**Chapter 15**

**Objective 1|** **Define personality.** Psychologists define personality as an individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. The early grand theories of personality tried to explain human nature, but current theories tend to focus on specific aspects of personality, such as our traits, uniqueness, sense of personal control, and concept of self.

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**Objective 2| Explain how Freud’s experiences in private practice led to his theory of psychoanalysis.** As a physician specializing in nervous disorders, Freud encountered patients whose complaints could not be explained in terms of purely physical causes. His attempt to understand these conditions led to his theory of psychoanalysis, the first comprehensive theory of personality.

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**Objective 3| Discuss Freud’s view of the mind as an iceberg, and explain how he used this image to represent conscious and unconscious regions of the mind.**Freud compared the human mind to an iceberg because he believed that most of the mind—the unconscious—is hidden from view (as most of an iceberg is hidden below water) because we repress the thoughts, wishes, feelings, and memories that create feelings of anxiety. In his view, this repression is never fully successful, and the troublesome thoughts and feelings express themselves in disguised forms unless we retrieve them into conscious awareness and free ourselves from the tensions they create. He sought to analyze these unconscious dynamics through free association and dream interpretation.

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**Objective 4| Describe Freud’s view of personality structure, and discuss the interactions of the id, ego, and superego.** Freud saw personality as the product of a conflict between our biological impulses and our internalized social restraints on these impulses. The players in this conflict are three interacting systems: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id, which wants immediate gratification, operates in the unconscious and attempts to satisfy basic sexual and aggressive drives. The superego, our internalized set of ideals, is the voice of our conscience, judging our actions and producing feelings of pride or guilt. Between them is the ego, the largely conscious, reality-oriented executive that attempts to reconcile the impulses of the id with the demands of the superego and those of the external world.

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**Objective 5| Identify Freud’s psychosexual stages of development, and describe the effects of fixation on behavior.** Freud believed that children develop through psychosexual stages—oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital—in which the id is focused on a particular erogenous zone. During the phallic stage, for example, boys may desire their mother and fear punishment for these feelings from their father—a set of reactions Freud called the Oedipus complex. A person who fails to resolve the conflicts associated with a psychosexual stage may remain locked into, or fixated at, that stage. The person’s personality will show the symptoms of this fixation in maladaptive behavior focused on the erogenous zone dominant at that stage.

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**Objective 6|** **Describe the function of defense mechanisms, and identify six of them.** Freud believed the ego uses defense mechanisms to protect itself from anxiety, which arises as a byproduct of the conflict between the competing demands of the id and the superego. The basic defense mechanism, according to Freud, is repression(banishing troublesome ideas and feelings into the unconscious);others include regression (retreating to an infantile stage), reaction formation (transforming unacceptable impulses into their acceptable opposites), projection (attributing one’s own unacceptable impulses to others),rationalization (explaining one’s behavior in terms of self justifying motives rather than unacceptable ones), and displacement(focusing sexual or aggressive impulses on someone who is more acceptable than the person who aroused the emotion).

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**Objective 7| Contrast the views of the neo-Freudians and psychodynamic theorists with Freud’s original theory.**The neo-Freudians accepted Freud’s basic ideas (the id-ego superego structure, the importance of the unconscious, the shaping of personality in childhood, and the dynamics of anxiety and the defense mechanisms). But they also argued that we have motives other than sex and aggression, and that the ego’s conscious control is greater than Freud supposed. Alfred Adler (who coined the term inferiority complex) and Karen Horney (who refuted Freud’s view of the inferiority of women) argued that social, not sexual, tensions are critical in personality formation. Carl Jung proposed a human collective unconscious containing memory traces from our species’ history. Contemporary psychodynamic theorists and therapists refute some aspects of Freud’s theory, such as the idea that sexual tensions are central to personality formation. They share with Freud the view that much of our mental life is unconscious, that childhood shapes our personality and attachment styles, and that we experience inner conflicts among our wishes, fears, and values.

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**Objective 8| Describe two projective tests used to assess personality, and discuss some criticisms of them.** The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is a series of ambiguous pictures used to elicit a story in which test-takers express their own inner feelings and interests. Users of the Rorschach inkblots, the most widely used projective test, ask people to interpret a series of inkblots, again on the assumption that test takers will reveal hidden feelings. Neither of these tests is noted for reliability (consistency of results) or validity (predicting what it’s supposed to predict).

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**Objective 9**| **Summarize psychology’s current assessment of Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis.**Recent research has contradicted many of Freud’s basic ideas, including the overriding importance of childhood experiences, degree of parental influence, timing of gender-identity formation, importance of sexuality during childhood, existence of hidden content in dreams, and frequency of repressed memories. Critics note that Freud’s ideas are not verifiable by scientific methods, and that his theory offers only after-the-fact explanations. Freud’s supporters reply that Freud viewed psychoanalysis as a way to find meaning in our existence, not as a predictive science. Freud drew psychology’s attention to the unconscious and to the struggle to cope with anxiety. Although contemporary research fails to support Freud’s view of the unconscious mind as a reservoir of repressed thoughts and emotions, findings throughout this text indicate that a vast amount of unconscious information processing occurs without our awareness. Current research does not support the concept of defense mechanisms closely tied to defense of the unconscious. It does support some defenses that protect self esteem, such as reaction formation, the false-consensus effect (similar to Freud’s projection mechanism), and terror management (warding off fears of death by pursuit of self-esteem or faith in one’s worldview). Finally, Freud is credited with focusing attention on the conflict between biological impulses and social restraints. And without question, his cultural impact has been enormous.

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**Objective 10| Summarize Abraham Maslow’s concept of self actualization, and explain how his ideas illustrate the humanistic perspective.** Maslow proposed a hierarchy of needs, ranging from the most basic physiological needs to the ultimate need for self actualization. He believed that after fulfilling other needs (physiological; safety; belongingness and love; self-esteem), people will be motivated to achieve their highest potential. He arrived at his description of a self-actualized person by studying, and summarizing the qualities of, healthy and creative people who had lived exemplary lives. Maslow typifies humanistic psychology’s attempt to turn psychology’s attention from baser motives and environmental conditioning to the growth potential of healthy people, believed to be basically good.

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**Objective 11| Discuss Carl Rogers’ person-centered perspective, and explain the importance of unconditional positive regard.** Like Maslow, Rogers believed that unless thwarted by their environment, people will grow and realize their self-actualizing tendencies. We can promote others’ growth toward a deeper self-awareness and a more realistic and positive self-concept by being genuine, accepting, and empathic. Part of being accepting, he believed, is unconditional positive regard—an attitude of total acceptance toward the other person. In Rogers’ view, a central feature of personality is our self-concept, our thoughts and feelings in response to the question “Who am I?”

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**Objective 12| Explain how humanistic psychologists assessed personality.** Some humanistic psychologists assessed personality through questionnaires on which people reported their self-concept, for example, by comparing their actual self with their ideal self. Others believed that we could understand a person’s subjective personal experiences only through interviews and intimate conversations.

 Pages: 610-611

**Objective 13| State the major criticisms of the humanistic perspective on personality.**Humanistic psychology helped to renew psychology’s interest in the self. Nevertheless, its critics have complained that humanistic psychology’s concepts were vague and subjective, its values individualist and self-centered, and its assumptions naively optimistic.

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**Objective 14| Cite the main difference between the trait and psychoanalytic perspectives on personality.** Rather than explain personality in terms of childhood sexuality and unconscious motivations, as Freud did, trait researchers have attempted to describe personality in terms of stable and enduring behavior patterns, or predispositions to feel and act. Some psychologists also have attempted to use dominant traits to describe personality “types.”

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**Objective 15|** **Describe some of the ways psychologists have attempted to compile a list of basic personality traits.** Trait researchers attempt to describe personality by placing individuals at points on several trait dimensions simultaneously. Some have attempted to isolate important dimensions of personality by using factor analysis. Hans Eysenck and Sybil Eysenck proposed that two primary, genetically influenced dimensions (extraversion-introversion and emotional stability-instability) will explain normal individual variations. Brain-activity scans do indicate that extraverts and introverts differ in their level of brain arousal. Jerome Kagan believes that heredity, by influencing autonomic nervous system reactivity, also influences temperament and behavioral style, which help define personality.

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**Objective 16| Explain how psychologists use personality inventories to assess traits, and discuss the most widely used personality inventory.** Personality inventories are questionnaires on which people respond to items designed to gauge a wide range of feelings and behaviors. The MMPI-2 is the most widely used personality inventory. Items on the MMPI are empirically derived, and the tests are objectively scored. Objectivity does not, however, guarantee validity (measuring what it is supposed to measure), and people may answer MMPI questions in ways that are socially appropriate but not truthful.

 Pages: 615-618

**Objective 17| Identify the Big Five personality factors, and discuss some of the strengths of this approach to studying personality.**The Big Five personality factors are conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, and extraversion. These traits appear to be stable in adulthood, substantially heritable, applicable to all cultures, and good predictors of other personal attributes. Locating an individual on these five dimensions currently offers the most comprehensive picture of personality.

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**Objective 18| Summarize the person-situation controversy, and explain its importance as a commentary on the trait perspective.** Critics of the trait perspective point out that although people’s general traits may persist over time, their specific behavior varies from situation to situation as their inner disposition interacts with a particular environment. Thus, traits are not good predictors of behavior. Trait theorists reply that despite these variations, a person’s average behavior across many different situations tends to be fairly consistent.

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**Objective 19| Explain why psychologists are interested in the consistency of the trait of expressiveness.** Expressive styles—animation, manner of speaking, and gestures—demonstrate how consistent traits can be, despite situational variations in behavior. Observers have been able to judge expressiveness in video snippets as short as 2 seconds long. We have little voluntary control over our expressiveness.

 Pages: 621-622

**Objective 20|** **Describe the social-cognitive perspective, and explain how reciprocal determinism illustrates that perspective.** Reciprocal determinism is a term applied to the interacting influences between personality and environmental factors. This interaction is central to the social-cognitive perspective, which applies principles of learning (through conditioning and observation) and cognition (our thinking about our situations) to the study of personality. Interactions between individuals and environments occur, for example, when we choose an environment that then shapes us, when our personality shapes how we interpret and react to events, and when our personality helps create situations to which we react.

 Pages: 623-624

**Objective 21| Discuss the effects of a perception of internal or external control, and describe the concept of learned helplessness.**People with an internal locus of control (who believe they control their own destiny) tend to experience higher school achievement, better health, less depression, and greater self control than those with an external locus of control (who believe forces beyond their control determine their fate).Learned helplessness is an acquired response of hopelessness and passive resignation that animals and humans display after repeated exposure to traumatic events they cannot control. Environments that increase people’s feelings of control can boost morale and empower people. Ever-increasing personal freedom, however, in the form of a wealth of consumer choices, can result in a tyranny of choices that can decrease life satisfaction, increase depression, and lead to feelings of paralysis.

 Pages: 625-626

**Objective 22| Discuss the link between performance and optimistic or pessimistic attributional style, and contrast positive psychology with humanistic psychology.**An optimistic or pessimistic attributional style—your way of explaining events—can be a window revealing how effective or helpless you feel. Students who express an attitude of hopeful optimism tend to get better grades than those who have a negative attributional style. But excessive optimism can foster feelings of invincibility that expose us to unnecessary risks. Positive psychology, like humanistic psychology, attempts to foster human fulfillment. But it differs from humanistic psychology in its scientific methods. The three goals of positive psychology are studying and fostering positive subjective well-being; positive character; and positive groups, communities, and cultures. Pages: 627-629

**Objective 23| Explain why social-cognitive researchers assess behavior in realistic situations.**Social-cognitive researchers are interested in how people’s behaviors and beliefs affect, and are affected by, their surroundings. They observe people in realistic situations because they have found that the best way to predict someone’s behavior in a given situation is to observe that person’s behavior pattern in similar situations.

 Pages: 629-630

**Objective 24| State the major criticism of the social-cognitive perspective.** Critics fault the social-cognitive perspective for focusing so much on the situation that it loses sight of the person. They maintain that this perspective slights the importance of unconscious dynamics, emotions, and biologically influenced traits.

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**Objective 25| Explain why psychology has generated so much research on the self, and give three examples of current research on the self.**Psychological research on the self has been accumulating for more than a century. Many psychologists view the self—the organizer of our thoughts, feelings and actions—as a critical part of personality. One recent example of research on the self is the study of the influence of possible selves, the visions of the selves we dream of becoming or fear we may become. Another example is the concept of the spotlight effect, the assumption that we overestimate the extent to which others notice and evaluate our appearance, performance, and blunders. A third example is the self-reference effect, the ability to better recall information if we relate it to our own person or life.

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**Objective 26| Give two alternative explanations for the positive correlation between low self-esteem and personal problems.** Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers argued that a healthy self-image (high self-esteem) pays dividends in a personally fulfilling and successful life, and some experiments have shown the destructive power of a negative self-image. But other psychologists have proposed an alternative explanation of the link between low self-esteem and personal problems—that self-esteem, low or high, reflects reality, that it is a side effect of one’s success or failure in meeting challenges and surmounting difficulties. In this view, the best boost to self esteem would be helping children meet challenges, not rewarding them despite their failures.

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**Objective 27| Discuss some ways that people maintain their self-esteem under conditions of discrimination or low status.**Studies show that under conditions of discrimination or low status, people—often those of color, those with disabilities, and women—maintain their self-esteem by valuing the things at which they excel, by attributing problems to prejudice, and by comparing themselves with people in similar positions.

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**Objective 28| Discuss self-serving bias, and contrast defensive and secure self-esteem.** The self-serving bias (our readiness to perceive ourselves favorably)includes our tendencies (1) to more readily accept responsibility for good deeds and for successes than for bad deeds and failures, and (2) to see ourselves as better than average. Defensive self-esteem is fragile and takes the form of egotism focused on sustaining itself at any cost. Secure self-esteem is less fragile and less dependent on external evaluations.

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