



Trait Theories

Personality Theories

On the play ground, 6 year old **Sam** pushes little **Samantha** off her tricycle and rides away on it.

Why?

SAMANTHA



SAM



Traits

Aggressive

Hot Tempered

Undisciplined

personality traits are "enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself that are exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts."

A **trait** is what we call a characteristic way in which an individual perceives, feels, believes, or acts.

Theorists generally assume

1. Traits are relatively stable over time,
2. Traits differ among individuals
3. Traits are also bipolar and
4. Traits influence behavior.



Three trait theory

In 1936, psychologist Gordon Allport found that one English-language dictionary alone contained more than **4,000 words** describing different personality traits. He categorized these traits into three levels.

Three trait theory

1. **Cardinal Traits:** Traits that dominate an individual's whole life, often to the point that the person becomes known specifically for these traits. Freudian, Machiavellian, narcissism, Don Juan, Christ-like, etc.
2. **Central Traits:** These are the general characteristics that form the basic foundations of personality. Terms such as intelligent, honest, shy and anxious are considered central traits.
3. **Secondary Traits:** These are the traits that are sometimes related to attitudes or preferences and often appear only in certain situations or under specific circumstances. Some examples would be getting anxious when speaking to a group or impatient while waiting in line.

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16 personality factor theory

Trait theorist **Raymond Cattell** reduced the number of main personality traits from Allport's initial list of over 4,000 down to **16** by means of a statistical technique called factor analysis.

16 personality factor theory

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. emotional, easily upset | vs. calm, stable |
| 2. Intelligent | vs. unintelligent |
| 3. suspicious | vs. trusting |
| 4. reserved, unfriendly | vs. outgoing, friendly |
| 5. assertive, dominant | vs. not assertive, humble |
| 6. sober, serious | vs. happy-go-lucky |
| 7. conscientious | vs. expedient |
| 8. shy, timid | vs. venturesome |
| 9. tender-minded | vs. tough-minded |
| 10. practical | vs. imaginative |
| 11. shrewd | vs. forthright |
| 12. self-assured, placid | vs. apprehensive |
| 13. conservative | vs. experimenting |
| 14. group oriented | vs. self-sufficient |
| 15. undisciplined | vs. self-disciplined |
| 16. Relaxed | vs. tense, driven |



Universal trait theory

British psychologist Hans Eysenck developed a model of personality based upon just **three universal traits** were sufficient to describe human personality. Differences between Cattell and Eysenck emerged due to preferences for different forms of factor analysis, with Cattell using oblique, Eysenck orthogonal rotation to analyze the factors that emerged when personality questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis.

Universal trait theory

- 1. Introversion/Extraversion:** Introversion involves directing attention on inner experiences, while extraversion relates to focusing attention outward on other people and the environment. So, a person high in introversion might be quiet and reserved, while an individual high in extraversion might be sociable and outgoing.
- 2. Neuroticism/Emotional Stability:** This dimension of Eysenck's trait theory is related to moodiness versus even-temperedness. Neuroticism refers to an individual's tendency to become upset or emotional, while stability refers to the tendency to remain emotionally constant.
- 3. Psychoticism:** Later, after studying individuals suffering from mental illness, Eysenck added a personality dimension he called psychoticism to his trait theory. Individuals who are high on this trait tend to have difficulty dealing with reality and may be antisocial, hostile, non-empathetic and manipulative.



Big five model

Both Cattell's and Eysenck's theory have been the subject of considerable research, which has led some theorists to believe that Cattell focused on too many traits, while Eysenck focused on too few. As a result, a new trait theory often referred to as the "Big Five" theory emerged. This five-factor model of personality represents five core traits that interact to form human personality. Lewis Goldberg proposed a five-dimension personality model, nicknamed the Big five.

Big five model

1. **Openness to Experience**: the tendency to be imaginative, independent, and interested in variety vs. practical, conforming, and interested in routine.
2. **Conscientiousness**: the tendency to be organized, careful, and disciplined vs. disorganized, careless, and impulsive.
3. **Extraversion**: the tendency to be sociable, fun-loving, and affectionate vs. retiring, somber, and reserved.
4. **Agreeableness**: the tendency to be soft-hearted, trusting, and helpful vs. ruthless, suspicious, and uncooperative.
5. **Neuroticism**: the tendency to be calm, secure, and self-satisfied vs. anxious, insecure, and self-pitying.



HEXACO model

Michael Ashton and Kibeom Lee , in 2008, proposed a six dimensional HEXACO model of personality structure. Ashton and Lee especially emphasize the Honesty-Humility (H) factor as differentiating the HEXACO model from other personality frameworks. Specifically, the **H factor** is described as sincere, honest, faithful/loyal, modest/unassuming, fair-minded, VERSUS sly, deceitful, greedy, pretentious, hypocritical, boastful and pompous. The H factor has been linked to criminal, materialistic, power-seeking and unethical tendencies.

HEXACO model

1. **H**onesty-Humility
2. **E**motionality
3. **Ex**traversion
4. **A**greeableness
5. **C**onscientiousness and
6. **O**penness to Experience .

Criticisms of trait theories

1. being **purely descriptive** and **offering little explanation** of the underlying causes of personality
2. Lead some people to accept **oversimplified classifications**
3. **Underestimate** the effect of **specific situations** on people's behavior.
4. **Poor predictors** of behavior.