

Personality

It is very difficult to define 'personality'. Hall et al (1957) argue that there are as many theorists as there are definitions.

Eysenck: "a more or less stable and enduring organisation of a person's character, temperament, intellect and physique, which determines his unique adjustment to the environment:."

Child: "more or less stable, internal factors that make one person's behaviour consistent from one time to another and different from the behaviour other people would manifest in comparable situations".

Both definitions comment on the **consistency** of personality ("more or less"), talks about the way it manifests itself within the **environment** and states that it is **unique**, or different.

They are both rooted in the **trait approach** to personality: a **trait** is a stable characteristic or quality distinguishing one person or thing from another.

Traditional Approaches

Trait Approach
The dominant approach. Predicated on empirical evidence, explicit, testable, falsifiable and replicable. But **whose theory** is the best?

Eysenck's Giant Three divided personality in to Extraversion (Introversion), Neuroticism (Stability) and Psychoticism (Normality). The former two received strong empirical support whereas the third was useful in his Crime theorising, but not widely supported.

Raymond Cattell's 16PF extensively studied adjectives in the english language using the **lexical sampling hypothesis** (which assumes that every notable aspect of personality would have been observed and entered in to the language as an adjective). He arrived at 16 personality factors and developed the 16PF - one of the most widely used personality questionnaires.

Big Five and NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae) describe personality in terms of 5 factors: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness. Used Catell's 16 PF and found 5 second-order factors (the 16 were not orthogonal). The popular measure for this is Costa and McCrae's (1992) NEO PI-R. Goldberg was responsible for characterising the Big Five in terms of definitions and their corresponding adjectives.

Humanistic Approach Roots in existentialism and phenomenology. Emphasises that we have free-will and our need for self-actualisation. Key figures include Kelly, Rogers and Maslow.

Psychodynamic Approach Originates from Freud's psychodynamic theory. Influential in psychotherapy but otherwise no longer an accepted theory.

Support: Emerge in different culture (Goldberg et al. 2000), High heritability indices (Plomin et al. 1999), Predict many criteria (Furnham et al. 1999), Can be recovered in self and peer-ratings and observations (Costa and McCrae, 1987) and they remain relatively stable across the lifespan (Caspi et al. 1999)

Limitations: Atheoretical (weak theoretical foundation, what are the origins?), Questions about orthogonality between A and C (often positively correlated), not all Big Five factors are the same 5 factors. There is the 'Big Five' (circumplex structure, based on lexical hypothesis) versus the 'Five Factor Model' (hierarchical structure, sociobiologically based) and the definitions are not fully consistent with each other.