

The Trait Perspective Personality



The Psychoanalytic Theory attempts to explain personality in terms of the dynamics that underlie behaviour. It peers beneath the surface searching for hidden motives to explain a person's behaviour and actions.

In the TRAIT Perspective, psychologists try to describe personality in terms of fundamental traits= people's characteristic behaviour's and conscious motives.

How Did the Trait Perspective Begin?

In 1919, Gordon Allport, a 22-year-old Psychology Student, interviewed Sigmund Freud in Vienna. Allport concluded that Freud was too pre-occupied with finding hidden motives. Allport decided that personality patterns and traits would explain personality better than hidden reasons. He was concerned less with *explaining* individual traits than with *describing* them.

How Do Psychologists Describe and Classify Personalities?

Since Freud's initial theory, there have been many other theories on personality and how to classify them.

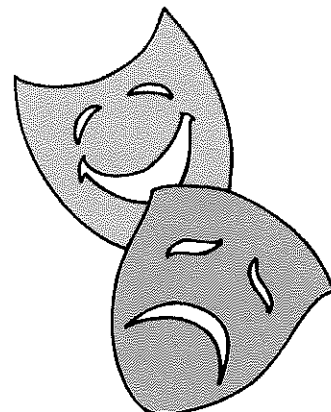
Psychologists classify patients by Personality Type:

For Example: How do we classify different kinds of apples? (distinct types?)



The Ancient Greeks used to describe personality by classifying people according to the same principles. They used Four Types to identify people:

1. melancholic (depressed)
2. sanguine (cheerful)
3. phlegmatic (unemotional)
4. choleric (irritable)



TODAY... We now have other ideas on basic personality types. There are many different theories and suggestions on how to classify and identify personalities:

- A) Jerome Kagan (1989) classified children's temperaments as either:
 - i. Shy-Inhibited
 - ii. Fearless-Uninhibited
 - Also known as Type A and Type B Personalities
- B) William Sheldon (1954) classified people by their body type:
 - i. ie: plump endomorph
 - ii. muscular mesomorph
 - iii. thin ectomorph
 - very stereotypical (chubby= happy go lucky)
 - controversial theory
- C) Carl Jung (1970) classified personalities in a "Type Profile"
- D) Myer-Briggs (1987) classified people according to the "Type Indicator"
- E) Hans and Sybil Eysenck developed the "Eysenck Personality Questionnaire" to test Personality.

British psychologists Hans Eysenck and Sybil Eysenck [EYE-zink] believe that we can reduce many of our normal individual variations to two or three genetically influenced dimensions, including *extraversion-introversion* and *emotional stability-instability* (FIGURE 42.1). Their *Eysenck Personality Questionnaire* has been given to people in 35 countries around the world, from China to Uganda to Russia. When people's answers are analyzed, the extraversion and emotionality factors inevitably emerge as basic personality dimensions (Eysenck, 1990, 1992).

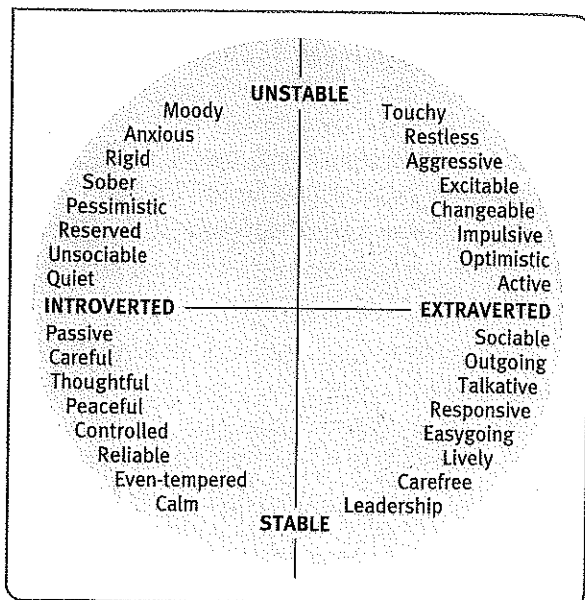


FIGURE 42.1
 Two personality factors
 Mapmakers can tell us a lot by using two axes (north-south and east-west). Hans Eysenck and Sybil Eysenck use two primary personality factors—extraversion-introversion and stability-instability—as axes for describing personality variation. Varying combinations define other, more specific traits. (From Eysenck & Eysenck, 1963.)



Problem: Classifying people as one or another distinct personality type fails to capture their full individuality.