

Characteristics and Evolution of Personality Theories

Aruna*, О. Мянгар, Э. Октябрьжаргал

*Correspondence to: Aruna, Mongolian State University of Education Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 18010, E-mail: nihaoaruna@163.com

Abstract: The evolution of personality psychology theory has traversed a comprehensive journey, beginning with ancient humoral theory, and advancing towards the nuanced, multidimensional frameworks of contemporary psychology. Gordon Allport laid foundational groundwork by defining personality and proposing various classifications, paving the way for the bifurcation into trait classifications and type theories. This article delves into the development of these dominant perspectives and highlights the pivotal role of the Five-Factor Model and Carl Jung's psychological type theory in enhancing our comprehension of individual differences and their underlying psychodynamics. Further, it scrutinizes the challenges confronting personality research, such as cultural disparities and trait stability. It underscores the necessity for future inquiries to probe into the biological underpinnings of personality traits and their implications on behavior, emotions, and mental health. This exploration aims to underscore the significance and diversity of personality theories in elucidating human behavior and psychological processes.

Keywords: Personality Theory Development, Psychological Type, Jung's Theory, MBTI

The concept of personality encompasses a rich array of components. It constitutes a multi-layered psychological structure integrating an individual's psychological inclinations, characteristics of mental processes, personality traits, and psychological states. Diverse perspectives from psychologists have led to varying theories. Notably, the renowned American social and personality psychologist Gordon W. Allport (1937) identified five approaches to defining personality within psychology: enumerative, integrative, hierarchical, adaptive, and distinctive. These definitions aim to address the multifaceted nature of personality.

Following his analysis of the five definitions mentioned, Gordon W. Allport (1937) offered a definition of personality that has gained wide

acceptance among psychologists, as detailed in his seminal work, "Personality: A Psychological Interpretation" (1937). According to Allport, personality is "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine the individual's unique adjustments to the environment. It encompasses multiple levels of psychological structure, including an individual's tendencies, characteristics of mental processes, personal traits, and psychological states, in an integrated manner." Currently, the field of personality research is broad and diverse, with two dominant paradigms: trait theory and type theory. The theory of personality traits, emerging in the 1940s, encompasses several key theories: (1) Allport's Trait Theory: Introduced by Gordon W. Allport in 1937, this theory posits that personality's core structure consists



© The Author(s) 2023. **Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, for any purpose, even commercially, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

of traits describing individual response tendencies. Allport categorized these traits into various types, including a common pattern applicable to nearly everyone and individual-specific narrative issues, as well as a widely recognized trichotomy of primary, central, and secondary traits. Primary traits trigger most of an individual's psychological behaviors, central traits denote consistency in a broader range of actions, and secondary traits exhibit the least universal applicability. (2) Cattell's Personality Trait Theory: Utilizing factor analysis, Raymond Cattell identified 16 independent foundational traits, known as 16PF. Additionally, he advanced behavioral genetics research, suggesting personality encompasses stable structural and dynamic motivational dimensions. (3) The five-factor model was proposed by Raymond in 1961. It was independently studied by Tupes and Cristal, Goldberg's Oregon Research Institute, McCrae Costa of the University of Illinois, and the National Institutes of Health. Assessed through the NEO-PI-R, it includes Extraversion(Warmth, Gregariousness, Assertiveness, Activity, Excitement-Seeking, Positive Emotions);Neuroticism(Anxiety, Angry Hostility, Depression, Self-Consciousness, Impulsiveness, Vulnerability);Openness to Experience(Fantasy, Aesthetics, Feelings, Actions, Ideas, Values); Agreeableness(Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty, Tender-Mindedness);Conscientiousness(Competence, Order, Dutifulness, Achievement Striving, Self-Discipline, Deliberation).

Theories distinct from trait theory, known as type theories, primarily aim to identify various personality categories and analyze individual characteristics. Public fascination with personality types dates back to ancient Greece and Rome. The humorism theory, initially proposed by the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates, linked a person's emotional state to the balance of four bodily fluids (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm). This theory was later expanded by the Roman physician Galen into four temperaments: sanguine (optimistic, lively), choleric (quick-tempered, irritable), melancholic (pessimistic, despondent), and phlegmatic (calm, detached).

In modern times, numerous psychologists have introduced distinctive new theories of personality types. Ernst Kretschmer, in his early work "Physique and Character," presented a theory of somatotypes.

Originating from clinical psychiatry and built on constitutional biology, Kretschmer categorized personality types according to body shapes: asthenic (thin, frail), pyknic (short, stocky), athletic (muscular, strong), and dysplastic (irregularly developed). William Sheldon further developed this concept, advocating a biological typology that correlates body types with temperaments, though he did not elucidate the underlying mechanisms.

Additionally, the German philosopher and psychologist Wilhelm Dilthey and his student Eduard Spranger theorized about value types based on individual differences in interests and what people value most in life, thus forming a theory of value types. This category also includes theories based on psychological function, blood types, and classifications by Soviet psychologists regarding personality types conditioned by conscious tendencies.

Over the years, these theories have gradually been supplanted by more contemporary psychological theories. At the turn of the 20th century, psychologist Carl G. Jung introduced the concepts of the personal and collective unconscious, laying the groundwork for psychological typologies.

Early in Carl Jung's career, during word association tests, he has noticed that individuals with different personalities exhibited distinct complexes. Later, through broad engagement and analytical studies of people from various social strata, he tentatively introduced a theory of two attitude types in 1913. Following his departure from Freud, Jung delved into deep self-analysis and critically examined the personalities of Freud and Alfred Adler. Jung hypothesized that distinct psychological approaches could be tailored to different psychological types, thus pioneering typological research. Jung is celebrated as the first to investigate personality types from a psychological standpoint and is deemed a significant trailblazer in the exploration of personality differences. His seminal work, "Psychological Types," is challenging for those unfamiliar with Western culture and philosophy, encompassing discussions on religion, theology, philosophy, and aesthetics. Jung's insights drew from the personality distinctions and theoretical perspectives of Plato and Aristotle, extending through to analyses of medieval figures like Tertullian and Origen, and further enriched by studies on the aesthetic

views of Friedrich Schiller and Friedrich Nietzsche. Psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer's interpretations in "The Theory of Types" remarkably aligned with Jung's typology, integrating Jung's unique theoretical notions like the libido and the unconscious. In his book, Jung formally proposed the attitudes of introversion and extroversion and delineated the functional types of sensation, intuition, thinking, and feeling.

Carl Jung posited that psychological energy, or libido, flows in two principal directions in its engagement with the world. One direction is an inward orientation towards one's subjective inner world; the other, an outward orientation towards the external environment. Jung named these orientations "attitudes," identifying them as introversion for the inward tendency, and extroversion for the outward. These innate temperamental differences between individuals influence how they perceive and react to life's experiences. Jung noted that these psychological response patterns alternately manifest within the same person, reinforcing the concept of these orientations as fundamental attitudes.

Extroverts are defined by a natural outward flow of libido, linking them to the external world. They instinctively and spontaneously place the highest interest and value on external entities, primarily including people, events, and external relationships. When active in the external world or when managing interpersonal relationships, extroverts often feel at their most comfortable and successful. However, in solitude and in the absence of change, they may become restless and uneasy.

Introverts, conversely, are marked by an innate inward flow of libido, tying them to subjective and internal thoughts, fantasies, or emotions. They assign the greatest interest and value to subjective and internal responses and impressions. Introverts prefer the confines of their own social circle and might appear reserved or anxious in larger groups. Nevertheless, once the pressure of adapting to the external environment is lifted, they exhibit significant comfort and ease. They enjoy dwelling in their own secure inner world, which Carl Jung metaphorically described as a carefully tended and well-protected garden, inaccessible to others.

Carl Jung's theory of personality types breaks down the complete process of psychological activity into three steps: the direction of psychological energy—

introversion and extroversion; the mode of receiving information—sensing and intuition; and the method of processing information—thinking and feeling. Sensing and intuition, as well as thinking and feeling, are termed psychological functions. Jung described psychological functions as "distinct forms of mental activity that, across various situations, tend to remain consistent." Attitude types, namely introversion and extroversion, do not exist in isolation; rather, they are expressed in conjunction with functional types.

Sensing vs. Intuition. Carl Jung categorized sensing and intuition as non-rational and perceptive, understanding functions. "The core function of sensing is to affirm the existence of something, whereas intuition speculates on its origins and potential destinations." Sensing represents one of the fundamental psychological functions, embodying the conscious process of perception. Triggered by sensory input and bodily functions, it conveys images of both the external and internal worlds to the brain. Intuition operates unconsciously, perceiving internal and external objects indirectly. It might involve a complete presentation of something to the brain without clear indications of its origin, or the incorporation of ideas and associations into perceived content through instinctive understanding. Jung viewed these two distinct functions as both conflicting and complementary, similar to the interplay between thinking and feeling.

Thinking vs. Feeling. Carl Jung described thinking and feeling as rational or judgment functions. "Thinking clarifies what things are, while feeling illuminates their value." Thinking is the process of linking ideas via concepts. Feeling represents the subjective process of valuing the contents of consciousness. Every element that enters consciousness is assigned a value, including a mood: it can be accepted or discarded; liked or disliked; deemed good, bad, or irrelevant. According to Jung, when feelings come into play, the formation of views through conceptual linkage is halted, indicating the suppression of the thinking function.

The integration of attitudes and functions results in eight psychological types: Extroverted Thinking, Introverted Thinking, Extroverted Feeling, Introverted Feeling, Extroverted Sensing, Introverted Sensing, Extroverted Intuition, and Introverted Intuition.

Carl Jung emphasized the significance of an

individual's complete personality type rather than isolated traits. According to Jung's theory, a specific type, such as the Extraverted Intuitive Type, comprises several traits (for instance, extraversion and intuition) that interact to forge a unique personality. Each person naturally leans toward certain traits, which shapes their focus and fosters the development of corresponding behavioral habits and personality patterns. Jung referred to the preferred trait function as the dominant function. The eight psychological types that emerge from the mix of attitudes and functions primarily showcase the characteristics of the dominant psychological functions. Variations in the tendencies, applications, and evolution of these functions contribute to the differences among individuals. The diverse, predictable behavior patterns stemming from these differences, along with their dynamic interplay with other mental functions, constitute the various psychological types. Later, Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, built upon Jung's categorizations by adding a perception-judgment dimension to illustrate the approach to dealing with the external world. This expansion resulted in 16 distinct combinations, equating to 16 personality types.

Carl Jung's psychological type theory delved into the core of the human psyche to explore its internal structure, offering an excellent foundation for the study of individual differences. As such, Jung emerged as an early pioneer in the domain of personality type research. However, despite establishing this typological theory, Jung did not develop quantitative tools for distinguishing among the various psychological types of individuals. Over the next century, researchers invested significant effort, not only advancing and probing deeper into the original theory but also creating a range of tools to facilitate the practical application of the psychological type theory.

In the 1940s, Horace Gray and Jose B. Wheelwright developed the Grey-Wheelwright Type Schedule, also known as the GW Questionnaire, drawing upon psychological type theory. However, this instrument and its theoretical underpinnings clashed with the dominant behavioral psychology of the era, resulting in limited recognition.

In 1978, American psychoanalysts June Singer and Mary Loomis recognized that forced-choice scales could hinder respondents from accurately representing

their personality types. To address this, they created the SLIP Personality Inventory (Singer-Loomis Inventory of Personality). Unlike forced-choice formats, this questionnaire allows participants to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a scale from 1 to 7, offering a nuanced spectrum of responses. Despite its innovative approach, the SLIP Personality Inventory has seen limited widespread adoption.

The MBTI scale (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Personality Inventory) is a well-known personality measurement tool based on Jung's psychological type theory. It was developed by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers in the mid-20th century. As early as 1917, Briggs began to use individual self-descriptions to conduct typological research, and the publication of Jung's "Psychological Types" in 1923 provided them with a theoretical basis. Myers aimed to utilize this tool for better personnel allocation during war efforts and to foster mutual understanding. Between 1942 and 1956, Myers amassed and analyzed extensive data, refining the MBTI through rigorous testing and enhancements over the years. By 1975, the MBTI was extensively disseminated via Consulting Psychologists Press, evolving into an internationally recognized personality assessment instrument. Its various editions and ongoing research have established it as a pivotal resource in psychology and personal development.

Lewis Goldberg, in the decades spanning the 1960s to the 1970s, built upon the theoretical groundwork established by Raymond Cattell and Donald W. Fiske to formulate and enhance the Big Five Personality Theory, also known as the Five-Factor Model. This development was later advanced by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae in the 1980s with the creation of the NEO-PI scale, a psychometric instrument designed for the evaluation of the Big Five personality traits. The Big Five personality theory has been recognized as one of the foremost theories on personality traits. The Big Five Personality Theory delineates five core dimensions of personality: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, referred to as "OCEAN". These dimensions lay out a framework for articulating and foreseeing individuals' actions, feelings, and cognitive processes across diverse contexts.

From the early theory of humors to the contemporary

Big Five personality model, the study of personality theories has evolved significantly. An examination and analysis of these theories reveal the vast diversity and pivotal role of personality studies within the realm of psychology. The progression of theories from figures like Allport, Cattell, and the Five-Factor Model not only furnishes us with a crucial theoretical framework for comprehending individual variances but also guides the course of psychological research and practical application.

It's crucial to acknowledge that while these theories significantly contribute to our understanding of personality traits and types, they also encompass inherent limitations and controversies. Issues such as the impact of cultural differences on personality development, the variability of personality traits, and the precision of scale measurements represent areas ripe for further investigation. Additionally, advancements in neuroscience and genetics have spotlighted the biological underpinnings of personality traits as a burgeoning area of research.

Conclusions

The evolution of personality type theory mirrors psychology's continuous quest to deeply comprehend individual differences. Future studies must persist in pushing the boundaries of theoretical innovation, methodological enhancement, and cross-cultural investigations. Marrying traditional theories with cutting-edge technologies, like big data analytics and neuroscience, promises a more profound insight into personality's intricacies and fosters growth within the realm of personality psychology. Upcoming research should aim to address the current theories' limitations, uncover new mechanisms behind personality formation, and investigate the impact of personality traits on individual behavior, emotions, and mental well-being. This approach will enrich psychology with a more holistic and nuanced perspective.

References

- [1] Jung, C. G. (1921). *Psychological Types*. Zurich: Rascher Verlag.
- [2] Allport, G. W. (1937). *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- [3] Eysenck, M. W. (1977). *Human memory: Theory, research and individual differences*: Pergamon Press Oxford.
- [4] Eysenck, S. B., Eysenck, H. J., & Barrett, P. (1985). A revised version of the Psychoticism scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*.
- [5] Myers, I. B., McCaulley, M. H., & Most, R. (1985). *Manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*: Consulting Psychologists Press Palo Alto, CA.
- [6] Roediger, H. L., & McDermott, K. B. (1993). Implicit memory in normal human subjects. *Handbook of neuropsychology*.
- [7] Buchner, A., Erdfelder, E., & Vaterrodt-Plünnecke, B. (1995). Toward unbiased measurement of conscious and unconscious memory processes within the process dissociation framework. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.
- [8] Sternberg, R. J. (1999). *Thinking styles*: Cambridge University Press.
- [9] Liu Baitao. (2007). *The Personality Types and Job Burnout-From of MBTI Perspective*. Master's Thesis, Henan University.
- [10] Wang, Minghui. (2008). *The Theories of Personality of Psychoanalysis and New Psychoanalysis-A Contrast of Theories by Frued and Ronger*. *Journal of Xinjiang Normal University (Social Sciences)*.
- [11] Tian Lingfei. (2009). *Study on Jungian Psychological Type Theory and Inventory of Historical Development*. *China Journal of Health Psychology*.
- [12] Chen, Chengzhi & Jiao, Chunhong. (2010). *New Theories of Personality*. *Journal of Science and Technology Information*.
- [13] Liu Jing. (2011). *Stay-at-home Mother on The Personality Type of The Relationship Between Subjective Well-being*. Master's Thesis, Shanxi University.
- [14] Peng Lili. (2012). *The Relationship Between University Students' Personality, Lifestyle and Brand Personality Cognition Differences*. Master's Thesis, Southwest University.
- [15] Lei An. (2013). *Cognitive Characteristics of Different Psychological Type*. Master's Thesis, Jiangxi Normal University.
- [16] Jiang Gui Fang. (2015). *Discussion on Morality and Human Reality Needs*. *Journal of Zhengzhou University of institute of Aeronautical Industry Management (Social Science Edition)*.