

# Five perspective on personality: comparison and analysis



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## Compare and Contrast the Five Perspective on Personality Indicating the Strengths and Weakness of Each Approach

- Tiara A.

“ We know what we are but not what we may be.” Ophelia in Hamlet

According to Guralnik (1987), personality is defined as the quality or fact of being a person or a particular person. Guralnik also defines personality as distinctive individual qualities of a person, considered collectively.

Personality is an account that is hard to put one explanation. Individuals each have their own definition. Instead of agreeing on one specific definition, psychologist are involved in an ongoing and perhaps never ending discussion of how to depict human personality and what topics belong within this sub field of psychology (Mayer, 2005; McAdams & Pals, 2006). Five separate theories emerge from the different perspectives of notable psychologist. Each approach seem to correctly determine and examine an important feature of human personality. Biological theorists believes that personality is genetic. Behaviorists go with the idea that personality is a straightforward result of the influence of the individual’s environment. Third, the psychodynamic theory journeys into the unconscious mind and childhood to describe personality. Humanist use free will as their statement of personality. Finally, the trait theory proposes that the development of personality is derived from many different traits.

Psychologists have projected various theories of personality to attempt explaining similarities and provide reasons for differences in personalities.

The following approaches – *psychodynamic, biological, humanistic,*

<https://assignbuster.com/five-perspective-on-personality-comparison-and-analysis/>

*behavioristic* and *trait theories* of personality will be outlined in this essay, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses for each theory. Sigmund Freud was the primary proponent of psychodynamic theory but neo-Freudians such as Jung, Adler, Erikson and Horney are also major contributors. Freud believed that every personality has an unconscious element and that childhood experiences, even if not consciously recollected, continue to influence people's behaviors. The theory states that a personality has three parts – the id, the ego, and the superego which serve to regulate instinctual energies and forms our personalities.

The dynamic unconscious is populated by anxiety-provoking drives ideas which have been exiled from conscious awareness by psychological defense mechanisms such as repression. Defense mechanisms are the domain of the Ego, the part of personality preoccupied with mediating between external reality and the internal reality. They function to prevent the experience of intense conscious anxiety caused by a conflict between base drives and the moral aspect of the psyche, the Superego. Freud suggested that personality is formed during the first six years of life known as the Psychosexual stages of Development. The maturing child supposedly experiences a number of discrete and biologically-motivated psychosexual phases, during which their essential sexual energies (the libido) become endowed in particular areas of the body. So, the Id controlled oral stage, where sensual pleasure is derived via the mouth, gives way to the anal stage and the birth of the Ego. This is followed by the phallic stage, during which the Oedipus complex (children aspire to be the partner of the opposite-sex parent) occurs. Resolution of this complex results in shaping of the superego. Unlike some other theories, the

psychodynamic approach is a downright theory and can explain behaviour without difficulty. One strength of the psychodynamic approach is that they centered on the effects that childhood experiences have on the developing personality. This is a strength because Freud was the first psychologist to realize the importance of childhood. It also led to other psychologists including Piaget developing theories on childhood. An instance of this is the Little Hans case study. Hans had a fear of castration which led to him having a phobia of horses. One weakness of the psychodynamic approach is that it is unfalsifiable. This is a weakness because the suppositions can not be scientifically measured or proved wrong. An example of this is the idea of the mind being split into three parts. It is also deterministic because it suggests that behaviour is pre-determined and people do not have free will. An example of this is the psychosexual stages. Freud also placed an over-emphasis on sexual drive and provides us with an extremely pessimistic outlook on personality as it discounts the notion of free will.

Hans Eysenck was an early proponent of the biological approach to personality. He reasoned that personality can be divided along three primary dimensions. He called these extraversion-introversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Eysenck debated that differences in personality are largely based in inherited biological differences. One strength of the biological conceptualization is that it is very scientific. This is a strength because the experiments used are measurable, objective and can be repeated to test for reliability. Also, the researcher has more control over the variables which is apparent in Selye's study of rats which led to him developing the theory of General Adaptation Syndrome. It is also deterministic. This is a strength

because it increases the likelihood of being able to treat people with abnormal behaviour and provides statements about the causes of behaviour. This apprehension can then be used to improve people's lives. One weakness of the biological approach is that it focuses too much on the 'nature' side of the nature/nurture argument. They debates that behaviour is caused by hormones, neurotransmitters and genetics. One theory is that schizophrenia is genetic, however, twin studies show that it is not entirely genetic and the environment has a component to play. It is also nomothetic. This is a weakness because it creates theories about disorders and generalizes them to utilize to everyone. It does not take into account the view that humans are unique. An example of this is that General Adaptation Syndrome presumes that everyone responds in the same way to stress but does not take into account that some people have more support than others. The humanistic movement was led by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers and concentrates primarily on an individual's potential in terms of development and satisfaction. Humanists have an optimistic view on human nature. They focus on the ability of human beings to think consciously and rationally and to attain their full potential. In the humanistic view, people are accountable for their own lives and actions, they also have the freedom and will to change their attitudes and behaviour. Maslow believed a human has a hierarchy of needs to fulfill before becoming a self-actualized individual. After the basic needs such as food and shelter are met, humans seek safety and security and then seek love and acceptance. Only after all these things are through with can a person fulfill their potential or achieve " self-actualisation". Rogers agreed with most of what Maslow believed in terms of striving towards self-actualisation but through the self-concept or one's

<https://assignbuster.com/five-perspective-on-personality-comparison-and-analysis/>

opinion of oneself. Roger's approach is called person-centered. He believed that for a person to "grow", they need an environment that provides them with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), unconditional positive regard (acceptance, respect, love), and empathy (being listened to and understood). Without these, relationships and healthy personalities will not evolve as they should. Another basic premise to Roger's theory is the self or self concept, i. e. what one thinks of oneself is the self-concept and how others see one is the actual self. The humanistic approach is enormously popular from a phenomenological view point: it is about a person living their life with meaning and authenticity. It also has the potential to enrich people's lives by understanding and appreciating their own self.

Like every theory, some people find the humanistic approach to be valid while others see it for the numerous inherent flaws. The humanistic perspective does recognize human experience, but largely at the expense of being non-scientific in its methods and ability to provide evidence. Some of the strengths of this theory include the focus on both the positive nature of humankind and the free will associated with change. Unlike Freud's theory and the biological approach, which focus on determinism or our lack of power over ourselves, Maslow and others see the individual as very powerful. With the good, always comes the bad, and this theory is no different. The biggest criticism of humanistic thought appears to center around it's lack of concrete treatment approaches aimed at specific issues. With the basic concept behind the theory being free will, it is difficult to both develop a treatment technique and study the effectiveness of this technique. Critics also contend that the humanistic approach's emphasis on self-fulfillment

may lead some people to become self-indulgent and so absorbed with themselves that they develop a lack of concern for others. Even the concept of self-actualization poses challenges.

Behaviorism was introduced by John B. Watson in the 1920s. It limits psychology to the study of observable behaviors. To explain the development and maintenance of behaviors, behaviorist used classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Personality is described as the end result of one's history of conditioning. One strength of the behaviourist approach is that it has successfully applied classical and operant conditioning to its theories. Systematic desensitization is based on classical conditioning and is useful for treating phobias. Another strength is that it uses scientific methods of research. This is a strength because the experiments are objective, measurable and observable. An example of this is Bandura's bobo doll study of aggression. One weakness of the behaviourist approach is that it focuses too much on the 'nurture' side of the nature/nurture debate. It suggests that all behaviour is learned but cognitive and biological elements have been proved to affect behaviour. An example of this is the assumption that people learn behaviour by observing others getting rewarded for certain actions. Another weakness is the ethical issues raised by using animals in experiments. This is because animals can not consent to take part and are unable to withdraw. An example of a behaviourist animal study is Pavlov's dogs which led to classical conditioning principles being developed.

The trait theory approach is one of the largest areas within personality psychology. According to this theory, personality is made up of a number of <https://assignbuster.com/five-perspective-on-personality-comparison-and-analysis/>

broad traits. A trait is basically a relatively stable characteristic that causes an individual to behave in certain ways. Some of the best known trait theories include Eysenck's three-dimension theory and the five factor theory of personality.

The trait perspective or 5 Factor theory of personality consists of broad, enduring dispositions that can be assessed. With respect to trait assessment, it is possible that people can fake desirable responses on self-report measures of personality. Research does show however that averaging behavior across several situations seems to indicate that people do have distinct personality traits.

Genetic studies have supported the claim that genetic predispositions influence most personality types and that many traits are biologically rooted. The empirical nature of the work by Allport, Murray and other early trait psychologists sets them apart from the founders of most personality theories. Rather than relying on intuition and subjective judgment as did Freud and many of the neo-Freudians, these trait theorists used objective measures to examine their constructs. Cattell specifically allowed the data to determine the theory which was then subject to further empirical validation. This approach reduces some of the biases and subjectivity that plague other approaches. Like any other important theoretical perspective, the trait approach has generated a large amount of research. Weakness of this approach concerns the lack of an agreed-upon framework. Although all trait theorists use empirical methods and are concerned with the identification of traits, no single theory or underlying structure ties all of the theories together. We can see the confusion this created by asking how many basic <https://assignbuster.com/five-perspective-on-personality-comparison-and-analysis/>



traits there are. Murray reduced personality to 27 psychogenic needs. Cattell found 16 basic elements of personality. Without an agreed-upon framework, it is difficult to gain a cohesive overview of the approach or to see how research on one aspect of personality traits fits with research in other areas.

## REFERENCE

McLeod, S. A. (2007). *Psychology Perspectives*

Burger, J. M. (2011) *Introduction to Personality*

Ryckman, R. M. (2000). *Theories of personality* . Wadsworth: Belmont, CA.

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2000). *Perspectives on personality* (4th ed.)

Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.