

# UNDERSTANDING PERSONALITY

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A human being is part of a whole, called by us the “universe” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Albert Einstein

We the human race have different personalities and personality types, it is synonymous to, like our unique figures and faces. We all have different statures, figures and faces which are quit unique and distinguish us from others. Our inborn nature is nurtured by the early up bringing practices of our parents and elders, the customs, culture and the society. Our ethnicity and environmental surroundings has a lasting effect on our personality development. All these early experiences have long lasting effects on our orientation in the world and mold our habits, temperament and define our character. The different habits leads to traits and give arise to our unique personality type. The Cambridge English dictionary defines personality as “The type of person you are, which is shown by the way, you behave, feel and think- for example we say “She has a very warm personality” and that “He is well qualified for the job, but he does lack personality (= he is a boring person)”. Understanding personality is indispensable for practicing psychiatry. To understand, personality we need to define the culture we are living in. Culture (WAY OF LIFE), as defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary, the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time: relating to the habits, traditions and beliefs of a society. Culture, is the ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society. Ecology shapes culture, while ecology is the organisms and their relationship with the surroundings.

Approaching the question of what determines personality from a different direction, biological and evolutionary approaches to personality suggest that

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important components of personality are inherited. Building on the work of behavioral geneticists, researchers using biological and evolutionary approaches argue that personality is determined at least in part by our genes in much the same way that our height is largely a result of genetic contributions from our ancestors.<sup>1</sup> The evolutionary perspective assumes that personality traits that led to our ancestors’ survival and reproductive success are more likely to be preserved and passed on to subsequent generations<sup>2</sup>.

All port eventually answered this question by suggesting that there are three fundamental. Categories of traits: cardinal, central, and secondary.<sup>3,4</sup> A cardinal trait is a single characteristic that directs most of a person’s activities. For example, a totally selfless woman may direct all her energy toward humanitarian activities; Central traits, such as honesty and sociability, are an individual’s major characteristics; they usually number from five to ten in any one person. Finally, secondary traits are characteristics that affect behavior in fewer situations and are less influential than central or cardinal traits.<sup>5</sup> For instance, a reluctance to eat meat and a love of modern art would be considered secondary traits<sup>6,7</sup>.

Another trait theorist, psychologist Hans Eysenck (1995)<sup>8</sup> also used factor analysis to identify patterns of traits, but he came to a very different conclusion about the nature of personality. He found that personality could best be described in terms of just three major dimensions: extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. The extraversion dimension describes a person’s level of sociability, whereas the neuroticism dimension encompasses an individual’s emotional stability. Finally, psychoticism is the degree to which reality is distorted. By evaluating people along these three dimensions, Eysenck was able to predict behavior accurately in a variety of situations.

Figure 1 Eysenck described personality in terms of three major dimensions: extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Using these dimensions, he could predict people’s behavior in many types of situations. (Source: Eysenck, 1990)<sup>9</sup>

<b>Extraversion</b> Sociable Lively Active Assertive Sensation-seeking	<b>Neuroticism</b> Anxious Depressed Guilt feelings Low self-esteem Tense	<b>Psychoticism</b> Aggressive Cold Egocentric Impersonal Impulsive
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Figure 1, lists specific traits associated with each of the dimensions

For the last two decades, the most influential trait approach contends that five traits or factors—called the “Big Five”—lie at the core of personality.<sup>10</sup> The five factors, described in Figure 2, are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (emotional stability). Using factor analytic statistical techniques, a host of researchers have identified a similar set of five factors that underlie personality.

Costa McRae’s Big 5, Openness, Agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism.<sup>10</sup>

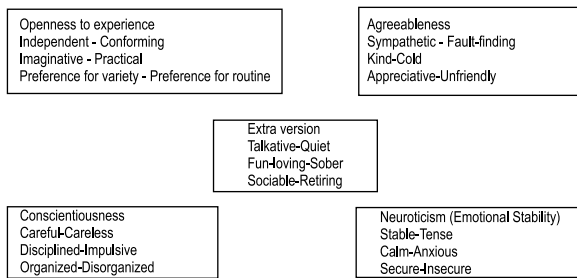


Figure 2: The Big Five Personality Factors and Dimensions of Sample Traits

There are various degrees of the traits that we share with each other. Openness tells us of the adventurousness vs the more consistent. The more collectivistic the society it is more likely for us to follow norms rather than take risks or be more adventurous or be innovative, it link the phenomenon to cultural influences. Agreeableness denotes how friendly, compassionate, a person is versus being more analytical or detached. Extraversion alludes to whether a person is outgoing, energetic, flamboyant, and attentions seeking, versus the more solitary kind. Conscientious person may be more efficient organized and dependable rather than flexible, easygoing, and spontaneous. Those high in neuroticism, tend to be more sensitive or highly strung versus being more secure or confident. Either side of the spectrum on all traits, have their sets of positives and negatives.

The results of research studies conducted on twins who are genetically identical but raised apart illustrate the importance of genetic factors in personality<sup>11</sup>. Personality tests indicate that in major respects, genetically identical twins raised apart are quite similar in personality, despite having been separated at an early age. Moreover, certain traits are more heavily influenced by heredity than others. For example, social potency (the degree to which a person assumes mastery and leadership roles in social situations) and traditionalism (the tendency to follow authority) had particularly strong genetic components, whereas achievement and social closeness had relatively weak genetic components.<sup>12</sup>

The roots of adult personality emerge early in life. Infants are born with a specific temperament, an individual’s behavioral style and characteristic way of responding. Temperament encompasses several

dimensions, including general activity level and mood. For instance, some individuals are quite active, while others are relatively calm. Similarly, some are relatively easygoing, whereas others are irritable, easily upset, and difficult to soothe<sup>12</sup> Temperament is quite consistent, with significant stability from infancy well into adolescence<sup>13</sup>.

Psychologists interested in assessing personality must be able to define the most meaningful ways of discriminating between one person’s personality and another’s.<sup>14</sup> To do this, they use psychological tests, standard measures devised to assess behavior objectively. With the results of such tests, psychologists can help people better understand themselves and make decisions about their lives. Researchers interested in the causes and consequences of personality also employ psychological tests<sup>14,15</sup>.

It is important to keep in mind the complexity of human behavior—particularly your own. No single test can provide an understanding of the intricacies of someone’s personality without considering a good deal more information than can be provided in a single testing session<sup>16,17</sup>.

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