M14 Assignment: Personality

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ADHD, also known as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, is a neurodevelopmental disorder according to the DSM-5, in which atypical problems in personal, social, academic, and/or intellectual function arise. ADHD can be described as persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interfere with daily functioning and development. For example, someone with ADHD might show avoidance in tasks requiring sustained attention, such as a conversation. The ADHD individual will often distract themselves with physical behaviors or automatic thoughts. It is also likely that an individual with ADHD would experience comorbidity.

There is no exact reason to explain the etiology of ADHD, however, there exists a handful of theories. One theory is that ADHD can be inherited through genetics, specifically two genes that control the amount of dopamine receptor availability and size of the prefrontal cortex. Those with ADHD have been tested using PET imaging and found that the lack of dopamine activity and prefrontal cortex activity could explain the biological mechanisms for the hyperactive/ impulsive behavior. This is due to the prefrontal cortex essentially being an individual's ability to express control, more simply it is the way to say yes or no. With a smaller, weaker, prefrontal cortex, an individual’s ability to express control over their decisions is weakened. Furthermore, less dopamine activity means areas responsible for dopamine response, are going to work harder to get that response. This phenomenon would cause the brain (specifically the amygdala) to find ways to get dopamine, which might explain the struggles in sustained activity in individuals with ADHD. Another theory is that ADHD is simply due to environmental factors during pregnancy. For example, if your mother smoked during pregnancy, the nicotine specifically was found to increase ADHD likeliness. The case of nicotine causing ADHD would most likely apply to all stimulants.

Treatment for ADHD can happen in one or two ways, but both methods of treatment will provide the best outcome. The first and most widely used form of treatment is medication; this medication can come in the form of methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamine with dextroamphetamine (Adderall). Both medications listed are stimulants and increase the production of dopamine. There are also non-stimulant medications such as atomoxetine (Strattera) and guanfacine (Intunive). The second form of treatment is therapy, specifically Cognitive-Behavioral therapy, which focuses on teaching coping strategies, organizational skills, and behavior management techniques. Combining both forms of treatment will yield the best results, as the medication is more like a band-aid. The medication is there to help you function in your daily life, while the therapy is going to lay the foundation for how to manage your disorder. There are many resources for finding information, treatment, and support in dealing with the challenges of ADHD. One such group is CHADD (Child and Adults with Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder https://chadd.org/ )