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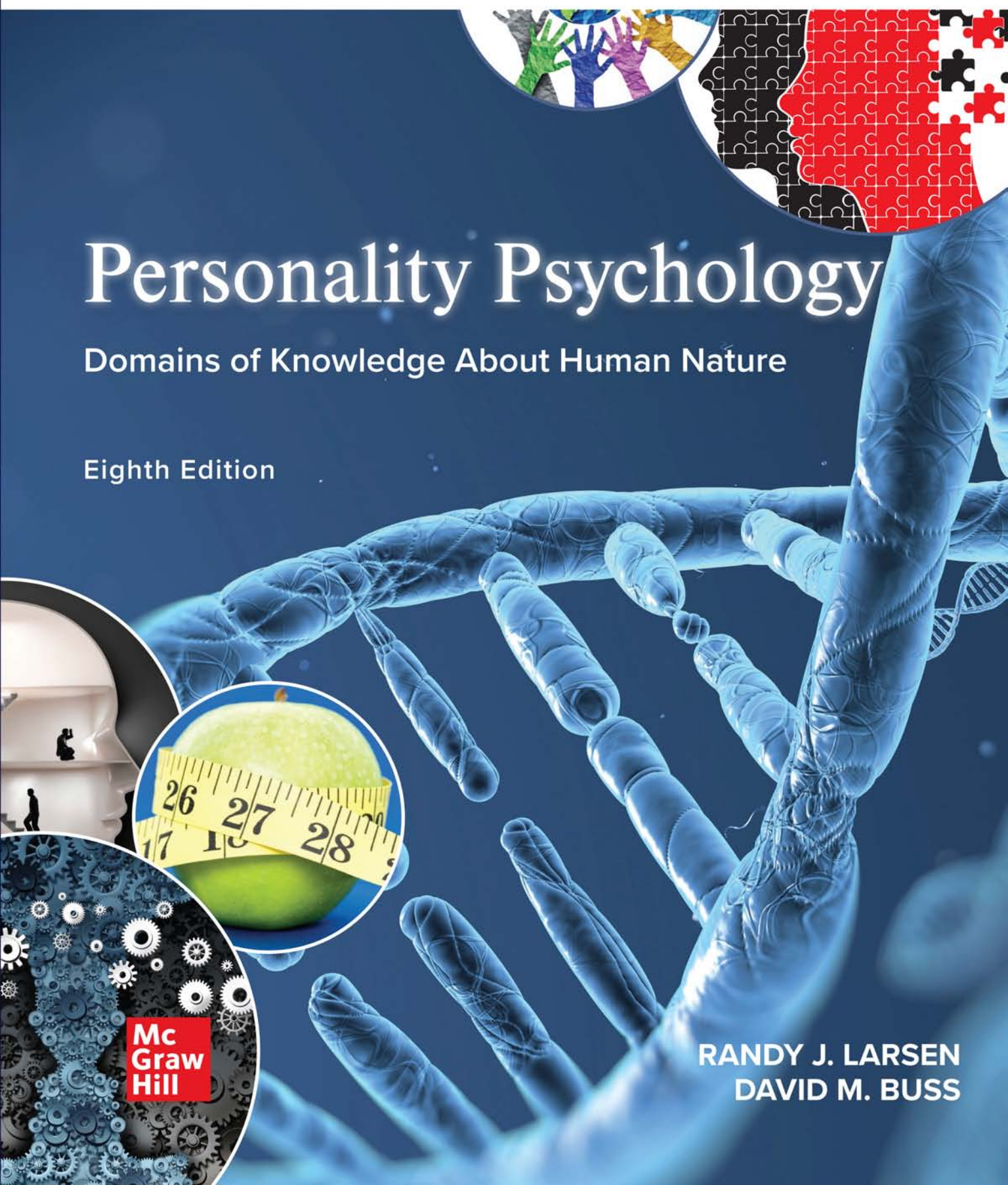
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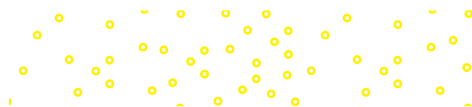
Domains of Knowledge About Human Nature

Eighth Edition

RANDY J. LARSEN
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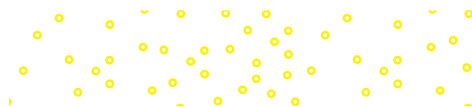
Personality Psychology

Eighth Edition

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KNOWLEDGE
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PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

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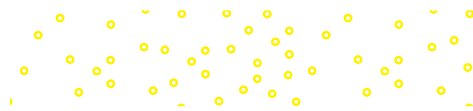
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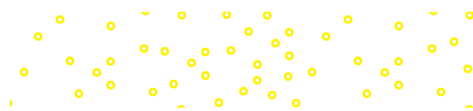
Dedication

To all my students of personality, especially
Tim Bono, who is applying this knowledge to
improve the lives of others.

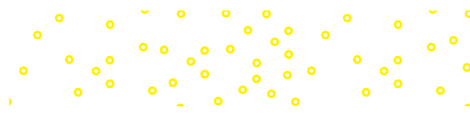
RL

To my father Arnold H. Buss.

DB



Brief Contents



INTRODUCTION

- 1 Introduction to Personality Psychology 2
- 2 Personality Assessment, Measurement, and Research Design 22

PART I

The Dispositional Domain

- 3 Traits and Trait Taxonomies 56
- 4 Theoretical and Measurement Issues in Trait Psychology 86
- 5 Personality Dispositions over Time: Stability, Coherence, and Change 122

PART II

The Biological Domain

- 6 Genetics and Personality 154
- 7 Physiological Approaches to Personality 184
- 8 Evolutionary Perspectives on Personality 222

PART III

The Intrapsychic Domain

- 9 Psychoanalytic Approaches to Personality 260
- 10 Psychoanalytic Approaches: Contemporary Issues 296
- 11 Motives and Personality 330

PART IV

The Cognitive/Experiential Domain

- 12 Cognitive Topics in Personality 368
- 13 Emotion and Personality 400
- 14 Approaches to the Self 436

PART V

The Social and Cultural Domain

- 15 Personality and Social Interaction 468
- 16 Sex, Gender, and Personality 496
- 17 Culture and Personality 524

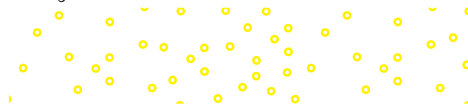
PART VI

The Adjustment Domain

- 18 Stress, Coping, Adjustment, and Health 554
- 19 Disorders of Personality 584

CONCLUSION

- 20 Summary and Future Directions 624



Contents

About the Authors xv | Preface xvii

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Introduction to Personality Psychology 2

Personality Defined 4

Personality Is the Set of Psychological Traits . . . 5

And Mechanisms . . . 6

Within the Individual . . . 7

That Are Organized and Relatively Enduring . . . 7

And That Influence . . . 8

Their Interactions with . . . 8

And Adaptations to . . . 9

The Environment 9

Three Levels of Personality Analysis 10

Human Nature 11

Individual and Group Differences 11

Individual Uniqueness 12

A Fissure in the Field 12

Grand Theories of Personality 12

Contemporary Research in Personality 13

Six Domains of Knowledge About Human Nature 14

Dispositional Domain 15

Biological Domain 15

Intrapsychic Domain 16

Cognitive-Experiential Domain 16

Social and Cultural Domain 17

Adjustment Domain 18

The Role of Personality Theory 18

Standards for Evaluating Personality Theories 19

Is There a Grand Ultimate and True Theory of Personality? 21

KEY TERMS 21

Chapter 2

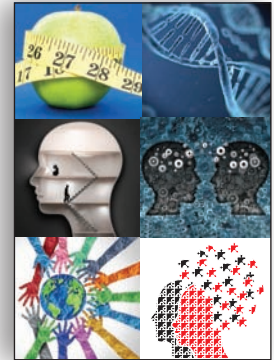
Personality Assessment, Measurement, and Research Design 22

Sources of Personality Data 24

Self-Report Data (S-Data) 24

Observer-Report Data (O-Data) 27

Test Data (T-Data) 29



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| | |
|---|----|
| Life-Outcome Data (L-Data) | 35 |
| Issues in Personality Assessment | 37 |
| Evaluation of Personality Measures | 38 |
| Reliability | 38 |
| Response Sets | 39 |
| Validity | 42 |
| Generalizability | 43 |
| Research Designs in Personality | 43 |
| Experimental Methods | 44 |
| Correlational Studies | 46 |
| Case Studies | 49 |
| When to Use Experimental, Correlational, and Case Study Designs | 51 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 52 |
| KEY TERMS | 53 |



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P A R T I

The Dispositional Domain

Chapter 3

Traits and Trait Taxonomies 56

| | |
|--|----|
| What Is a Trait? Two Basic Formulations | 58 |
| Traits as Internal Causal Properties | 58 |
| Traits as Purely Descriptive Summaries | 59 |
| The Act Frequency Formulation of Traits—An Illustration of the Descriptive Summary Formulation | 60 |
| Act Frequency Research Program | 60 |
| Evaluation of the Act Frequency Formulation | 62 |
| Identification of the Most Important Traits | 63 |
| Lexical Approach | 63 |
| Statistical Approach | 64 |
| Theoretical Approach | 66 |
| Evaluating the Approaches for Identifying Important Traits | 66 |
| Taxonomies of Personality | 67 |
| Eysenck's Hierarchical Model of Personality | 67 |
| Circumplex Taxonomies of Personality | 71 |
| Five-Factor Model | 73 |
| The HEXACO Model | 83 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 84 |
| KEY TERMS | 85 |

Chapter 4

Theoretical and Measurement Issues in Trait Psychology 86

| | |
|--|----|
| Theoretical Issues | 89 |
| Meaningful Differences Among Individuals | 89 |
| Stability over Time | 90 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Consistency Across Situations | 91 |
| Person–Situation Interaction | 94 |
| Aggregation | 98 |
| Measurement Issues | 101 |
| Carelessness | 102 |
| Faking on Questionnaires | 102 |
| Beware of Barnum Statements in Personality Test Interpretations | 104 |
| Personality and Prediction | 105 |
| Applications of Personality Testing in the Workplace | 105 |
| Legal Issues in Personality Testing in Employment Settings | 108 |
| Personnel Selection—Choosing the Right Person for the Job | 113 |
| Selection in Business Settings—The Myers–Briggs Type Indicator: A Worst-Case Example | 114 |
| Selection in Business Settings—The Hogan Personality Inventory: A Best-Case Example | 118 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 120 |
| KEY TERMS | 121 |

Chapter 5

Personality Dispositions over Time: Stability, Coherence, and Change 122

| | |
|--|-----|
| Conceptual Issues: Personality Development, Stability, Coherence, and Change | 124 |
| What Is Personality Development? | 124 |
| Rank Order Stability | 124 |
| Mean Level Stability | 125 |
| Personality Coherence | 125 |
| Personality Change | 127 |
| Three Levels of Analysis | 127 |
| Population Level | 127 |
| Group Differences Level | 128 |
| Individual Differences Level | 128 |
| Personality Stability over Time | 129 |
| Stability of Temperament During Infancy | 129 |
| Stability During Childhood | 130 |
| Rank Order Stability in Adulthood | 132 |
| Mean Level Stability and Change in Adulthood | 135 |
| Personality Change | 139 |
| Changes in Self-Esteem from Adolescence to Adulthood | 139 |
| Autonomy, Dominance, Leadership, and Ambition | 139 |
| Sensation Seeking | 140 |
| Femininity | 140 |
| Independence and Traditional Roles | 142 |
| Personality Changes Across Cohorts: Assertiveness and Narcissism | 143 |
| Can You Intentionally Change Your Personality? | 144 |
| Personality Coherence over Time: Prediction of Socially Relevant Outcomes | 145 |
| Marital Stability, Marital Satisfaction, and Divorce | 145 |
| Alcoholism, Drug Use, and Emotional Disturbance | 146 |
| Religiousness and Spirituality | 147 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Education, Academic Achievement, and Dropping Out | 147 |
| Health, Retirement, and Longevity | 148 |
| Predicting Personality Change | 149 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 150 |
| KEY TERMS | 151 |

P A R T I I

The Biological Domain

Chapter 6

Genetics and Personality 154

| | |
|--|------------|
| The Human Genome | 156 |
| Controversy About Genes and Personality | 157 |
| Goals of Behavioral Genetics | 158 |
| What Is Heritability? | 159 |
| Misconceptions About Heritability | 160 |
| Nature–Nurture Debate Clarified | 161 |
| Behavioral Genetic Methods | 161 |
| Selective Breeding—Studies of Humans' Best Friend | 162 |
| Family Studies | 163 |
| Twin Studies | 163 |
| Adoption Studies | 165 |
| Major Findings from Behavioral Genetic Research | 167 |
| Personality Traits | 167 |
| Attitudes and Preferences | 169 |
| Drinking and Smoking | 170 |
| Marriage and Satisfaction with Life | 172 |
| Shared Versus Nonshared Environmental Influences: A Riddle | 173 |
| Genes and the Environment | 175 |
| Genotype–Environment Interaction | 175 |
| Genotype–Environment Correlation | 176 |
| Molecular Genetics | 178 |
| Behavioral Genetics, Science, Politics, and Values | 180 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 181 |
| KEY TERMS | 183 |

Chapter 7

Physiological Approaches to Personality 184

| | |
|--|-----|
| A Physiological Approach to Personality | 190 |
| Physiological Measures Commonly Used in Personality Research | 191 |
| Electrodermal Activity (Skin Conductance) | 191 |
| Cardiovascular Activity | 192 |
| The Brain | 193 |
| Other Measures | 199 |



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| | |
|---|-----|
| Physiologically Based Theories of Personality | 200 |
| Extraversion-Introversion | 200 |
| Sensitivity to Reward and Punishment | 204 |
| Sensation Seeking | 207 |
| Neurotransmitters and Personality | 210 |
| Morningness-Eveningness | 212 |
| Brain Asymmetry and Affective Style | 217 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 220 |
| KEY TERMS | 221 |

Chapter 8

Evolutionary Perspectives on Personality 222

| | |
|---|-----|
| Evolution and Natural Selection | 224 |
| Natural Selection | 224 |
| Sexual Selection | 225 |
| Genes and Inclusive Fitness | 226 |
| Products of the Evolutionary Process | 226 |
| Evolutionary Psychology | 228 |
| Premises of Evolutionary Psychology | 228 |
| Empirical Testing of Evolutionary Hypotheses | 230 |
| Human Nature | 232 |
| Need to Belong | 232 |
| Helping and Altruism | 234 |
| Universal Emotions | 236 |
| Sex Differences | 238 |
| Sex Differences in Aggression | 239 |
| Sex Differences in Jealousy | 241 |
| Sex Differences in Desire for Sexual Variety | 245 |
| Sex Differences in Mate Preferences | 246 |
| Individual Differences | 248 |
| Environmental Triggers of Individual Differences | 249 |
| Heritable Individual Differences Contingent on Other Traits | 250 |
| Frequency-Dependent Strategic Individual Differences | 251 |
| The Big Five, Motivation, and Evolutionarily Relevant Adaptive Problems | 254 |
| Limitations of Evolutionary Psychology | 255 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 256 |
| KEY TERMS | 257 |

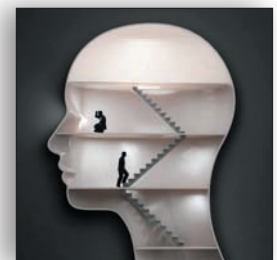
PART III

The Intrapsychic Domain

Chapter 9

Psychoanalytic Approaches to Personality 260

| | |
|--|-----|
| Sigmund Freud: A Brief Biography | 263 |
| Fundamental Assumptions of Psychoanalytic Theory | 264 |



| | |
|---|-----|
| Basic Instincts: Sex and Aggression | 265 |
| Unconscious Motivation: Sometimes We Don't Know Why We Do What We Do | 265 |
| Psychic Determinism: Nothing Happens by Chance | 267 |
| Structure of Personality | 270 |
| Id: Reservoir of Psychic Energy | 270 |
| Ego: Executive of Personality | 271 |
| Superego: Upholder of Societal Values and Ideals | 275 |
| Interaction of the Id, Ego, and Superego | 275 |
| Dynamics of Personality | 276 |
| Types of Anxiety | 276 |
| Defense Mechanisms | 277 |
| Psychosexual Stages of Personality Development | 283 |
| Personality and Psychoanalysis | 286 |
| Techniques for Revealing the Unconscious | 287 |
| The Process of Psychoanalysis | 289 |
| Why Is Psychoanalysis Important? | 291 |
| Evaluation of Freud's Contributions | 292 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 294 |
| KEY TERMS | 295 |

Chapter 10

Psychoanalytic Approaches: Contemporary Issues 296

| | |
|--|-----|
| The Neo-Analytic Movement | 299 |
| Repression and Contemporary Research on Memory | 299 |
| False Memories from Fake News | 304 |
| Contemporary Views on the Unconscious | 306 |
| Ego Psychology | 308 |
| Erikson's Eight Stages of Development | 311 |
| Karen Horney and a Feminist Interpretation of Psychoanalysis | 317 |
| Emphasis on Self and the Notion of Narcissism | 318 |
| Object Relations Theory | 319 |
| Early Childhood Attachment | 320 |
| Adult Relationships | 323 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 328 |
| KEY TERMS | 329 |

Chapter 11

Motives and Personality 330

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Basic Concepts | 332 |
| Need | 334 |
| Press | 335 |
| Apperception and the TAT | 336 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Big Three Motives: Achievement, Power, and Intimacy | 338 |
| Need for Achievement | 339 |
| Need for Power | 344 |
| Need for Intimacy | 347 |
| Humanistic Tradition: The Motive to Self-Actualize | 348 |
| Maslow's Contributions | 350 |
| Rogers's Contributions | 355 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 363 |
| KEY TERMS | 365 |

P A R T I V

The Cognitive/Experiential Domain

Chapter 12

Cognitive Topics in Personality 368

| | |
|--|-----|
| Personality Revealed Through Perception | 372 |
| Field Dependence-Independence | 372 |
| Pain Tolerance and Sensation Reducing/Augmenting | 378 |
| Personality Revealed Through Interpretation | 380 |
| Kelly's Personal Construct Theory | 380 |
| Locus of Control | 382 |
| Learned Helplessness | 385 |
| Personality Revealed Through Goals | 387 |
| Personal Projects Analysis | 387 |
| Cognitive Social Learning Theory | 390 |
| Intelligence | 393 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 397 |
| KEY TERMS | 399 |

Chapter 13

Emotion and Personality 400

| | |
|--|-----|
| Issues in Emotion Research | 402 |
| Emotional States Versus Emotional Traits | 403 |
| Categorical Versus Dimensional Approach to Emotion | 403 |
| Content Versus Style of Emotional Life | 406 |
| Content of Emotional Life | 406 |
| Style of Emotional Life | 429 |
| Interaction of Content and Style in Emotional Life | 433 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 434 |
| KEY TERMS | 435 |



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Chapter 14

Approaches to the Self 436

- Descriptive Component of the Self: Self-Concept 439
 - Development of the Self-Concept 439
 - Self-Schemata: Possible Selves, Ought Selves, and Undesired Selves 443
- Evaluative Component of the Self: Self-Esteem 448
 - Evaluation of Oneself 448
 - Research on Self-Esteem 449
- Social Component of the Self: Social Identity 457
 - The Nature of Identity 458
 - Identity Development 458
 - Identity Crises 460
- SUMMARY AND EVALUATION 463
- KEY TERMS 465

P A R T V

The Social and Cultural Domain

Chapter 15

Personality and Social Interaction 468

- Selection 470
 - Personality Characteristics Desired in a Marriage Partner 471
 - Assortative Mating for Personality: The Search for the Similar 473
 - Do People Get the Mates They Want? And Are They Happy? 475
 - Personality and the Selective Breakup of Couples 478
 - Shyness and the Selection of Risky Situations 479
 - Personality Traits and the Selection of Friends and Situations 480
- Evocation 480
 - Aggression and the Evocation of Hostility 481
 - Evocation of Anger and Upset in Partners 481
 - Evocation of Likability, Pleasure, and Pain 485
 - Evocation Through Expectancy Confirmation 485
- Manipulation: Social Influence Tactics 486
 - A Taxonomy of Eleven Tactics of Manipulation 486
 - Sex Differences in Tactics of Manipulation 488
 - Personality Predictors of Tactics of Manipulation 488
- Panning Back: An Overview of Personality and Social Interaction 492
- SUMMARY AND EVALUATION 494
- KEY TERMS 495

Chapter 16

Sex, Gender, and Personality 496

- The Science and Politics of Studying Sex and Gender 498
 - History of the Study of Sex Differences 498



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| | |
|--|-----|
| Calculation of Effect Size: How Large Are the Sex Differences? | 499 |
| Minimalists and Maximalists | 501 |
| Sex Differences in Personality | 501 |
| Temperament in Children | 501 |
| Five-Factor Model | 503 |
| Basic Emotions: Frequency and Intensity | 506 |
| Other Dimensions of Personality | 507 |
| Masculinity, Femininity, Androgyny, and Sex Roles | 509 |
| The Search for Androgyny | 511 |
| Gender Stereotypes | 514 |
| Theories of Sex Differences | 516 |
| Socialization and Social Roles | 517 |
| Hormonal Theories | 519 |
| Evolutionary Psychology Theory | 520 |
| An Integrated Theoretical Perspective | 521 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 522 |
| KEY TERMS | 523 |

Chapter 17

Culture and Personality 524

| | |
|--|-----|
| Cultural Violations: An Illustration | 526 |
| What Is Cultural Personality Psychology? | 527 |
| Three Major Approaches to Culture | 527 |
| Evoked Culture | 527 |
| Transmitted Culture | 531 |
| Cultural Universals | 542 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 550 |
| KEY TERMS | 551 |

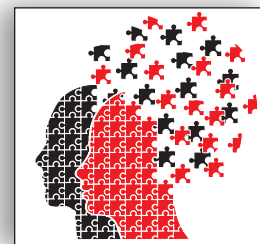
PART VI

The Adjustment Domain

Chapter 18

Stress, Coping, Adjustment, and Health 554

| | |
|--|-----|
| Models of the Personality–Illness Connection | 556 |
| COVID-19 and the Five Models of Personality–Illness Connection | 562 |
| The Concept of Stress | 564 |
| Stress Response | 565 |
| Major Life Events | 565 |
| Daily Hassles | 567 |
| Varieties of Stress | 568 |
| Primary and Secondary Appraisal | 569 |
| Coping Strategies and Styles | 570 |
| Attributional Style | 570 |
| Dispositional Optimism | 571 |



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| | |
|--|-----|
| Management of Emotions | 573 |
| Disclosure | 575 |
| Type A Personality and Cardiovascular Disease | 577 |
| Hostility: The Lethal Component of the Type A Behavior Pattern | 580 |
| How the Arteries Are Damaged by Hostile Type A Behavior | 582 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 582 |
| KEY TERMS | 583 |

Chapter 19

Disorders of Personality 584

| | |
|---|-----|
| The Building Blocks of Personality Disorders | 586 |
| The Concept of Disorder | 588 |
| What Is Abnormal? | 588 |
| The <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</i> | 589 |
| What Is a Personality Disorder? | 591 |
| Specific Personality Disorders | 593 |
| The Erratic Cluster: Ways of Being Unpredictable, Violent, or Emotional | 593 |
| The Eccentric Cluster: Ways of Being Different | 604 |
| The Anxious Cluster: Ways of Being Nervous, Fearful, or Distressed | 610 |
| Prevalence of Personality Disorders | 616 |
| Gender Differences in Personality Disorders | 617 |
| Dimensional Model of Personality Disorders | 617 |
| Causes of Personality Disorders | 619 |
| SUMMARY AND EVALUATION | 622 |
| KEY TERMS | 623 |

Chapter 20

Summary and Future Directions 624

| | |
|---|-----|
| Current Status of the Field | 626 |
| Domains of Knowledge: Where We've Been, Where We're Going | 627 |
| Dispositional Domain | 627 |
| Biological Domain | 628 |
| Intrapsychic Domain | 631 |
| Cognitive/Experiential Domain | 631 |
| Social and Cultural Domain | 632 |
| Adjustment Domain | 634 |
| Integration: Personality in the Twenty-First Century | 635 |

Glossary 636

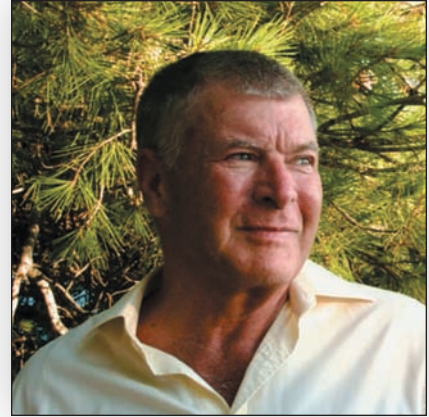
References 665

Name Index 719

Subject Index 731

About the Authors

Randy J. Larsen received his MA in Clinical Psychology from Duquesne University and his PhD in Personality Psychology from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Over the years, his clinical experiences include adolescent therapist (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services), prison psychologist (Pennsylvania Department of Corrections), police psychologist (Steel Valley Council of Governments), and prison educator (Missouri Eastern Correctional Center). As a college professor, he has served on the faculty of Purdue University, the University of Michigan (where he met David Buss and began collaborating on this book), and Washington University in St. Louis. His research awards include a Distinguished Scientific Achievement Award for Early Career Contributions to Personality Psychology from the American Psychological Association and a Research Scientist Development Award from the National Institute of Mental Health. He has been an associate editor at the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Cognition and Emotion*, and the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* and has been on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Research in Personality*, *Review of General Psychology*, and the *Journal of Personality*. He has authored over 150 scientific papers and book chapters in personality psychology and is on the Institute of Scientific Information's list of the top 25 most cited scientists in his discipline. His books include *The Science of Subjective Well-Being* (with Michael Eid; Guilford Press), *Taking Sides in Personality Psychology* (with Laurel Newman; McGraw-Hill), and *Handbook of Personality Processes and Individual Differences* (with Lynne Cooper; APA Press). Randy Larsen has served on several Scientific Review Groups for the National Institutes of Health and the National Research Council. His research on personality has been supported by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Aging, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, the McDonnell Foundation for Cognitive Neuroscience, and the Solon Summerfield Foundation. Currently Randy Larsen is the William R. Stuckenberg Professor of Human Values and Moral Development at Washington University in St. Louis. His recent classes there include personality psychology, positive psychology, introductory psychology, and ethics for scientists. He lives in St. Louis with his wife, and their two children are currently in college.



Courtesy of Randy J. Larsen



David M. Buss

David M. Buss received his PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. He served on the faculties of Harvard University and the University of Michigan before accepting a professorship at the University of Texas at Austin, where he currently teaches. Buss received the American Psychological Association (APA) Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Personality Psychology, the APA G. Stanley Hall Award, and the APA Distinguished Scientist Lecturer Award. Books by David Buss include *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating* (Revised Edition) (Basic Books, 2016), which has been translated into 10 languages; *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of*

the Mind (6th ed.) (Taylor & Francis, 2019), which was presented with the Robert W. Hamilton Book Award; *The Dangerous Passion: Why Jealousy Is as Necessary as Love and Sex* (Free Press, 2000), which has been translated into 13 languages; and two editions of *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology* (Wiley, 2005, 2016). Buss has authored more than 300 scientific publications and has also written articles for *The New York Times* and the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. He appears in the ISI List of Most Highly Cited Psychologists Worldwide, has been cited as one of the most eminent psychologists of the modern era, and has been cited as one of the 30 most influential living psychologists. The American Psychological Society (APS) awarded David Buss the Mentor Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2017. He lectures widely throughout the United States and abroad and has extensive cross-cultural research collaborations. David Buss greatly enjoys teaching and had the honor of winning the President's Teaching Excellence Award at the University of Texas.

Preface

We have devoted our lives to the scientific study of personality. We believe this sub-discipline, the scientific study of what it means to be a person, is one of the most exciting parts of psychology. Thus we were enormously gratified to see the volume of e-mails, letters, and comments from satisfied consumers of our first through seventh editions. At the same time, preparing the eighth edition proved to be a humbling experience. The cascade of exciting findings in the field of personality is formidable, requiring not merely updating but also the addition of major sections of new material. Moreover, in important ways, our first edition proved prescient in terms of changes in how the field is organized and taught.

Rather than organize our text around the traditional grand theories of personality, we devised a framework of six important domains of knowledge about personality functioning. These six domains are the *dispositional domain* (traits, trait taxonomies, and personality dispositions over time), the *biological domain* (physiology, genetics, evolution), the *intrapsychic domain* (psychodynamics, motives), the *cognitive-experiential domain* (cognition, emotion, and the self), the *social and cultural domain* (social interaction, gender, and culture), and the *adjustment domain* (stress, coping, health, and personality disorders). We believed these domains of knowledge best represented the state of affairs in personality psychology in the year 2000, as we were writing the first edition of this text. Progress in the field since then has continued to bear out that belief as new knowledge has accumulated in each of these domains.

In addition to major organizing themes (the six domains), our previous editions also differed from other personality texts in the importance placed on *culture*, *gender*, and *biology*, and these areas of personality have shown substantial growth in recent years. But we have also been fascinated to witness and describe growth in *each* of the six major domains of personality that form the organizational core of the book.

We have always envisioned our text as a reflection of the contemporary personality psychology. Our desire is to capture the excitement of what the science of personality is all about. For the eighth edition, we did our best to remain true to that vision. We believe that the field of personality psychology has entered a golden age, and we hope that the changes we've made to the eighth edition convey a discipline that is vibrant in a way it never has been before. After all, no other field is devoted to the study of all that it means to be human.

For this edition, each chapter has been streamlined through judicious trimming. This provided room for discussing new research conducted within the past three years, making length of this edition similar to the previous. Significant additions to the seventh edition are described below.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Personality Psychology

- Editing to streamline the writing and update the goals of personality research.

Chapter 2: Personality Assessment, Measurement, and Research Design

- Experience sampling used to identify the negative effects of being indoors and computer screen time usage on loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A spouse or lover has access to privileged information often inaccessible through other sources, such as their sexual behavior.
- Even the facial expressions displayed during these laboratory conflicts predict subsequent marital outcomes.

- T-data enable experimenters to *test specific hypotheses*, such as the predicted effect of Extraversion on social decision making.
- Actometer measures have been used to assess hyperactivity and ADHD in children.
- Traits such as Narcissism and Psychopathy are positively correlated with pornography consumption.
- Sensation seeking successfully predicted a variety of gambling behaviors, such as playing the lottery, betting on sporting events, playing video poker, using slot machines, and addiction to cocaine.

Chapter 3: Traits and Trait Taxonomies

- Frequency of suicidal ideation, for example, is a good predictor of depressive symptoms.
- One study found as many as eight factors from an analysis of personality nouns, including Dummy (twit, trash), Doll (beauty, sweetie), Philosopher (bookworm, nonconformist), Goof (joker, clown), Chatterbox (flirt, loudmouth), and Ladies' man (stud, hunk).
- New exercise assessing the degree to which people are currently seeking short-term mating (casual sex) versus long-term committed mating relationships.
- New book recommendation on the strengths of introverts: Cain, S. (2013). *Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. Broadway Books.
- High-N scorers tend to express more dissatisfaction with their romantic relationships.
- Introverts also seem to cope better with being alone during the COVID-19 pandemic, cope better with chronic pain, and suffer fewer sleep disturbances compared to extraverts.
- A recent review of 152 studies found that the HEXACO model provided broader coverage of the personality domain compared to the five-factor model.

Chapter 4: Theoretical and Measurement Issues in Trait Psychology

- Updated information and links on dating sites that use personality testing to match people
- Clarified how personality tests can be used in selection settings, and how measurement accuracy (reliability and validity) can influence success in selection efforts.
- Improved description of how a few primary traits can combine to create unique personalities.
- Introduce how a high test-retest correlation does not mean people did not change between testing, instead it confirms that people maintained their rank order over time.
- Include recent references to person-situation interaction.
- Since Walter Michel and Seymour Epstein recently passed away, reference to their important work and ideas is now described in the past tense.
- Clarified the concept of "aggregation" and added it as a key term in this edition.
- More detail provided on Barnum statements in personality feedback, using astrology and Bradley Cooper's "mentalist" character in the movie "Nightmare Alley" as examples of how overly general statements can be believable.
- Provide a link to a Big Five assessment site where students can take the questionnaire and obtain personal testing feedback that is quantitative, specific, and based on empirical research.

- Updated research on the female underprediction effect with a report by the College Board (2019) on their SAT underpredicting college GPA for women compared to men.
- Material on using personality tests to select police officers is updated with reference to the George Floyd murder, plus newer references to specific scales in the 16PF that are used in police screening tests is provided.

Chapter 5: Personality Dispositions over Time: Stability, Coherence, and Change

- Cohort changes in sex ratio: In the United States, more than 56 percent of college students are women.
- Subsequent studies confirm that neuroticism predicts divorce.
- High conscientiousness is linked to later income and net worth.
- A study of 272 Japanese centenarians found that these long-lived individuals score high on extraversion and low on neuroticism.
- High conscientiousness and low neuroticism are linked to better coping with anxiety surrounding COVID-19.
- New section reporting research designed to effectively change personality traits, such as increasing one's level of extraversion and decreasing one's level of neuroticism, in desired directions.

Chapter 6: Genetics and Personality

- Many would-be parents are very interested in findings from genetic research. Some express a desire not to have children if they knew they would carry a genetic disposition for a mental disorder.
- A study of 12,117 dogs found that they differed greatly in boldness versus timidity, with bolder dogs exploring more, positively approaching unfamiliar people, and showing low levels of fear.
- A large-scale study of the HEXACO personality traits, which includes the Honest-Humility factor, found heritabilities ranging from 34 to 58 percent.
- Genotype-environment correlations are becoming increasingly important in understanding the complex processes of how personality and social environments are connected.
- A recent study implicated DRD2, DRD4, and two other genes linked to sensation seeking among adolescents.

Chapter 7: Physiological Approaches to Personality

- Reference to some of Damasio's recent work on the mind-body connection.
- New details on the case of Phineas Gage and the 2009 discovery of his photo with the iron rod that inflicted his head wound.
- Discussion of "wearable" technology sensors (e.g., watches, rings, micro-recorders) that can monitor several physiological and behavioral systems, and their recent inclusion in personality research.
- Cautionary note attached to discussion of digit ratio, advising that empirical research published in peer-reviewed research should be weighted more heavily when evaluating results.
- New research on skin conductance and neuroticism.
- New material on heart rate variability (HRV) in section on cardiac measures, and the meaning of heart rate variability for research on stress and personality.
- New citations to studies on brain structure (volume) and personality as well as with intelligence.

- Update on the Human Connectome Project and its role in facilitating research on personality and brain connections between regions.
- New references to extraversion research and to MAO and sensation seeking.
- New example of a computer game to illustrate approach motivation by reward and avoidance motivation by punishment.
- Review of research on coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, with emphasis on punishment sensitivity relating to avoiding risks (e.g., not taking public transportation) and reward sensitivity relating to a reluctance to socially distance or isolate.
- Reference to studies on going against one's chronotype (morningness or eveningness), and now have "chronotype" as a key term.

Chapter 8: Evolutionary Perspectives on Personality

- Characteristics that were probably adaptive in ancestral environments—such as *xenophobia*, or fear of strangers—are not necessarily adaptive in modern environments. This is an example of an *evolutionary mismatch*, a feature adaptive in the past that is no longer adaptive in the modern world.
- The need to belong theory has been used to explain a wide range of phenomena, including cheering for sports teams, joining religious groups, forming online gaming communities, conformity to the group, social identity, reputation management, creating political coalitions, and even the increased political polarization currently witnessed in some countries.
- Humans, of course, help people who are not close kin. We form friendships with non-kin, which sometimes can last a lifetime. We help friends who are in need, and they in turn help us when we are in need. This is the defining feature of *reciprocal altruism*—incurring costs to self to deliver benefits to other with the expectation that those benefits will be reciprocated or returned now or at some future time. The personality trait Agreeableness has been linked with a strong proclivity to be a good reciprocal altruist.
- A recent test of the universality of emotion expression examined the facial expressions of 63 sculptures created in the Americas dating back to 1500 BCE prior to any contact with Western civilization. The authors conclude that modern Westerners share with ancient pre-contact peoples the links between facial expression of emotion and the social contexts in which these expressions commonly occur.
- Emotions can also be expressed by nonverbal body language. A prime example is the emotion of *pride*. When people win an athletic contest, for example, they commonly thrust both arms in the air, forming a V, perhaps symbolic for victory. The nonverbal expression of triumph appears to be recognized across cultures. The nonverbal V is also displayed by congenitally blind individuals who win athletic contests.
- Individual differences in the *fearfulness* facet of neuroticism are predicted by physical strength. Weaker people are more fearful, presumably because they are more vulnerable to threats and fear motivates them to avoid social confrontations.

Chapter 9: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Personality

- Update on the case of Ross Cheit described in chapter opening.
- Updated description of, and references to, research on blindsight and deliberation outside of awareness.
- New material on the scientific status of the ego depletion concept, including

- Introduce a fourth form of anxiety, introduced by students of Freud, called self-esteem anxiety, and include this as a new key term.
- Moved some material around to improve the flow of the chapter.

Chapter 10: Psychoanalytic Approaches: Contemporary Issues

- Update on the Holly Ramona case.
- New material on, and link to, the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, and its role in helping patients, families, and legal teams dealing with potentially false memories of abuse.
- New references to Loftus' recent work on false memories (imagination inflation effect) as well as the effects of misinformation on beliefs in conspiracy theories.
- Include links to examples of subliminal advertisements.
- Reference to new work by Jonathon Bargh on unconscious priming effects.
- Report on a meta-analysis on narcissism and high levels of interpersonal conflict.
- Update on Kamala Harris, who is now the first female Vice President of the United States.
- More clear description of what are the "objects" in object relations theory.
- Include several new links to sites where students can take an assessment of their adult attachment style.
- Mention family separations in the current Ukraine conflict as an example of adult attachment disruption.
- "Caregiver" now used, along with mother or parent, in discussing childhood attachment.
- Clarify the connection between childhood separation anxiety and adult relationship disruption, and provide the example of couples in the current Ukraine conflict having to split up, with mothers (and children) leaving the country while fathers stay behind.
- More discussion of the possibility of change in adult attachment styles, with reference to current research.

Chapter 11: Motives and Personality

- Link to videos of Michael Johnson setting the 200-meter world record.
- New citation to definition of motives.
- Updated research on implicit and explicit motives.
- Include replication studies on gender differences in need for intimacy motive.
- Include research on Vladimir Putin's high level of need for power, and suggest this motive may underly his 2022 war on Ukraine, and include studies that use politician's motive scores from speeches to predict the start or end of wars.
- Update on Pete Buttigieg as an example of a high need for achievement person.
- Updated TAT references.
- New research on need for achievement and children's beliefs that intelligence is fixed or malleable (from Carol Dweck's theory).
- Mention social media use, instant messaging, and e-mail behaviors that relate to need for intimacy.
- Update research on Kenrick's re-interpretation of Maslow's need hierarchy.

Chapter 12: Cognitive Topics in Personality

- Updated research on racial bias and lethal force errors among police officers.
- Newer research on Field Dependence/Independence described.
- Reducer/augmenter section has three new studies cited.
- Current research linking locus of control to the COVID-19 pandemic (internals report less stress, more compliance with mitigation guidelines, and more likely to take the vaccine).

- Explicitly distinguish locus of control (pertains to positive/rewarding events) and attributional style (pertains to negative events).
- Newer citations for attributional style.
- Update on personal projects analysis and introduce the concept of well-doing.
- Newer studies establishing the Flynn Effect in college students, and another documenting that this trend has reversed (called the negative Flynn Effect) in the past two decades.
- Added birth and death dates for major figures in this area, and in other chapters as well.

Chapter 13: Emotion and Personality

- Newer citations for measuring positive emotions.
- Update with latest (2022) United Nations survey data on world happiness.
- New key term: eudaimonia—the view that happiness is attained by living a life of meaning and purpose.
- Numerous updates to happiness research.
- Several link errors fixed.
- New research presented on positive illusions.
- New research on personality trait predictors of happiness, plus the role of pro-social behaviors.
- New research on treating depression with exercise.
- New research on the relation between violence and brain abnormalities, with new citations to work of Jonathan Pincus and Adrian Raine.

Chapter 14: Approaches to the Self

- Self-esteem is now a key term.
- Use of social media acronyms (e.g., IRL for In Real Life, FOMO for Fear of Missing Out).
- Several references to the COVID-19 pandemic in examples.
- New studies on social comparison as the toxic element of problematic social media use.
- New research on “helicopter parenting” and its effects on adolescent self-esteem.
- New “Application” on an Asian elephant in the Bronx Zoo who passed the dot-and-mirror test of self-awareness.
- New studies on self-complexity, defensive pessimism, self-handicapping, self-esteem variability, and domain-specific self-esteem.
- Updated links within the chapter.
- Connected self-schema to the concept of associative networks in memory first introduced in Chapter 10.
- Link the topic of social identity to the concept of “reputation.”
- Mention studies that question the concept of implicit self-esteem.
- Since Jerome Kagan passed away in 2021, reference to his work changed to past tense.

Chapter 15: Personality and Social Interaction

- Personality also influences our selection of friends. People high on extraversion and agreeableness, for example, tend to choose a larger number of friends on social networking sites compared to more introverted and disagreeable people.
- Vulnerable narcissists, who have somewhat shaky self-esteem, are especially prone to the hostile attribution bias.

- When marital conflicts arise, emotionally unstable partners tend to use *avoidance* rather than *compromise* to deal with it, thus perpetuating the conflict.
- The link between agreeableness and social likability has been documented as early as adolescence.
- People sometimes try to manipulate their prospective in-laws for the goal of help in solidifying their mateship with their offspring.
- Dark Triad men are apt to use coercion as a tactic of manipulation to obtain sex from reluctant or unwilling women.

Chapter 16: Sex, Gender, and Personality

- Gender differences in emotional stability are especially important because they are linked with important life outcomes such as risk of eating disorders such as bingeing and purging, which are much more common in females.
- Low self-esteem in women predicts vulnerability to depression in adolescents and college students.
- Although the sexes differ overall in sexual aggression, it really appears to be limited to a subset of men—those who are high on Dark Triad traits, lack empathy, and display hostile masculinity, especially if they also pursue a short-term mating strategy.
- Gender differences in empathizing, in turn, are linked to altruistic behavior such as helping those in need and sharing their belongings.
- Women score higher than men on *objectified body consciousness*, which involves becoming observers and critics of their bodies and feeling shame when their bodies do not match up with cultural idealized body standards.
- The current movement toward using gender-neutral pronouns such as *they*, *them*, and *theirs*, or novel ones such as *ze* and *xe*, reflect people who do not identify with the gender binary.
- Most reviews conclude that gender stereotypes are well-calibrated to actual gender differences and are not exaggerated.
- Fetal exposure to hormones can have lasting effects on gender-linked interests and abilities.

Chapter 17: Culture and Personality

- A cultural perspective on personality is critical for testing the generalizability of both findings and theories of personality functioning.
- Cultural variation in the number of children a woman has appears to be evoked partly as a consequence of the cultural level of economic development and the cultural level of social support provided to women.
- A longitudinal study found that Australian children who experienced harsher and more unpredictable cultural environments engaged in more and earlier sexual activity.
- Experiments conducted in China and Canada show that when the threat of disease is made salient to people, they are more likely to conform on experimental tasks.
- Self-enhancement, which is culturally variable, shows up in considering oneself “better than average” and over-claiming credit for successful group outcomes.
- Higher exposure to culturally credible cues of religious commitment in others increases religious beliefs—an illustration of transmitted culture.
- A study in Spain concluded that beliefs about the traits of men being more *agentic* and the traits of women being more *communal* show remarkable stability over more than three decades, from 1985 to 2018.

Chapter 18: Stress, Coping, Adjustment, and Health

- COVID-19 is used to illustrate that, while many diseases are caused by microbes, their transmission is often through specific behaviors that can be modified.
- We streamlined content throughout in order to make room for a new section on personality and the COVID-19 pandemic. We now illustrate how the five models of the personality–illness link have been applied to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to the restrictions recommended by public health officials.
- New key term: Allostatic Load, which refers to the total accumulated “wear and tear” on the body produced by stress over time.
- Covered new research on optimistic attributional style as a mediator of the effects of character strengths on risk for depression.
- Added a link to Carver and Scheier’s optimism questionnaire.
- Discuss research that separates the presence of optimism from the absence of pessimism to examine their separate effects on health.
- Describe an application of the Pennebaker expressive writing paradigm applied to college students’ personal struggles with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Shortened the Closer Look on the role of positive emotions in coping with stress.
- Added a new study on Type A illustrating how this individual difference conforms more to a dimension (normally distributed) than to a true typology.
- Cite CDC data showing that heart disease remains the number one cause of death in the United States (though in 2022 COVID-19 was a close second).

Chapter 19: Disorders of Personality

- Update to the case of Kody Scott, which opens this chapter. Mr. Scott passed away from natural causes in 2021, a few months after release from a prison sentence following a 2017 assault conviction. While he had several opportunities to change his life of violence, his repeated convictions throughout his life illustrate that, for most people with a personality disorder, change is difficult and unlikely.
- Updated research on a dimensional (versus categorical) model of personality disorders.
- Description of the minor update to the DSM, which is now titled DSM 5-TR (for Text Revision).
- While the DSM 5-TR continues the categorical approach to personality disorders, we now describe the World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Classification of Diseases (ICD) system. In 2022 the ICD fully adopted a dimensional approach to personality disorders. The ICD was ratified by all 193 member nations of the WHO, whereas the DSM is a product mainly of one country—the United States. For now, the DSM 5-TR is the standard for diagnosis in the United States, and so we present this approach to personality disorders. However, we wanted students to be aware of the alternative—the ICD—which is in use in most other developed countries around the world.
- Added detail to Table 19.11 describing the self-concept, emotional, behavioral, and social relationship disturbances associated with the 10 DSM 5-TR personality disorders.

Chapter 20: Summary and Future Directions

- Understanding the role of situations will generate efforts to form a taxonomy of situations, similar to how the field has developed a taxonomy of traits.
- Genetics of personality turning out to be more complex than initially envisioned.
- Progress in linking the six domains of human nature to each other via research collaborations.

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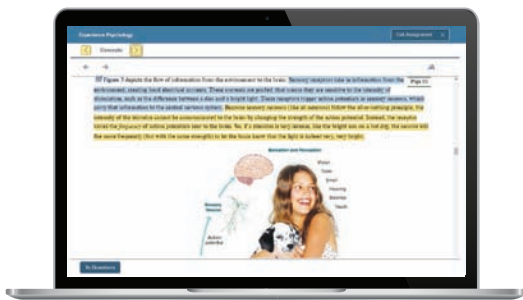
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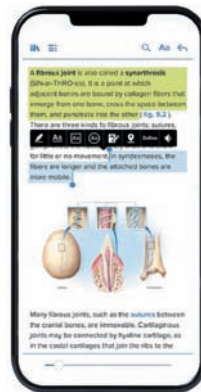
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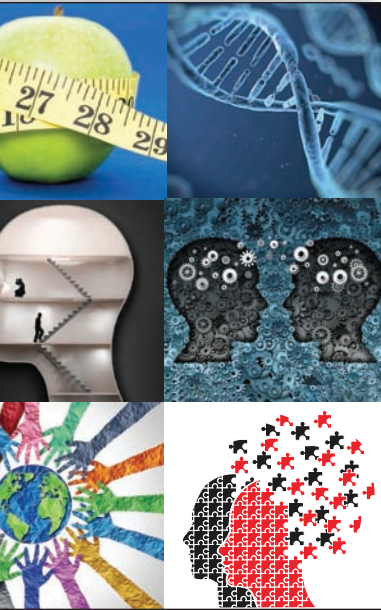
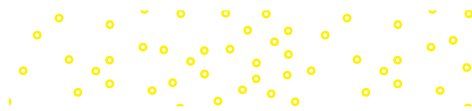
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Introduction to Personality Psychology

Personality Defined

Personality Is the Set of Psychological Traits . . .
And Mechanisms . . .
Within the Individual . . .
That Are Organized and Relatively Enduring . . .
And That Influence . . .
Their Interactions with . . .
And Adaptations to . . .
The Environment

Three Levels of Personality Analysis

Human Nature
Individual and Group Differences
Individual Uniqueness

A Fissure in the Field

Grand Theories of Personality
Contemporary Research in Personality

Six Domains of Knowledge About Human Nature

Dispositional Domain
Biological Domain
Intrapsychic Domain
Cognitive-Experiential Domain
Social and Cultural Domain
Adjustment Domain

The Role of Personality Theory

Standards for Evaluating Personality Theories

Is There a Grand Ultimate and True Theory of Personality?

KEY TERMS

INTRODUCTION



Those who carry humor to excess are thought to be vulgar buffoons, striving after humor at all costs, not caring about pain to the object of their fun; . . . while those who can neither make a joke themselves nor put up with those who do are thought to be boorish and unpolished. But those who joke in a tasteful way are called ready-witted and tactful . . . and it is the mark of a tactful person to say and listen to such things as befit a good and well-bred person.

Source: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*. K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company, Limited, 1893.

Aristotle, in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, expressed these wise observations on the subject of humor and the ways in which people do or do not express it. In this quote, we see Aristotle behaving much as a personality psychologist. Aristotle is analyzing the characteristics of persons who have an appropriate sense of humor. He is providing some details about what features are associated with a sense of humor. Aristotle adds to this description by comparing people who are extreme, having either too much or too little sense of humor. In his book on ethics, Aristotle analyzed many personality characteristics, including truthfulness, courage, intelligence, self-indulgence, anger-proneness, and friendliness.

We might conclude that Aristotle was an amateur personality psychologist. But aren't we all amateur personality psychologists to some extent? Aren't we all curious about the characteristics people possess, including our own? Don't we all use personality characteristics in describing people? And haven't we all used personality terms to explain behavior, either our own or others'?

Each person is, in certain respects, like all other persons, like some other persons, and like no other person.

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When we say that our friend goes to a lot of parties because she is extraverted, we are using personality to summarize and explain her behavior. When we refer to another friend as conscientious and reliable, we are describing features of his personality. When we characterize ourselves as thoughtful, intelligent, and ambitious, we are describing features of our personalities.

Features of personality make people different from one another, and these features usually take the form of adjectives, such as John is lazy, Mary is optimistic, and Fred is anxious. *Adjectives that can be used to describe characteristics of people are called trait-descriptive adjectives.* There are nearly 20,000 such trait-descriptive adjectives in the English language. This astonishing fact alone tells us that, in everyday life, there are compelling reasons for trying to understand and describe those we interact with, as well as ourselves.

Notice that the adjectives describing personality refer to several very different aspects of people. Words such as *thoughtful* refer to inner qualities of mind. Words such as *charming* and *humorous* refer to the effects a person has on other people. Words such as *domineering* are relational and signify a person's position, or stance, toward others. Words such as *ambitious* refer to the intensity of desire to reach our goals. Words such as *creative* refer both to a quality of mind and to the nature of the products we produce. Words such as *deceitful* refer to the strategies a person uses to attain his or her goals. All of these features describe aspects of personality.

Exercise

Think of someone you know well—say, a friend, family member, or roommate. Consider the many characteristics that make this person unique. List the five adjectives you think best capture this person's personality. For example, if you were to describe this person to someone, what five adjectives would you use? Now, ask your target person to list the five adjectives *he or she* thinks best describe himself or herself. Compare your lists.

Personality Defined

Establishing a definition for something as complex as human personality is difficult. The authors of the first textbooks on personality—Gordon Allport (1937) and Henry Murray (1938)—struggled with the definition. The problem is how to establish a definition that is sufficiently comprehensive to include all of the aspects mentioned earlier, including inner features, social effects, qualities of the mind, qualities of the body, relations to others, and inner goals. Because of these complexities, some textbooks on personality omit a formal definition entirely. Nonetheless, the following definition captures the essential elements of personality: **Personality** is the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence their interactions with, and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments. Let's examine the elements of this definition more closely.

Personality Is the Set of Psychological Traits . . .

Psychological traits are characteristics that describe ways in which people are different from each other. Saying that someone is *shy* is to mention one way in which he or she differs from others who are more outgoing. Traits also define ways in which people are *similar* to some others. For example, people who are shy are similar to each other in that they are anxious in social situations and perhaps blush easily, particularly when there is an audience focusing attention on them.

Consider another example—the trait of talkativeness. This characteristic can be meaningfully applied to people and describes a dimension of difference among them. Typically, a talkative person is that way from day to day, from week to week, and from year to year. Certainly, even the most talkative person can have quiet moments, quiet days, or even quiet weeks. Over time, however, those with the trait of talkativeness tend to emit verbal behavior with greater frequency than those who are low on talkativeness. In this sense, traits describe the **average tendencies** of a person. On average, a high-talkative person starts more conversations than a low-talkative person.

Research on personality traits asks four kinds of questions:

- How many traits are there?
- How are the traits organized?
- What are the origins of traits?
- What are the correlations and consequences of traits?

One primary question is *how many* fundamental traits there are. Are there dozens or hundreds of traits, or merely a few? The second research question pertains to the *organization*, or structure, of traits. For example, how is talkativeness related to other traits, such as impulsivity and extraversion? A third research question concerns the *origins* of traits—where they come from and how they develop. Does heredity, our genetic makeup, influence talkativeness? What sorts of cultural and child-rearing practices affect the development of traits such as talkativeness? A fourth key question pertains to the *correlations and consequences* of traits for the experiences we have, the behavior we engage in, and the life outcomes we achieve or fail to achieve. Do talkative persons have many friends? Do they have a more extended social network to draw upon in times of trouble? Do they annoy people who are trying to study?

The four research questions constitute the core of the research program of many personality psychologists. Psychological traits are useful for at least three reasons. First, they help to *describe* people and help to understand the dimensions of difference among people. Second, traits are useful because they help *explain* behavior. The reasons people



People are different from each other in many ways. The science of personality psychology provides an understanding of the psychological ways that people differ from one another.

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Courage is an example of a trait that is activated and reveals itself only in specific situations. The current president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, was an actor and comedian prior to his election as his country's president. His high level of courage only became apparent when his country responded to widespread attacks by its neighbor, Russia.

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act may be partly a function of their personality traits. Third, traits are useful because they can help *predict* future behavior—for example, the sorts of careers individuals will find satisfying, who will tolerate stress better, and who is likely to get along well with others. Thus, personality is useful in *describing*, *explaining*, and *predicting* differences among individuals. All good scientific theories enable researchers to describe, explain, and predict in their domains. Just as an economic theory might be useful in describing, explaining, and predicting fluctuations in spending habits or the broader economy, personality traits describe, explain, and predict differences among persons.

And Mechanisms . . .

Psychological mechanisms are like traits, except that the term *mechanisms* refers more to the processes of personality. For example, most psychological mechanisms involve an information-processing activity. Someone

who is extraverted, for example, may look for and notice opportunities to interact with other people, such as in elevators or coffee shops. That is, an extraverted person is prepared to notice and act on certain kinds of social information.

Most psychological mechanisms have three essential ingredients: *inputs*, *decision rules*, and *outputs*. A psychological mechanism may make people more sensitive to certain kinds of information from the environment (input), may make them more likely to think about specific options (decision rules), and may guide their behavior toward certain categories of action (outputs). For example, an extraverted person may look for opportunities to be with other people, may consider in each situation the possibilities for human contact and interaction, and may encourage others to interact with him or her. Our personalities contain many psychological mechanisms of this sort—information-processing procedures that have the key elements of inputs, decision rules, and outputs (see Figure 1.1).

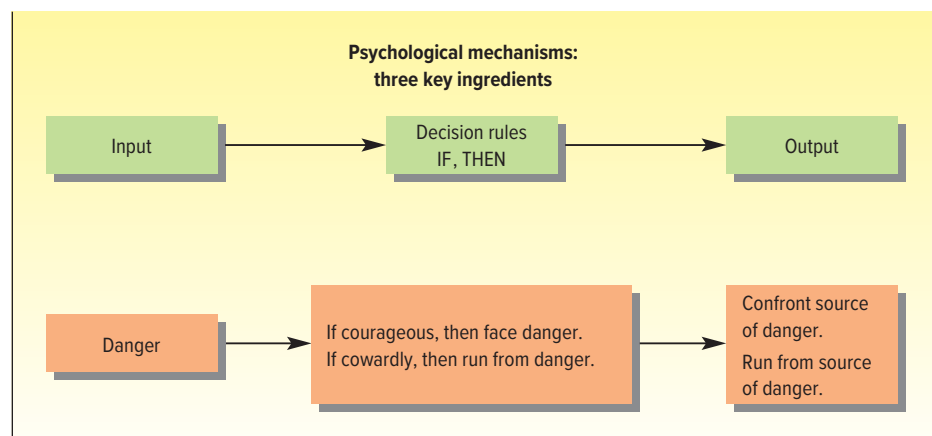


Figure 1.1

Psychological mechanisms have three essential ingredients. Our personalities contain many such mechanisms.

This does not mean that all of our traits and psychological mechanisms are activated at all times. In fact, at any point in time, only a few are activated. Consider the trait of courageousness. This trait is activated only under particular conditions, such as when people face serious dangers and threats to their lives or the lives of others in their group. Some people are more courageous than others, but we will never know which people are courageous unless and until the right situation presents itself. Look around next time you are in class: Who do you think has the trait of courageousness? You won't know until you are in a situation that provides the potential for courageous behavior.

Within the Individual . . .

Within the individual means that personality is something a person carries with them over time and from one situation to the next. Typically, we feel that we are today the same people we were last week, last month, and last year. We also feel that we will continue to have these personalities in the coming months and years. And, although our personalities are certainly influenced by our environments, and especially by the significant others in our lives, we feel that we carry with us the same personalities from situation to situation in our lives. The definition of personality stresses that the important sources of personality reside within the individual. Hence, they are at least somewhat stable over time and somewhat consistent over situations, issues we will examine empirically in subsequent chapters.

That Are Organized and Relatively Enduring . . .

Organized means that the psychological traits and mechanisms for a given person are not simply a random collection of elements. Rather, personality is organized because the mechanisms and traits are linked to one another in a coherent fashion. Imagine the simple case of two desires—a desire for food and a desire for intimacy. If you have not eaten for a while and are experiencing hunger pangs, then your desire for food might override your desire for intimacy. On the other hand, if you have already eaten, then your desire for food may temporarily subside, allowing you to pursue intimacy. Our personalities are organized in the sense that they contain decision rules that govern which needs or motives are activated, depending on the circumstances.

Psychological traits are also relatively **enduring** over time, particularly in adulthood, and are somewhat consistent over situations. To say that someone is angry at this moment is not saying anything about a trait. A person may be angry now, but not tomorrow or may be angry in one situation, but not in others. Anger is more of a *state* than a trait. To say that someone is anger prone or generally hot tempered, however, is to describe a psychological trait. Someone who is anger prone is *frequently* angry, relative to others, and shows this proneness time and time again in many different situations. For example, the person might be argumentative at work, hostile and aggressive while playing team sports for recreation, and quarrelsome with family members.

There may be some occasions when this generalization about the consistency of personality from situation to situation does not hold. Some situations may be overpowering and suppress the expression of psychological traits. People who are generally talkative, for example, may remain quiet during a lecture, at the movies, or in an elevator—although you undoubtedly have experienced someone who would not keep quiet in any of these circumstances!

The debate about whether people are consistent across situations in their lives has a long history in personality psychology. Some psychologists have argued that the

evidence for consistency is weak (Mischel, 1968). For example, honesty measured in one situation (say, cheating on a test) may not correlate very highly with honesty measured in another situation (say, cheating on income taxes). We will explore this debate more fully later in the book. For now, we will simply say that most personality psychologists maintain that although people are not perfectly consistent, there is enough consistency to warrant including this characteristic in a definition of personality.

The fact that personality includes relatively enduring psychological traits and mechanisms does not preclude change over time. Indeed, describing precisely the ways in which we change over time is one goal of personality psychologists.

And That Influence . . .

In the definition of personality, an emphasis on the **influential forces** of personality means that personality traits and mechanisms can have an effect on people's lives. Personality influences how we act, how we view ourselves, how we think about the world, how we interact with others, how we feel, how we select our environments (particularly our social environments), what goals and desires we pursue in life, and how we react to our circumstances. People are not passive creatures merely responding to external forces. Rather, personality plays a key role in affecting how people shape their lives. It is in this sense that personality traits are forces that *influence* how we think, act, and feel.

Their Interactions with . . .

This feature of personality is perhaps the most difficult to describe, because the nature of **person–environment interaction** is complex. In Chapter 15, we examine interactionism in greater detail. For now, however, it is sufficient to note that interactions with situations include perceptions, selections, evocations, and manipulations. *Perceptions* refer to how we “see,” or interpret, an environment. Two people may be exposed to the same objective event, yet what they pay attention to and how they interpret the event may be very different. And this difference is a function of their personalities. For example, two people can look at an inkblot, yet one person sees two cannibals cooking a human over a fire, whereas the other perceives a smiling clown waving hello. As another example, a stranger may smile at someone on the street; one person might perceive the smile as a smirk, whereas another person might perceive the smile as a friendly gesture. It is the same smile, just as it is the same inkblot, yet how people interpret these situations can be determined by their personalities.

Selection describes the manner in which we choose situations to enter—how we choose our friends, romantic partners, hobbies, college classes, and careers. How we go about making these selections is, at least in part, a reflection of our personalities. How we use our free time is especially a reflection of our traits. One person may take up the hobby of parachute jumping, whereas another may prefer to spend time quietly listening to a podcast alone. We select from what life offers us, and these choices are partly a function of personality.

Evocations are the reactions we produce in others, often quite unintentionally. To some extent, we create the social environment that we inhabit. A child with a high activity level, for example, may evoke in parents' attempts to constrain the child, even though these attempts are not intended or desired by the child. A person who is physically large may evoke feelings of intimidation in others, even if intimidation is not the goal. Our evocative interactions are also essential features of our personalities.

Manipulations are the ways in which we intentionally attempt to influence others. Someone who is anxious or frightened easily may try to influence their group to avoid scary movies or risky activities. Someone who is highly conscientious may insist that everyone follow the rules. Or, someone who is very neat and orderly may insist that their spouse pick up their messy things. The ways in which we attempt to manipulate the behavior, thoughts, and feelings of others are essential features of our personalities. All of these forms of interaction—perceptions, selections, evocations, and manipulations—are central to understanding the connections between the personalities of people and the environments they inhabit.

And Adaptations to . . .

An emphasis on **adaptation** conveys the notion that a central feature of personality concerns adaptive functioning—accomplishing goals, coping, adjusting, and dealing with the challenges and problems we face as we go through life. Few things are more obvious about human behavior than the fact that it is goal directed, functional, and purposeful. Even behavior that does not appear functional—neurotic behavior such as excessive worrying, for example—may, in fact, be functional. For example, people who worry a lot may be better at detecting social signs of danger and correctly anticipating ways to cope with threat. Consequently, what appears on the surface to be maladaptive (excessive worrying) may, in fact, have some adaptive functions. In addition, some aspects of personality processes represent deficits in normal adaptations, such as breakdowns in the ability to cope with stress, to regulate one's social behavior, or to manage one's emotions. Although psychologists' knowledge of the adaptive functions of personality traits and mechanisms is currently limited, it remains an indispensable key to understanding the nature of human personality.

The Environment

The physical **environment** often poses challenges for people. Some of these are direct threats to survival. For example, food shortages create the problem of securing adequate nutrients for survival. Extremes of temperature pose the problem of maintaining thermal homeostasis or body temperature. Heights, snakes, spiders, and strangers can all pose threats to survival. Human beings, like other animals, have evolved solutions to these adaptive problems. Hunger pangs motivate us to seek food, and taste preferences guide our choices of which foods to consume. Shivering mechanisms help combat the cold, and sweat glands help fight the sweltering heat. At a psychological level, our fears of heights, snakes, spiders, and strangers—the most common human fears—help us avoid or safely interact with these environmental threats to our survival.

Our social environment also poses adaptive challenges. We may desire the prestige of a good job, but there are many other people competing for the same positions. We may desire interesting friends and mates, but there are many others competing for them. We may desire greater emotional closeness with others, but may not know how to achieve closeness. The ways in which we cope with our social environment—the challenges we encounter in our struggle for belongingness, love, and esteem—are central to an understanding of personality.

Personality partly determines the particular aspects of the environment that are important at any moment in time. A person who is talkative, for example, will notice more opportunities in the social environment to strike up conversations than