

Trait theory essay sample

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Do you remember taking those personality quizzes where they ask you to describe your personality? What types of things did you mark? Did you mark terms such as friendly, caring, outgoing, and talkative? All these are prime examples of traits. The study of human personality has fascinated people from the dawn of time. The four major personality perspective attempts to describe patterns in personality, how they differ, and how they are formed. The theory that will be discussed in this paper is trait theory of personality or also sometimes referred to as dispositional theory. Trait perspective of personality is concern with identifying, describing, and measuring specific traits that make up the human personality. Trait personality theory is unlike humanistic or psychoanalytic theory. The primary focus of trait theorist is to measure the differences between traits and how they make up the human personality (Cherry). A trait is a stable characteristic that causes someone to act in certain ways. According to trait theorists, personality is made up of a combination of various traits.

An example of this could be someone who is described as introverted, hardworking, and conscientiousness one might conclude that they neat, smart, and organized. Trait theory's primary focused on the measuring and identifying personality characteristics. Gordon Allport is the founding father of trait personality perspective. At the time, personality was not a sub-discipline of psychology (" Application"). Allport found that there were more than 4, 000 words to describe personality traits. He felt that there were to many repetitive traits so he broke them down into three categorizes. These categorizes are: central, secondary, and cardinal. Central traits are common things that characterize an individual's personality such as honesty,

friendless, and easy going. Secondary traits are only present under certain conditions. An example of this is when someone gets nervous before delivering a presentation to his or her peers. A cardinal trait dominates an individual's entire personality.

This is quite rare. Another important theorist in trait theory is Henry Murray. Murray earned a medical degree from the University of Columbia in 1919 (“Application”). Jung convinced Murray to study psychoanalysis. With his medical background and analytical training gave flair to his writing and research. Murrays development of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), is a personality test designed to determine personality themes and unconscious motivation (“Application”). The basic needs of personality are called psychogenic needs. According to Murray, there are 27 psychogenic needs and gave description of each category. Environmental forces play a significant role in psychogenic needs. An advantage of trait theory is that it is straightforward. I like that trait theory does not rely on personal experiences rather statistical data. Unlike other theories, trait theories do not make assumptions on whether people acquire or inherit traits.

The theory uses objective criteria for categorizing and measuring of behavior (“Evaluating the Trait Perspective on Personality”). The development of the perspective is independent of one another and often enough arrive at similar factor analysis. Another strength of trait theory is the ability to categorize observable behavior. With every theory there are going to be disadvantages. One criticism of trait theory is that it lies in the predictive value. Situational variables can determine an individual's behavior and not just traits. Another limitation is self-reporting. Self-reporting requires the individual to

understand oneself enough to report on their behavior. It is also difficult for the researcher to spend enough time and accurately assess someone's personality. Observer bias can also play a huge factor in an outcome ("Evaluating the Trait Perspective on Personality").

There are many things I like about the theory. I understand that there are many theories that try to explain human personality and behavior. Our personalities are so different and complex. I like that in trait theory that it is straightforward. The individual can take various tests to determine their personality. I took the Big Five Personality test and it hit on key points of my personality. My highest scores indicated that I am an extraverted person. I am energetic and love to be the life of the party. I feel that "life of the party" is a little extreme but I am very energetic. When I have a goal in mind, I give it a hundred and ten percent. Being in the military, I am required to socialize with many people from different walks of life. It is important to make a good first impression. In the category of conscientiousness I score extremely high. I believe that hard work pays off and in order to be successful, one has to be reliable. I plan my week out and know exactly what has to be done.

This theory is relatable to the everyday man. This theory can be used to help someone identify his or her strengths and weakness. I would use this theory to help someone by asking him or her to take the Big Five Personality Test. After taking the test it will be easier to understand the dimensions of their personality. The five factors indicated on the test are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism often referred to as OCEAN ("Application"). If someone scores low in the

categories of openness and extraversion then I would not recommend to them a sales job or something with a lot of human interaction. An introverted person should not be in a commission job. There are also exceptions to this rule.

Someone might be introverted in his or her personal life but when it comes down to working they could “turn on their personality”. Trait perspective of personality is concerned with identifying, describing, and measuring specific traits that make up the human personality. Human personality has fascinated people from the beginning of time. Trait theorists are not concerned with the development of traits. Unlike any other theoretical orientations, trait theorists are interested in the comparison of individuals through aspects and degrees. Founding father Gordon Allport concluded that every person has central traits that dominate his or her personality. Central and cardinal traits are environmentally influenced. With every theory there are strengths and weaknesses. A strength of trait theory is that it is straightforward. A weakness is that it does not address development.

Reference

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