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Personality Trait Theory

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Allport, Cattell, Eysenck and the Big Five

The Personality Trait Theory is one of the most critically debated in the field of personality studies. Many psychologists have theorized using the trait approach to personality, which advocates the differences between individuals. To better understand the Personality Trait Theory, suppose you are asked to describe your friend's personality. You may say that he is cheerful, sociable and fun to be with. These traits and more are the main focus of the trait approach.

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Gordon Allport: Trait Theory

According to Gordon Allport, one English dictionary could provide you more than 4000 words describing or synonymous to a single personality trait. Because of this finding, he was able to categorize traits into three general levels. They include:

1. Cardinal Traits

For sure you have heard the words "Christ-like", "Freudian" and "Narcissist". The origins and meanings of these traits are very easy to determine. A person may be called "Christ-like" if he

sacrifices his own good for the benefit of others. Cardinal traits, therefore, are the ones that dominate the entirety of a person's life such that a person carrying such trait may even become famous and have their name become synonymous with these traits.

2. Central Traits

These are general characteristics that you use to describe another person are called central traits. Examples include kind, sincere, cool and jolly.

3. Secondary Traits

These traits are those that only come out under certain situations. For example, you become uneasy when a pop quiz is announced.

Raymond Cattell: Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire

From Allport's list of about 4,000 traits, Raymond Cattell decreased the number into 1713 because he believed that uncommon traits should be eliminated. In his research, Cattell eventually narrowed down the list into 16 personality traits. He then developed the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF), an assessment tool commonly utilized today. The 16 personality traits include:

1. Warmth (A)
2. Reasoning (B)
3. Emotional Stability (C)
4. Dominance (E)
5. Liveliness (F)
6. Rule-consciousness (G)
7. Social Boldness (H)
8. Sensitivity (I)
9. Vigilance (L)
10. Abstractedness (M)
11. Privatness (N)
12. Apprehension/Apprehensiveness (O)
13. Openness to change (Q1)
14. Self-reliance (Q2)

15. Perfectionism (Q3)

16. Tension (Q4)

Hans Eysenck: Three Dimensions of Personality

British psychologist Hans Eysenck developed a model of personality based upon just three universal traits:

Unlike Allport and Cattell, theorist Hans Eysenck only included three general traits in his list. They are:

1. Introversion- Extraversion

As in Carl Jung's personality type theory, Eysenck classified people as either introvert, those who directs focus on inner world, or extravert, those who gives more attention to other people and his environment.

2. Neuroticism-Emotional Stability

This category is synonymous to "moodiness versus even-temperedness", where in a neurotic person is inclined to having changing emotions [1] from time to time, while an emotionally stable person tends to maintain a constant mood or emotion.

3. Psychoticism

This dimension refers to the finding it hard to deal with reality. A psychotic person may be considered hostile, manipulative, anti-social and non-empathetic.

The Big Five: Five-Factor Model

As a result of a thorough research on Cattell's and Eysenck's personality trait theories, the Big Five theory was formulated. This model states that there are 5 core traits which collaborate in order to form a single personality. These include:

1. **Extraversion** - tendency to be active, sociable, person-oriented, talkative, optimistic, empathetic
2. **Openness to Experience** - tendency to be imaginative, curious, creative and may have unconventional beliefs and values.
3. **Agreeableness** - tendency to be good-natured, kind-hearted, helpful, altruistic and trusting.
4. **Conscientiousness** - tendency to be hardworking, reliable, ambitious, punctual and self-directed.

5. **Neuroticism** - tendency to become emotionally unstable and may even develop psychological distress

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Links

[1] <https://explorable.com/nature-of-emotions>