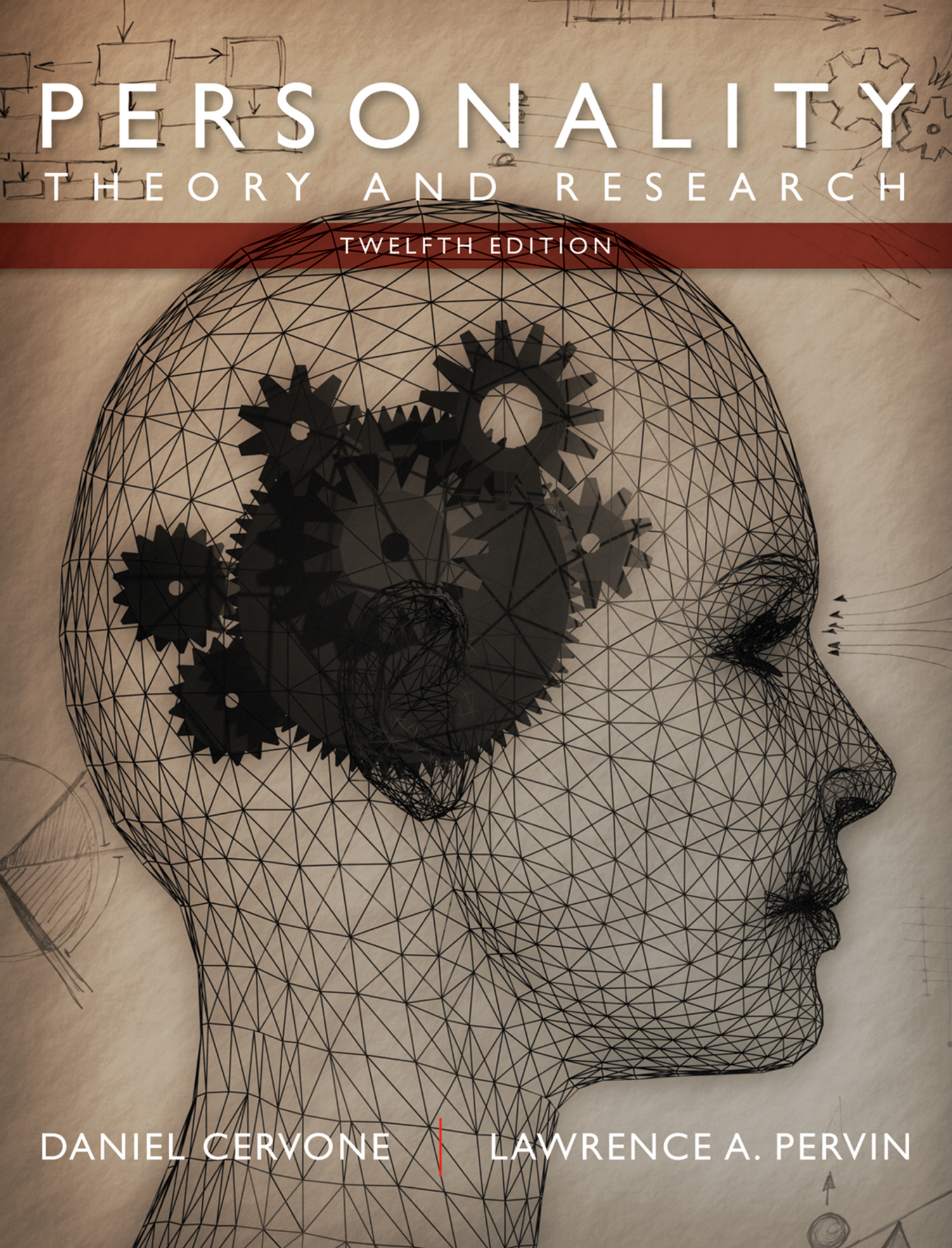
PERSONALITY

THEORY AND RESEARCH

TWELFTH EDITION



DANIEL CERVONE | LAWRENCE A. PERVIN

PERSONALITY

THEORY AND RESEARCH *Twelfth Edition*

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WILEY

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COVER PHOTO CREDIT	Chad Baker/Digital Vision/Getty Images

This book was set in 10/12 New Aster by Aptara, Inc., and printed and bound by Donnelley Jefferson City.

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ISBN-13: 978-1118-36005-7

ISBN-10: 1118-36005-2

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Bobbie, David, and Levi (LAP)

To Jenny and Nicholas (DC)

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PREFACE

TO STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

It is now more than four decades since the first edition of this text. The field has changed, and the text has changed to keep pace. Yet, before we outline the changes that distinguish this 12th edition of the book, we note that the volume's basic aims remain the same as they were at the outset:

1. *Present the major theoretical perspectives on personality*. We cover the field's *major* theoretical perspectives in depth. Some textbooks cover numerous theories, including minor perspectives with little relevance to the contemporary scientific field. That strategy bears a cost: When many theories are reviewed, the more influential ones may not be covered in sufficient depth. We strive to provide intellectually deep coverage of each of the field's main theoretical perspectives. Note that by "perspectives" we mean that we cover not only the work of the classic theorists (e.g., Freud, Rogers) but also theoretical and empirical advances by other investigators who embraced the general perspectives developed originally by those theorists.
2. *Achieve balance*. We strive to present unbiased coverage of the theories of personality. This does not mean that our coverage is not critical. We discuss both the strengths and limits of each theory. Our evaluations, however, are not designed to persuade students of the merits of a particular approach but to broaden their understanding and enhance their own critical thinking skills.
3. *Integrate theory and research*. We aim to show the student how theory and research inform one another. Theoretical developments spur research, and research contributes to the development, modification, and evaluation of personality theories.
4. *Integrate case material with theory*. By necessity, theory and research deal with abstractions and generalizations, rather than with specific and unique individuals. To bridge the gap between the general and the specific, we present case study material that illustrates how each theory assesses and interprets the individual. We follow one case throughout the book to show how the various theories relate to the same person. Thus, the student can ask, "Are the pictures of a person gained through the lens of each theory completely different from each other, or do they represent complementary perspectives?" Our inclusion of case material also enables the student who is interested in clinical psychology to see connections between personality psychology and clinical practice.
5. *Provide the basis for comparison of the theories*. Coverage of each of the theoretical perspectives is consistent. We present each theory's treatment of personality structures, processes or dynamics, personality development, and clinical applications. Subsequent to this coverage, we evaluate the theories at the conclusions of chapters. Through the given chapter, students are provided the opportunity to make their own comparisons and begin to come to their own conclusions concerning the merits of each.
6. *Present the field in an accessible manner, while respecting its complexity*. We strive to teach students about the field of personality psychology as it really

exists—including some of its nuances and complexities. Yet we strive to make this presentation accessible, including using a writing style that addresses students' interests and questions and provides necessary background content.

These, then, are the ways in which the text remains the same. Its content, of course, is updated. One substantial update in this 12th edition is an entirely new element: a recurring feature on *Personality and the Brain*. Its inclusion reflects changes in the discipline. Years ago, some theoretical perspectives were biologically grounded, whereas others disregarded a biological level of analysis. Today, however, all perspectives are informed by biologically grounded research. Personality psychologists and neuroscientists outside of the field identify the neural bases of phenomena that have long been explored, at a psychological level of analysis, by the personality theorists. Each of our chapters contains a *Personality and the Brain* feature. Chapter 2, on research methods, has been expanded to provide the reader with background needed for this new material.

In addition to numerous specific updates found throughout the text, a second significant new feature is a new case study. Chapter 14, which is devoted to the topic *Personality in Context*, includes a case study showing how a detailed analysis of the relations between personality systems and social contexts can be informative to both the personality scientist and the clinician. In addition, Chapter 9, on biological foundations, has been modified and expanded, reflecting developments in the field.

We hope that *Personality: Theory and Research* will enable students to appreciate the complexity of personality, the capacity of case studies and empirical research to shed light on this complexity, and the scientific and practical value of systematic theorizing about the individual. We also hope that students may discover a particular theory of personality that makes personal sense to them and is useful in their own lives. Finally, we hope that the text and supplementary resources will provide instructors with material that enhances the achievement of their own goals in the teaching of this course.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the Psychology staff at John Wiley and Sons for their continued support. Their valuable suggestions have made this book a better classroom product for both instructors and students. We also thank our many students and colleagues whose constructive suggestions have improved our coverage of personality theory and research.

We also thank Dr. Walter D. Scott, of the University of Wyoming, for permission to include the case study that appears in Chapter 14. Dr. Scott was the therapist for the case, whose assessment tools and case report were prepared collaboratively by Dr. Scott and one of us (DC).

We are grateful to Dr. Tracy L. Caldwell of Dominican University for suggesting the "toolkit" metaphor that appears in our first chapter and reappears

in the text's concluding passages. DC deeply appreciates Dr. Caldwell's many constructive suggestions on this 12th edition, which have substantially strengthened the text.

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This text benefited from outside reviewers' input whose scholarly feedback enhanced the final product. Reviewers included:

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PERSONALITY THEORY: FROM EVERYDAY OBSERVATIONS TO SYSTEMATIC THEORIES

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MAJOR CONCEPTS

REVIEW

Chapter Focus

My friend is not very self-confident. She's my friend, but she always tries to show that she's better by trying to take my boyfriends away from me. She's a fake friend, obviously. She could be fun to hang out with, until there is a guy on the way. She tries to do everything to show that she's better, because, really, she's got low self-esteem. She always has to have a guy by her side to feel good. Otherwise she feels worthless.

This person I know is extremely insecure about himself. This insecurity has embodied itself in bizarre behavior patterns, which ultimately describe a sad, paranoid soul who has undergone many hardships, not necessarily digesting the origin of such mishaps. Instead of recognizing himself as the instigator, he has chosen to blame others for his actions.

I can be selfish, but I believe it is because I try to be perfect. Perfect in the sense I want to be an "A" student, a good mother, a loving wife, an excellent employee, a nourishing friend. My significant other thinks I try too hard to be "Mother Teresa" at times—not that that is a bad thing. But I can drive myself insane at times. I have led a hard childhood and adulthood life; therefore I believe I am trying to make up for all the bad times. I want to be productive, good—make a difference in my world.

I'm a real jackass. I'm intelligent enough to do well in school and study genetics but have no idea when to shut up. I often am very offensive and use quite abrasive language, although I'm shy most of the time and talk to few people. I'm sarcastic, cruel, and pompous at times. Yet I've been told that I'm kind and sweet; this may be true, but only to those I deem worthy of speaking to with some frequency. I'm very fond of arguing and pretty much argue for fun.

My friend is an outgoing, fun-to-be-with person. Although when he feels that something is not right, I mean according to his standards, he is a perfectionist in an obsessive manner. If he feels that someone is not capable of completing a job he takes over and does it himself. Behind closed doors his temper is unbelievable, loud, and never happy. In a social environment he is Mr. Happy-Go-Lucky.

This person is shy at times. They tend to open up to some people. You never know when they're happy or sad. They never show their real feelings, and when they do it's so hard for them. They did have a trauma experience that closed them up—where they seem to be afraid to let their real self show. They are funny and do have a lot of fun and are fun to be around, but at times it's hard to know if they're really having a good time. The person is loved by a lot of people and is an extremely giving person but doesn't like "seriousness."

These sketches were written by people just like you: students enrolled in a course on the psychology of personality. They were writing on the

very first day of class. When we, the authors of this textbook, teach this course, we commonly begin by asking class members to describe their personality and that of a friend. Students' descriptions are insightful and richly detailed—so much so that one is forced to ask: Is the class filled with "personality theorists"?

In a sense, the answer is "yes." We are all personality theorists. We all spend countless hours asking questions about ourselves ("Why am I depressed?" "Why do I become so anxious when I have to speak in public?") and others ("Why are my parents so weird?" "If I introduce Maria to Mike, will they hit it off?"). In answering these questions we develop ideas—rich, complex, sophisticated ideas—about why people act the way they do. We develop our own theories about personality.

The fact that we think so much about people raises an important point for you to consider now, at the outset of your course in personality psychology. The point is the following: You already know a lot about the subject matter of this course. You probably know more about the subject matter of this class, at its very beginning, than you do about any other course you could possibly take in college. By comparison, imagine what would happen if a professor in a different course asked students to do what we ask: to write a description of the course's main subject matter on the first day of class. Consider a math, history, or chemistry course: "Please describe integral calculus." "Outline the causes of the Bolshevik Revolution." "Describe your favorite chemical bond." Such requests would be absurd. Whereas these courses are designed to *introduce* you to the subject matter, this course is different. Personality "needs no introduction." You already know, and can describe in detail, a great many "personalities." You have ideas about what makes people tick and how people differ from one another. You use these ideas to understand events, to predict future events, and to help your friends handle the stresses, bumps, and bruises of life. You already possess, and use, your own theory of personality.

"But"—you may be asking yourself—"if I already know so much about personality, why should I take this class? What can I learn about personality from professional personality psychologists? What are the personality theorists who are discussed in this book accomplishing that I'm not?" This chapter addresses these questions. Specifically, it introduces the field of personality psychology by considering the following three questions.

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THIS CHAPTER

1. How do scientific theories of personality differ from the ideas about persons that you develop in your daily life?
2. Why is there more than one personality theory and in what general ways do the theories differ?
3. What are personality psychologists trying to accomplish; in other words, what aspects of persons and individual differences are they trying to understand and what factors are so important that they must be addressed in any personality theory?

Everybody wants to know about personality. What is my friend really like? What am I really like? Can people change their personality—and if so, how? Is there a basic human nature—and if so, what is it? Asking these questions is not hard. Providing solid, scientifically credible answers is. One group of people that tries to provide answers is psychologists in the field of personality psychology. This book introduces you to this field's research methods, primary findings, and most important theories.

In many ways, personality psychology may seem familiar to you. The professional psychologists' questions about persons resemble questions that you already ask. Yet there are big differences between most people's day-to-day, informal thinking about personality and the formal scientific theories developed by personality psychologists. The differences are not so much in the questions that are asked but in how answers are sought. Let's begin, then, by considering some of the differences.

Think for a moment about how you develop ideas about people. You observe and interact with friends and family. You reflect on yourself. You get ideas from books, songs, movies, TV shows, and plays. Somehow, from this mix, you end up with beliefs about the nature of persons and the main differences between individuals. This mix of information is information enough *unless* one is trying to develop a formal theory of personality. Personality theorists are charged with studying persons scientifically. To develop a scientific theory of personality, theorists must pursue five goals that typically are not pursued in everyday, informal thinking about persons.

FIVE GOALS FOR THE PERSONALITY THEORIST

The five goals personality theorists pursue involve both theory (the ideas used to understand persons, their development, and the differences among them) and evidence (the scientific observations that become the database for the theory). The various theories of personality differ in how successful they are achieving each of the goals; as you read this book, then, you can evaluate each theory's success in achieving each one of them. Let's look at the five goals now:

1. OBSERVATION THAT IS SCIENTIFIC

Good scientific theories are built on careful scientific observation. By observing people scientifically, the personality psychologist obtains systematic descriptions of universal human tendencies and differences among people. These descriptions constitute the basic data that the theories must explain.

In personality psychology, there are three key requirements for scientific observation:

1. *Study large and diverse groups of people*. Psychologists cannot base theories on observations of small numbers of people they happen to run into in their daily life. People may differ from one social or cultural setting to another, and those differences may become apparent only when people are studied within specific life contexts (Cheng, Wang, & Golden, 2011). Psychologists thus must include diverse samples of persons in their research.

2. *Ensure that observations of people are objective.* When conducting research, one must eliminate from the research process any preconceptions or stereotypes that might bias one's observation. Researchers also must describe their research methods in detail, so that others can replicate their methods and verify their results.
3. *Use specialized tools to study thinking processes, emotional reactions, and biological systems that contribute to personality functioning.* Psychologists observe people, just as you do. But they supplement these everyday observations with evidence obtained from specialized research tools that you'll learn about throughout this book (especially in Chapter 2).

2. THEORY THAT IS SYSTEMATIC

Once psychologists obtain good descriptions of personality, they can formulate a personality theory. The theory is designed to provide explanation; that is, with theories, psychologists can explain what they observe in research.

When thinking about people, you and the professional psychologist have similar interests, but the psychologist has extra burdens. Before taking this class, you already have developed lots of different ideas about different people. But you do not have the burden of relating all your ideas to one another in a systematic, logical way. Suppose that one day you say "My friend is depressed because her boyfriend broke up with her" and another day you say "My mother is depressed just like her mother was; she must have inherited it." If so, you usually do not have to relate these statements to each other; people don't force you to spell out the relation between interpersonal factors (e.g., relationship breakup) and biological ones (inherited tendencies). But this is what the scientific community requires personality theorists to do. They must relate all their ideas to one another to create theory that is systematically organized.

3. THEORY THAT IS TESTABLE

If you tell a friend "My parents are weird," your friend is not likely to say "Prove it!" But the scientific community says "Prove it!" any time a scientist says anything. The personality psychologist must develop theoretical ideas that can be tested by objective scientific evidence.

This is true of any science, of course. But in personality psychology, attaining the goal of a testable theory can be particularly difficult. This is because the field's subject matter includes features of mental life—goals, dreams, wishes, impulses, conflicts, emotions, unconscious mental defenses—that are enormously complex and inherently difficult to study scientifically.

4. THEORY THAT IS COMPREHENSIVE

Suppose you have just rented an apartment and are considering inviting in a roommate to share rent costs. When deciding who to invite, you might ask yourself a number of questions about their personalities: Are they fun loving? Conscientious? Open minded? And so forth. Yet there also are a lot of other questions that you do not have to ask: If they are fun loving, is it primarily because they inherited this quality or learned it? If they are conscientious now, are they likely to be more or less conscientious 20 years from now? If they are

open minded, is it primarily because of cultural experiences through which they learned to think about the world or because of a universal human tendency toward open-minded thinking that evolved and thus is inherited?

When thinking about persons, you can be selective, asking some questions and ignoring others. But a personality theory must be comprehensive, addressing all significant questions about personality functioning, development, and individual differences.

5. APPLICATIONS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

As the quotes from students that open this chapter make clear, people formulate insightful ideas about personality prior to studying personality psychology. Yet it is rare that people convert their personal insights into systematic applications. You may recognize that one friend's problem is a lack of self-confidence and that another's is an inability to open up emotionally. Yet, after this recognition, you probably don't design therapies to boost people's confidence in themselves or enable them to open up. Personality psychologists, however, do this. They aim not only to develop testable, systematic theory but also to convert their theoretical ideas into beneficial applications. You will learn about many such applications throughout this book.

In summary, this text introduces you to a field of study whose goal is not merely to say something interesting and insightful about people. The personality psychologists' goals are (1) to observe people scientifically and to develop theories that are (2) systematic, (3) testable, (4) and comprehensive, and (5) to convert this data-based theory into practical applications. It is these five features that distinguish the work of the personality psychologist from that of the poet, the playwright, the pop psychologist—or the student writing personality sketches on the first day of class. The poet, the playwright, and you the student may each provide insight into the human condition. But the personality psychologist is uniquely charged with developing a comprehensive, testable, systematic theory, basing that theory on scientific observation, and developing theory-based applications that benefit individuals and society.

Throughout this book, we evaluate the personality theories by judging their level of success in achieving these five goals. We do so in "critical evaluation" sections that conclude our presentation of each theory. This book's final chapter judges how successful the field of personality psychology as a whole has been in achieving these five aims.

WHY STUDY PERSONALITY?

Why take a course in personality? One way to answer this question is to compare the material in this course with that of other courses in psychology. Consider intro psych—the typical Psych 101. Students often are disappointed with its content. The course does not seem to be about whole, intact people. Instead one learns about parts of people (e.g., the visual system, the autonomic nervous system, long-term memory, etc.) and some of the things people do (learning, problem solving, decision making, etc.). "But where in psychology," one reasonably might ask, "does one learn about the whole, intact person?" The answer is here, in personality psychology. Personality theorists

address the total person, trying to understand how different aspects of an individual's psychological life are related to each other, and relate also the society and culture in which the person lives (Magnusson, 1999, 2012). One reason for studying personality psychology, then, is that it addresses psychology's most complex and interesting topic: the whole, integrated, coherent, unique individual.

Another reason for taking a course in personality psychology involves the wider intellectual world. The personality theories we will discuss have been influential not only within the confines of scientific psychology. They have influenced society at large; they're part of the intellectual tradition of the past century. As such, these ideas already have influenced your own thinking. Even before taking a course in personality, you might say that someone has a big ego, call a friend an "introvert," or believe that a seemingly innocent slip of the tongue reveals something about the underlying motives of the speaker. If so, you *already* are using the language and ideas of personality theorists. This course, then, provides insight into some foundations for your own ways of thinking about people—ways of thinking you have acquired by living in a culture that has been influenced by the work of personality theorists.

DEFINING PERSONALITY

The field of personality addresses three issues: (1) human universals, (2) individual differences, and (3) individual uniqueness. In studying universals, one asks: What is generally true of people; what are universal features of human nature? When studying individual differences, the main question is: How do people differ from one another; is there a set of basic human individual differences? Finally, regarding uniqueness, one asks: How can one possibly explain the uniqueness of the individual person in a scientific manner (since science often strives for general principles rather than portraits of unique entities)? Personality psychologists address dozens of more specific questions, as you will see throughout this book, but the specific issues generally can be understood in terms of overarching questions about universal properties of personality, individual differences, and the uniqueness of the individual.

Given this three-part focus, how are we to define *personality?* Many words have multiple meanings, and *personality* is no exception. Different people use the word in different ways. In fact, there are so many different meanings that one of the first textbooks in the history of the field (Allport, 1937) devoted an entire chapter merely to the question of how the word *personality* can be defined!

Rather than searching for a single definition of the word *personality,* it is useful to learn from philosophers, who teach that if one wants to know what a word means one should look at how the word is used—and, while looking, one should bear in mind that the one word may be used in a number of different ways (Wittgenstein, 1953). Different people indeed use the word *personality* differently. The general public often uses the term to represent a value judgment: You like someone who has a "good" personality or "lots of personality." A boring person has "no personality." In this casual usage, the word

means something like "charisma." Personality scientists, however, use the word differently. The book in your hands is most definitely *not* a book about "Charisma: Theory and Research." The personality scientist is not trying to provide value judgments about the goodness of individuals' personalities. He or she is trying to advance objective scientific inquiry into persons. Let's consider, then, the scientist's definition.

Different personality scientists employ subtly different definitions of the word *personality*. The differences reflect their differing theoretical beliefs. As you work through this book, you will see that some of these differences are quite important. But for now, you can think of the differences as being subtle. There is a strongly shared sense of what *personality* means among personality scientists. All personality psychologists use the term **personality** to refer to *psychological qualities that contribute to an individual's enduring and distinctive patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving*. Having stated that definition, let's elaborate on it a bit.

By *"enduring,"* we mean that personality characteristics are qualities that are at least somewhat consistent across time and across different situations of a person's life. People tend to have styles of functioning that are reasonably stable. At the same time, we are aware that people do change over time and often behave differently in different situations. The introvert at one period in life turns out to be an extravert in later life. Or the introvert in some social situations becomes an extravert in other situations. The task of the personality psychologist is to describe and explain the patterns of a person's psychological functioning, the patterns that stand out as we observe the person over time and across situations.

By *"distinctive,"* we mean that personality psychology addresses psychological features that differentiate people from one another. A counterexample is instructive. If someone asks you to describe your personality you do not say, "I tend to feel sad when bad things happen but happy when good things happen." You don't say this because *everybody* tends to feel sad/happy when bad/good things happen. These psychological tendencies are not distinctive. Even when personality psychologists study universals (i.e., aspects of mental life shared by all persons), they generally use their understanding of universals as a foundation for studying differences among individuals.

By *"contribute to,"* we mean that the personality psychologist searches for psychological factors that causally influence, and thus at least partly explain, an individual's distinctive and enduring tendencies. Much work in personality psychology, as in any science, is descriptive. In personality psychology, researchers may describe trends in personality development, the main individual differences in a population of people, or patterns of behavior exhibited by a particular individual in different situations. However, the personality theorist hopes to move from such description to scientific explanation by identifying psychological factors that causally contribute to the patterns of development, individual differences, and individual behavior that are observed. Thus, the task of the personality psychologist is to *describe* and *explain* people's patterns of psychological functioning, including both patterns characteristic of all people (human nature) and those idiosyncratic to the individual.

Finally, by saying "feeling, thinking, and behaving," we merely mean that the notion of personality is comprehensive; it refers to all aspects of persons:

their mental life, their emotional experiences, and their social behavior. Personality psychologists strive to understand the whole person. Obviously, this is a difficult task that personality psychologists have set for themselves.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PERSONS: WHAT, HOW, AND WHY

With a definition of personality in hand, we can ask a new question: When developing a theory of personality, what types of questions is the personality theorist trying to answer? Questions about people generally are of three types. We want to know *what* they are like, *how* they became that way, and *why* they behave as they do. Thus, we want a theory to answer the questions of what, how, and why.

The *what* refers to characteristics of the person and the way these characteristics are organized in relation to one another. The *how* refers to the determinants of a person's personality. How did genetic influences contribute to the individual's personality? How did environmental forces and social learning experiences contribute to the person's development? The *why* refers to causes of, and reasons behind, an individual's behavior. Answers generally involve questions of motivation: Is the person motivated by a desire for success or a fear of failure? If a child does well in school, is it to please parents, to develop skills, to bolster self-esteem, or to compete with peers? Is a mother overprotective because she is highly affectionate, because she seeks to give her children what she missed as a child, or because she is compensating for feelings of hostility she feels toward the child? A complete theory of personality should yield a coherent set of answers to these three types of questions (what, how, and why).

ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT PERSONS SCIENTIFICALLY: UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURES, PROCESSES, DEVELOPMENT, AND THERAPEUTIC CHANGE

To answer the *what, how,* and *why* questions, the personality psychologist addresses four distinct topics: (1) personality *structure*—the basic units or building blocks of personality, (2) personality *process*—the dynamic aspects of personality, including motives, (3) *growth and development*—how we develop into the unique person each of us is, and (4) *psychopathology and behavior change*—how people change and why they sometimes resist change or are unable to change. We introduce these topics now and return to them throughout this book.

STRUCTURE

The concept of personality **structure** refers to stable, enduring aspects of personality. People possess psychological qualities that endure from day to day and from year to year. The enduring qualities that define the individual and distinguish individuals from one another are what the psychologist refers to as personality structures. In this sense, they are comparable to parts of the body, or to concepts such as atoms and molecules in physics. They represent the building blocks of personality theory.