

Traits: Gordon Allport

Kimberley A. Clow

kclow2@uwo.ca
<http://instruct.uwo.ca/psychology/257e-570>

Outline

- Biography
- Definition of Personality
- Structure of Personality
 - Traits
 - Personal Dispositions
- Development of Personality
 - Proprium
- The Psychologically Healthy Person

Brief Biography



- Born in Indiana
 - American
- Not a scholastic achiever
 - Mediocre grades
- Travelled to Germany
 - Met Freud
 - Met Gestalt psychologists
- Taught first class in personality
- Interested in social issues
 - Classic book on Prejudice
 - Founded SPSSI

Definition of Personality

- “Personality *is* something and *does* something ... it is what lies *behind* specific acts and *within* the individual”
 - Dynamic
 - Psychophysical
 - Determinant of behaviour
 - Characteristic
 - Behaviour & Thought

Structure of Personality

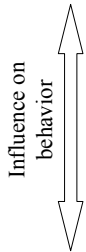
- Personality is stable
 - Consistency across diverse situations
- Components of Personality
 - Interests & Intentions
 - Traits
 - Biological Predispositions
- Traits
 - Common Traits → Traits
 - Individual Traits → Personal Dispositions

Traits

- Common to groups of people
 - Stereotypes
- Criteria
 - Frequency of type of behaviour
 - Range of situation for behaviour
 - Intensity of reaction to maintaining this behaviour

Personal Dispositions

Most Pervasive



Least Pervasive

- “Generalized neuropsychic structure (peculiar to the individual), with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent (equivalent) forms of adaptive and stylistic behavior”

- Cardinal
- Central
- Secondary

Other Relevant Factors

● Terms Associated with Personality

- Character
 - Bob is a good character
- Temperament
- Type

● Related Concepts

- Habits
- Attitudes

Proprium

● Composition of all the important aspects of a personality as a result of a person's experiences and growth

- Maintains our sense of self
 - The behaviours and characteristics that we deem central to our lives
- Determines how we perceive the world & what we remember from our experiences

● Propriate vs. Nonpropriate Behaviours

Development of Personality

Timeline	Propriate Development
First Year	Infant learns that she exists through sensory experiences
Second Year	Child learns that identity remains intact although circumstances change
Third Year	Feeling of pride results from individual accomplishments
Fourth Year	Child extends self-image by recognizing that certain objects belong to him
Sixth-Sixth Year	Child develops conscience and can deal with concept of right and wrong
Sixth-Twelfth year	Child uses reason and logic to solve problems
Adolescence	Child makes future goals and organizes life around them
Adulthood	Individual who has synthesized the preceding stages of development emerges

Motivation

● Characteristics of Motivation

- It must recognize the contemporary nature of motives
- It must allow for the existence of several types of motives
- It must recognize the importance of cognitive processes
- It must recognize that each person's pattern of motivation is unique

● Functional Autonomy

Values

● Our system of values and philosophical outlook gives meaning to life

- Theoretical
- Economic
- Aesthetic
- Social
- Political
- Religious
 - Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic

The Psychologically Healthy Person

● 6 Characteristics

- Capacity for self-extension
- Capacity for warm human interactions
- Demonstration of emotional security and self-acceptance
- Demonstration of realistic perceptions
- Demonstration of self-objectification
- Demonstration of unifying philosophy of life

Research & Criticism

● Ideographic versus Nomothetic

- Ideographic Approach
 - Intense study of a single case
- Nomothetic Approach
 - Study groups and analyze averages

● Methods

- Interviews
- Self-report
 - Diaries, letters, dreams, confessions
- Non-verbal cues
 - Gait, handwriting

Allport vs. Freud

● Differences from Freud

- Consciousness the only important element in health adult motivation
 - Not unconscious
- Actions guided by present & our view of future
 - Not past
- Can't study personality by looking at abnormal behaviour
- Personality not general & universal but personal & unique
