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Psychometrics

What is Differential Psychology?

- also known as the Individual Differences Approach (ID)
- division of psychology that seeks to understand and establish the psychological dimensions (normal & abnormal), the apply to everyone yet allow for differences between individuals
- assumes that the soul exists and elements of it are measurable through scientific enquiry
- elements = personality and intelligence
- assumes that there is a connection between normal expressions and abnormal expressions from the self e.g. a continuity
- assumes that behaviour of the elements is dynamic - they are not static
- assumes that things change not only within us but also between us

The Nature of ID

- The Structural Model — How do individuals differ?
- The Process Model — Why, where, and when do people differ?

Tests and Measurements

Psychological Tests in ID

- psychometrics - the measurement of the soul
- systematic applications that helps us understand and describe normal and abnormal expressions in psychology
- Important for:
 - allow for the indirect assessment of hidden (latent) psychological attributes (can't actually see them, what you can see is the manifestations of the hidden construct)
 - used to make important decisions about individuals
 - arguably the best, fairest and most economical methods for obtaining ID information
- Limitations:
 - precision and accuracy (2 fundamental properties of psychometrics) — it is very difficult to guarantee these in psychology
 - highly specialised — we only want the test to measure what we want to measure and nothing else
 - want as few errors (unaccounted variance/behaviours) as possible
 - administration and interpretation

Defining Characteristics

1. A sample of behaviours, attitudes, thoughts, and feelings
 - participants are asked to respond to an assessment
 - the psychological value of these responses is largely determined by the qualities of the sample
 - some sample qualities:
 - representativeness
 - biasedness - the degree of random error present in the sample - can produce over or under estimates

- response rate/non-respondents/dropouts/volunteers
 - dropouts may happen when they find out what you are studying
 - volunteers have a very unique set of traits e.g. curious, open to experience, care
- instability of psychological attributes/sample size
 - e.g. mood different during and after holidays
 - when is sample size big enough? don't sample enough, you get errors. sample too many, it's unethical

2. Sampling is obtained under and through standardised conditions and procedures

- procedural issues
- standardised sampling types
 - probability (random) sampling — every population unit has a known chance of being included in the sample
 - non-probability (non random) sampling — do not take into account the elements of chance

3. Established rules for scoring and obtaining quantitative information from behaviour samples

- objective scoring — follows a formula
- subjective scoring — expert assessors' judgement

Ethical Standards for Testing

- The right to respectful treatment
 - participants may retain all their legal, moral and cultural rights during the period of the study
- The right to informed consent
 - should be fully, clearly and truthfully briefed about the aims, the content, and outcomes of the study
 - problem of deception — may be used only when alternative techniques that don't employ deception are not feasible
- The right to privacy
 - participants have the right to reveal nothing about themselves to the investigator
 - researchers may not use data or collect data that may violate privacy
 - participants have the right not to allow the use of such data for any purposes
- The right to confidentiality
 - participants should be coded in ways that they cannot be identified
 - researchers may not reveal personal details and their performance
- The right to withdraw
 - can leave the study at any time without further consequences

Concerns regarding the interpretation of test results

- Are the observed attributes real?
 - test biases
 - procedural/administrative biases
 - faking
 - framing and research biases
- Are they important?
 - the difference between statistical and practical importance
- Do tests help or hurt?