
Abstract:

The proliferation of personality and individual differences constructs is testament to the vibrancy of research in this field. Furthermore, all such constructs would make some claim to receiving empirical support. However, while additional empirical research will help further determine the merit of these conceptions, this paper proposes that conceptual analysis is another tool available to researchers to help critically evaluate our constructs of interest. Conceptual analysis involves assessing both the clarity and coherency of our constructs as well as examining the relations between them. A useful direction here is scrutinising constructs in terms of intrinsic properties (what something is) and relations (what something does) to help both clarify and evaluate the coherency of these constructs, as well as build bridges between apparently disparate concepts. Given the perceived need for unification in psychology, conceptual analysis provides yet another tool for assessing the relationship of constructs to one another and contributing to a coherent account of ‘persons’. While conceptual analysis may appear to be too ‘philosophical’ to some, it is none other than our critical thinking skills in action. Implications for personality psychology are discussed.