

# Introduction to Personality Theory

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will cover the topic of personality. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Personality Psychology
  - a. Character
  - b. Temperament
2. Approaches to Personality Psychology

## 1. Personality Psychology

When you think about a person's psychology, what assumptions do you make? Generally, people assume that there's something regular, consistent, or normal in a person. They don't constantly change and act differently.

Typically a person has a sense of self or a **personality**. Personality psychology is the study of a person's unique, consistent, and stable patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving over time.

There are three important aspects when we study personality psychology:

- *A person's personality is unique.* This means it differs from person to person. Although traits can be consistent over many people over time, the extent to which that trait is exhibited can vary.
- *Personality is consistent.* It's the same, and a person performs similar types of behaviors in different kinds of situations.
- *Personality is stable.* It stays the same over time. This is unlike a concept like mood, which can change depending on things that happen to a person.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Personality

Unique pattern of consistent feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that originate within the individual across time and situations

#### 1a. Character

**Character** is an aspect of psychology which describes what we consider to be desirable or undesirable in a person. Character refers to the parts of personality that are valued or not valued.

Personality is descriptive; it tells what a person is like. Character is prescriptive; it says how someone should or shouldn't be. Character is just one aspect of personality and is developed by cultural and social influences.



#### TERM TO KNOW

### Character

Desirable or undesirable aspects of a person; characteristics that a person values or doesn't value

### 1b. Temperament

**Temperament** is our innate and inherited aspects of personality. Things like how emotional, irritable, or sensitive a person is are part of temperament. While these traits can be developed, they are innate to an individual. Temperament is an aspect of **behavioral genetics**, which is the study of behaviors and personality that are inherited. These traits are not necessarily situational, which explains why personality can be stable and consistent over time.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

### Temperament

Innate and inherited aspects of personality, like emotionality, irritability, or sensitivity

### Behavior Genetics

Study of the link between personality traits and heredity (genetic instructions)

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## 2. Approaches to Personality Psychology

In the field of personality psychology, there are many different approaches, just like the rest of psychology. Biological approaches focus on temperament and how heredity affects personality, while social or sociocultural approaches focus on things like character and the influence of others.

There are three approaches that are important to know specifically:

- Trait Theory
- Psychodynamic Theory
- Humanism

Trait theory is the identification of the basic stable and consistent qualities that people show. This is one of the most widely used aspects of personality psychology. It uses personality tests and attempts to break down into single components that which make up a person's psychology.

Psychodynamic theory emphasizes the importance of the unconscious on personality and temperament. There are several aspects to this theory with ideas developed by several important psychologists:

- Sigmund Freud, who theorized on the idea of competing forces and conflicts.
- Neo-Freudians like Horney and Adler who focus on anxiety and the need for superiority.

- Jung, who emphasized the collective unconscious.

Humanism involves the discussion of the development of ideas of self. This area focuses on self-esteem and self-concept. It looks at the positive views of self, and how we can achieve the most ideal version of ourselves.



## SUMMARY

**Personality psychology** is the study of a person's unique, consistent, and stable patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving over time. Character refers to the values a person places on specific traits, and temperament is the inherited aspects of a person's personality. There are many **approaches to personality psychology**, including: biological, social or sociocultural, trait theory, psychodynamic theory, and humanism.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia Author Erick Taggart.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### **Behavior Genetics**

Study the link between personality traits and heredity (genetic instructions).

### **Character**

Desirable or undesirable aspects of a person; characteristics that a person values or doesn't value.

### **Personality**

Unique pattern of consistent feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that originate within the individual across time and situations.

### **Temperament**

Innate and inherited aspects of personality, like emotionality, irritability, or sensitivity.