
The Concept Of Introversion: Features And Stereotypes

Society is often influenced by trends set on social media and technology. Sometimes the media and entertainment overpower an individual's own thoughts and ideas causing an impact on how society can view certain subject matter. Stereotypes in American society has taught the nation that extroversion is the route to take to succeed. After all, people do believe that assertiveness and being vocal is the only way to be successful. The misconception of introverts being viewed as incapable or unproductive is a social issue in our society. This misinterpretation feeds into a negative stigma that they are incapable of being a productive member because of how they are stereotyped on television, social media, and in person.

What does it mean to be an introvert? Many people make the mistake of assuming an introverted person is shy, socially awkward, or simply being rude. There are many other characteristics associated with introversion. Rather than defining introverts as quiet and reserved, it actually has to do with how individuals interact with the world around them (Rowe). In other words, it's where individuals recharge. Introverts find it mentally draining being with people and socializing for a period of time. They need space and time alone to regain energy for their mental health. To take a deeper look on what's happening on the inside, scientists have found through brain scans that during the thought process there is more blood flow through the parts of the brain entailed with problem solving and planning (Rowe). The study helps explain why introverts work best in smaller groups of people involving creativity and more thinking. On the other hand, extroverts are typically associated with being the party animal and center of attention. They often recharge by being around other people. In the same study, it concluded that people who have more extroverted personalities have more blood flow through the parts of the brain that contain sensory processing aspects (Rowe). This proves that extroverts tend to be more productive in areas that require fast thinking and high interaction jobs. Although the data supports the stereotypes, it should not become a fad or a way for the media to influence America.

Introverts are commonly misunderstood based on how they are portrayed on television shows. Television shows have displayed characters with the traits of shyness and/or social anxiety. These negative qualities could be true for either an introvert or extrovert, so it is unreasonable for television writers to stretch the truth about introverted characters. It can also be hard to find introverted role models shown on tv because they are usually seen as a bad thing which makes the viewers think there is something wrong with them personally.

A fine example of an introverted character, is the protagonist on the FOX show *Bones*. Temperance "Bones" Brennan, is clearly made out to be an introvert. On the show, she likes to work alone in her office and study evidence, this is where she can think her best (Heather). Working alone and in small groups is one of the most universal concepts about introverts. Temperance Brennan even says, "People assume that when you're alone you must be lonely. Like most assumptions, its erroneous." (Heather) The quote is significant for her character and for society because it refutes everything that tv has ever taught its audience about being an introvert. Another trait often associated with introverts is the liking of secluded hobbies. One of Temperance's main hobbies is writing best-selling fiction novels based off her work (Heather). Based on this hobby, since it requires zero group work it fits her personality perfectly. The

preference for minimally stimulating environments is also a factor of what goes into introverts personality. Temperance Brennan chooses to work in the lab because there is no loud noise and is not designated to group work but, she does consult her coworkers if needed (Heather). The lab allows everyone to use their strengths and specialize in certain areas that fit each personality. Temperance also proves that shyness and introversion are different. As Susan Cain said in her TED Talk The Power of Introverts, "shyness is about fear of social judgement. Introversion is more about, how do you respond to stimulation, including social stimulation" (Heather). Temperance goes against the fact about fear of judgement because she does not care about what other people think of her and is an honest character. She even goes out of her way frequently throughout to say or do impolite or awkward things to get the job done, something a shy person would dread doing (Heather). Most importantly, some of the characteristics the writers displayed were accurate for a true introvert, but some of it was overemphasized for the dramatic effect for the show. Stereotypes have shaped society into thinking introverts cannot be good leaders and this was present in the show about season two when Temperance was passed up for a promotion due to her lack of skills essential for the job (Heather). Introversion is usually misrepresented in pop culture based off of shyness and social awkwardness, which teaches the world to become someone they are not.

Another character that falls under the trap of being misled to the world is the main character in the BBC show Sherlock. Sherlock Holmes is an investigator who works with his best friend John Watson solving crimes. Sherlock Holmes demonstrates the basic traits of being an introvert and is similar to Temperance Brennan about being shy. Both protagonists refute the stereotypes of all introverts are shy because they do not care about other people's opinions of them so they are able to be brutally honest when necessary. Sherlock is mostly known for his poor social skills and is usually either seen alone or with his best friend when solving crimes (Heather). He focuses best when he is by himself so he can thoroughly think through scenarios and go through evidence. Furthermore, a common introvert trait is disliking big groups or social crowds so he prefers to be alone or with close friends. This can be demonstrated through his friendship with John Watson because that is who he spends most of his time around. Additionally, introverts detest small, meaningless conversations. In the show, you see Sherlock having intellectual deep conversations with his colleagues (Heather). He does not like small-talk because he is afraid of them, but more because it has no deeper purpose. Lastly, just like Temperance, Sherlock has a solitary hobby of playing the violin. Although the violin sometimes requires playing as a group, it is not necessary for learning to play. "The common introverted traits that Sherlock exhibits are just that, common. They are not true of all introverts and some have no scientific basis, but they common traits that many introverts can identify with," (Heather). Television has placed natural introvert traits in a box so it seems that those common traits are the only way introverts can be. It has taught society to have closed minds about the different personality types which can be toxic for trying to grow past the stereotyping.

Ironically, social media has a very different effect on how introverts interact with the world. It allows introverted people to have a voice and makes it less draining to talk to other people. Behind the screen, introverts have time to fully think out a response and answer on their own time. Talking to someone in person requires fast thinking and usually small-talk which introverts try to avoid. On social media, anyone can be portrayed how they want to be. In this case, it allows introverted people to have more confidence about what they want to share with the world. But of course, the fear of being ridiculed still stands.

Confidence is something that is given more to a person involved with social media because they

have the protection of hiding behind a screen. To shine on social media, introverts can be fascinating to talk to online when they are talking about something that they genuinely care about. Introverts are often better writers than they speak so this can also influence their confidence through social media (Caballo). Online it is so much easier to talk to someone because it gives the introvert the power to keep the conversation going or end it. An upside for social media on introverts is that they can still interact with people in the comfort of their own home. Therefore, it won't be as draining as it would be if they were out in a public setting. Sensitive introverts also have the tendency to worry about their internet status which can be a set back when trying to succeed. When someone unfriends an introvert or responds negatively to a post, it gets taken personally. The idea of judgement can be a factor when deciding to post or share anything at all (Caballo). Judgement is the only factor introverts cannot get away from either in real life or online. Though not all introverts have a fear of being judged as seen through Temperance and Sherlock. The safety felt when being behind the screen and still being able to connect with the world is something that introverts long to have.

Communication all the time can be a flaw in today's technology. 24/7 communication can be overstimulating for some introverts and extroverts. The internet is a gateway to share new ideas and thoughts to the world. There has been new ways to connect to other people starting with the telephone, voicemail, smartphones and now social media (Knowledge Leader). Now someone doesn't even have to leave their house to be social. The online platforms allows the introvert to connect to people without having face-to-face communication. This should not become an excuse to avoid real life talks even though it's much less intimidating. Introverts can know come up with a well thought out response without the pressure of confrontation (Knowledge Leader). They prefer writing over talking anyway. It is easier to communicate online because you can still get involved with the people around you and keep up with the latest news without physically being there. Although, some introverts have a fear of missing out on events so this could not necessarily make it better for them. Introverts are seen as reserved and antisocial in society. They are often mistaken as not becoming a productive member in society. These traits can be disproved by the fact that social media allows introverts to become more confident and have access to 24/7 communication.

In a culture that looks up to outgoing personalities and social interaction, the misconception of introverts is inevitable. They are usually seen as not capable to be good leaders, stuck-up or rude, and dislike being around people. American society has really stretched the truth about these stereotypes. The negative portrayal on how being an introvert is bad thing, allows people to pretend to be someone they are not out of embarrassment. American culture is not benefitting from the social issue at hand.

An ideal leader is usually someone who is seen as courageous and confident. These traits usually fall in the favor of extroverts. Introverts have other hidden qualities that are sometimes overlooked by extroverts because they don't have or understand them. Although a naturally introverted person is quiet, that doesn't mean that they can't contribute in a large group. Introverts take a more passive approach on handling situations compared to extroverts. For example, introverts have excellent listening-skills which can be very beneficial when trying to consider everyone's ideas. According to Business Insider, Rahul Sinha says, "A study shows that introverted executives with proactive groups can be extremely successful because introverted leaders carefully listen to what their teams have to say and vice-versa," (Smith). The strength of listening is a powerful skill that often helps introverts excel in the leadership area. Introverts also have a motive to challenge themselves so there is always a chance to improve.

Since they spend a lot of time in their own mind thinking, they know the strengths and weaknesses as a whole team. Working on areas that need to be improved can aid in the growth of a leader and group as a whole. This type of focus and awareness on oneself will encourage others to do the same so they can grow and solve problems together (Smith). Introverts can also face problems in the leadership world as well. Since they are more reserved as a person, in group meetings their thoughts can get overpowered by other peoples, especially extroverts. Extroverts are energized by being around people so they tend to get fired up and think out loud which can lead them to appeal to more people faster and the misconception of their thoughts are more intelligent. This can be a downfall or introverted leaders because they are better listeners rather than interrupting someone else for attention. Overall, leadership qualities are found in both introverted and extroverted leaders.

Quietness is one characteristic of being defined as an introvert but it can also be mistaken as being rude. Just because someone is not talking, does not necessarily mean they are stuck-up or trying to be rude. Sometimes introverts don't feel the need they have to talk because they are comfortable in the silence. Introverts can be quiet because they are trying to not get exhausted from long days at school or work and sometimes someone can become easily overstimulated so life is extra exhausting (Granneman). Introverts can also be seen as being rude because they keep to themselves rather than engage in small-talk. People who are introverted like to talk about topics that are more meaningful rather than chit-chat because it not only bores them but it drains them from their social energy (Schoenwald). They would much rather be with someone and have a discussion on more weighty topics because it has more of a purpose, which can be why some people find introverts rude because they avoid the casual talk. Keeping closer relationships and talking to friends about topics that fascinate them, reenergize their social battery and bring out their more natural personality. Talking about something you are passionate about can bring out your best self which is why introverts actually make great and long lasting friendships that they cherish. Lastly, introverts are known to be very observant about their surroundings. They pay closer attention to detail of the smaller things for joy. The naturally deep thinking and reflective minds allow for introverts to see what's happening around them and make small assumptions. This can also be seen as rude because society has taught people that staring is considered impolite, but in reality they are minding their own business and enjoy the limited interaction. People watching is a common solitary hobby taken up by introverts in social settings. They find it easier to watch what people say and do, what they wear, their body language and how their decisions have aged/shaped their life (Peregrine). By watching the people around them, it makes introverted people more comfortable in situations and helps them become more aware of their surroundings. These misconceptions of introverts being seen as rude can take away from an introverted persons harmless nature.

Introverts don't hate being around people, they just crave the more intimate relationships. Instead of having a lot of just acquaintancesacquaintances, introverts thrive with only a few close friendships. "What we do want are a few solid connections — people who really know us, inside and out," says the author of the article Introverts Aren't Antisocial, They're Selectively Social, Jen Granneman. She herself is in fact an introvert and she explains how her friends understand her personality and don't judge her for who she is. They are patient with her when she doesn't want to go out and how she trusts them enough to vent when she has too (Granneman). True friends are also okay with the occasional silence because that's where introverts are most comfortable when they don't have the need to talk. As stated before, large groups can be overwhelming for introverts mentally and emotionally. The stress from the loud noises and big groups of people talking, is just naturally exhausting to be around. "It's far less

overstimulating for us to interact with just one or two people at a time in an intimate setting,” says Grenneman indicating that introverts are more suitable in small groups. Introverts are in favor of small get togethers because it allows them to focus more on creating deeper connections to people, which introverts usually excel at doing. It is important for introverts to balance their time with people and also make space for downtime. Introverts don't hate being around people, they just need space because it can be mentally exhausting to constantly be in a social setting.

All in all, the controversy about the misconception of introverts and how they are seen through the world's eye can be diminished. In an extroverted ruled world, introverts defy all stereotypes against them. Introverts have a huge mind that they want to share with the world but never got the chance. “You may think I'm small, but I have a universe inside my mind,” said Yoko Ono, a Japanese-American multimedia artist. Television writers have influenced American society that extroversion is the only way to be successful in life and that introverts are not the normal. Being ashamed by who someone is based off of the media is a social issue that has been around for years and being addressed now. Introverts have been misunderstood for so long in regard to how they are portrayed on television, social media and in person.

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