Personality Notes

PSYC 370

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WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

1.1 Defining Personality

- *Personality*: consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes originating within the individual.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter Outline:

- The Hypothesis-Testing Approach
- The Case Study Method
- Statistical Analysis of Data
- Personality assessment
- Summary

2.1 The Hypothesis-Testing Approach

- **Theory**: General statement about the relationship between constructs or events.
  - Differ in the range of events or phenomena they cover.
- Characteristics of a good theory:
  - Parsimonious –Explains the phenomenon in simple terms.
  - Useful –Generates testable hypotheses.
- **Hypothesis**: Formal prediction about the relationship between or more variables that is logically derived from a theory.
- A theory is not accepted if empirical investigations consistently fail to confirm predictions.

2.1.1 Types of Experimental Variables

- **Independent variable**: Manipulated by the experimenter.
- **Dependent variable**: Measured by the experimenter.
- **Non-Manipulated independent variable**:
  - Exists without the researcher's intervention.
  - Investigator does not randomly assign participants to a conditions
  - Research cannot assume the participants in the two groups are identical.
  - Difficult to find cause-and-effect relationships.
- **Manipulated independent variable**:

- Begins with numerous participants.
- Randomly assigns participants to experimental groups.
- Researcher can assume that all the differences will be evened out.
- Random assignment increases confidence in causation relationships.

Interaction of Experimental Variables

- Research often has more than one independent variable.
- Interaction:
  - How one independent variable affects the dependent variable depends on the other independent variable.

2.1.2 Predictions

- Accurate predictions can be made if a scientist has a legitimate theory.
- Purpose of research is to provide support for a hypothesis.
- Researchers:
  - Generate a theory
  - Make a hypothesis
  - Collect data that supports or opposes the hypothesis

  Unpredicted findings by the researchers are the basis for future hypotheses and further research.

2.1.3 Replication

- Repetition of the research.
  - Example: Pharmaceutical company finds their new medication treats depression in adult men.
- Examines participant populations different from those used in the original research,
- Helps to determine whether the effect applies to larger number of people or is limited to the kind of individuals used in the original sample.
- Determining the strength of an effect by how often it is replicated is difficult because of the ***File Drawer Problem***.
  - Harder to get published when you didn't find significant results.
  - Researchers publish and report research only when they find significant effects.

2.2 The Case Study Method

- **Case study**: In-depth analysis of an individual, group, or event.
- **Case study method**:
  - Involves the collection of data from a single individual.
  - Can be used to study a single individual or a group.

2.2.1 Limitations of Case Study Method

- Determining cause-and-effect relationships.
- **Generalizability**:
  - Difficulty in generalizing from a single case to a larger population.

2.2.2 Strengths of Case Study Method

- Offers insight into the richness of a person's life.
- Valuable for generating hypotheses about the nature of human personality.
- Acts as a useful research tool. Appropriate in examining a rare case.

2.3 Statistical Analysis of Data

- Types of statistical tests appropriate for different types of data and research designs.
  - Analysis of variance (ANOVA).
  - χ^2 test.
  - Correlational coefficients.

2.4 Reliability

- Extent to which a test measures consistently.
  - Determined by calculating test-retest reliability coefficient.
- Internal consistency
  - All items on the test measure the same thing.
  - **Internal consistency reliability coefficient**:
    - High coefficient indicates that all items on the test measure the same thing.
    - Low coefficient suggests items are measuring more than one concept.

2.5 Validity

- Extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure.
- Easy to determine for some kinds of tests.
- Face validity:
  - Way to decide whether a test measures what it is says it measures is to look at the test items.
- Congruent validity:
  - Extent to which scores from the test correlation with other measures of the same construct.
  - Otherwise known as convergent validity.
- Discriminant validity:
  - Extent to which a test score does not correlate with the scores of theoretically unrelated measures.
- Behavioral validation:
  - Step in determining the construct validity of a test.
  - Test scores predicting relevant behavior is important.
  - Usefulness of the test must be questioned if the test scores cannot predict behavior.

CHAPTER 7

THE TRAIT APPROACH

Somatotype	Character	Shape
Endomorph [viscerotonic]	Relaxed, sociable, tolerant, comfort-loving, peaceful	Plump, buxom, developed visceral structure
Mesomorph [somatotonic]	Adventurous, assertive, aggressive, vigorous, dominant	Muscular, large-boned, hard, rectangular, strong
Ectomorph [cerebrotonic]	Quiet, sensitive, restrained, introverted, fragile	Thin, fragile, delicate, fine-boned

Table 7.1: Sheldon's Somatotypes

Trait: Categorizes people according to degree to which they manifest a particular characteristic.

Trait theory assumptions:

1. Characteristics are relatively stable over time.
2. Characteristics are relatively stable across situations.

7.1 Gordon Allport

7.1.1 Nomothetic vs. Idiographic Approaches

- *Nomothetic*:
  - All people can be described along a single dimension according to their level of, for example, assertiveness or anxiety.
  - Each person in a study using the nomothetic approach is tested to see how his or her score for the given trait compares with the scores of other participants.
  - These traits are called *common traits* because they are shared by everyone.
- *Idiographic*:
  - Focuses on the unique characteristics of an individual.
  - If you ask most people to list the traits that describe them, they will list a number of traits that are unique to them. These traits are called *central traits*.
- Allport says the best way to know someone is by identifying their central traits.

- He proposed that occasionally, a single trait will dominate a person's life and shape almost everything they do. This trait is called a *cardinal trait*.
  - For example, consider someone who is Machiavellian.

7.2 Henry Murray

- Greatly influenced by Carl Jung.
- Theory includes a blend of psycholoanalytic and trait approaches.
- *Personology*: The study of the whole person.
  - Basic elements of personality are driven by psychogenic needs.
  - Identified 27 needs.
    - Behavior is influenced by the level of importance of each need.
    - Example: Achievement and affiliation needs.

7.3 Raymond Cattell

- Devoted time to identifying personality traits through statistical analysis. That is, factor analysis.
- *Factor analysis*: A statistical technique that identifies clusters of related items on a test.
- Consists of 16 personality traits:

1. Warm
2. Abstract thinker
3. Emotionally stable
4. Dominant
5. Enthusiastic
6. Conscientious
7. Bold
8. Tender-minded
9. Suspicious
10. Imaginative
11. Shrewd
12. Apprehensive
13. Experimenting
14. Self-sufficient
15. Controlled
16. Tense

7.4 The Big Five

- *Neuroticism*: Degree of emotional instability or stability.
- *Extraversion*: Degree of sociability or social introversion.

- *Openness*: Degree of intellectual curiosity or creativity.
- *Agreeableness*: Degree of friendliness or hostility.
- *Conscientiousness*: Degree of organization or impulsiveness.

Factor	Characteristics
Openness	Imaginative vs. practical; preference for variety vs. routine; independent vs. conforming
Conscientiousness	Organized vs. disorganized; careful vs. careless; disciplined vs. impulsive
Extraversion	Sociable vs. retiring; fun-loving vs. sober; affectionate vs. reserved
Agreeableness	Softhearted vs. ruthless; trusting vs. suspicious; helpful vs. uncooperative
Neuroticism	Worried vs. calm; insecure vs. secure; self-pitying vs. self-satisfied

Table 7.2: The Big Five Personality Factors

7.5 Strengths and Weaknesses

- *Strengths*:
  - Provides a comprehensive framework for understanding personality.
  - Has been supported by a large body of research.
  - Has been used to predict a wide range of behaviors.
- *Weaknesses*:
  - Does not explain:
    - **How** or **why** traits develop.
    - **How** traits interact with each other.
    - **How** traits are influenced by the environment.
  - Has the chance for people to fake being good or bad. This is called *social desirability*.

7.6 Summary

1. The trait approach assumes we can identify individual differences in behaviors that are relatively stable across situations and over time. Trait theorists are usually not concerned with any one person's behavior but rather with describing behavior typical of people at certain points along a trait continuum.

2. Gordon Allport was the first acknowledged trait theorist. Among his contributions were the notions of central and secondary traits, nomothetic versus idiographic research, and descriptions of the self. Henry Murray identified psychogenic needs as the basic elements of personality. According to Murray, a need will affect behavior depending on where it lies on a person's need hierarchy and the kind of situation the person is in.

3. Raymond Cattell was interested in identifying the basic structure of personality. He used a statistical procedure called factor analysis to determine how many basic traits make up human personality. More recent research provides consistent evidence that personality is structured along five basic dimensions. Although questions remain, the evidence to date tends to support the five-factor model.

4. An enduring controversy in personality concerns the relative importance of traits compared to situational determinants of behavior. Critics have charged that traits do not predict behavior well and that there is little evidence for cross-situational consistency. Trait advocates have answered that if traits and behaviors are measured correctly, a significant relationship can be found. In addition, they maintain that the amount of behavior variance explained by traits is considerable and important.

5. The development of the five-factor model renewed interest in the relationship between personality and job performance. Although several of the Big Five dimensions are related to performance in the business world, many studies indicate that Conscientiousness may be the best predictor of performance.

6. Trait researchers typically rely on self-report assessment procedures in their work. One of the most commonly used self-report inventories is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Test users need to be aware of problems inherent in self-report inventories. These include faking, carelessness and sabotage, and response tendencies.

CHAPTER 8

THE TRAIT APPROACH (RELEVANT RESEARCH)