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This compact, brilliant text allows the reader to learn simultaneously about the subject matter and about the self. What more could be asked of an undergraduate text?

—**VIRGINIA BRABENDER, PhD**, PROFESSOR EMERITUS, WIDENER UNIVERSITY,
CHESTER, PA, UNITED STATES

With the publication of this book, Dr. Bornstein has given the field of personality psychology a gift—a well written, engaging, and accessible textbook that covers the four main perspectives on personality. This work will be considered a seminal textbook in personality theory for years to come, and one that students will remember long after their course is completed.

—**NICOLE CAIN, PhD**, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND
PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ, UNITED STATES

If there is such a thing as an irresistible textbook, this is it. In a few lively, wide-ranging, and often witty chapters, Robert Bornstein has made personality theory and research not only comprehensible, but entertaining. In addition to benefitting intellectually, readers will appreciate how this book deepens their personal understandings of self and others.

—**NANCY McWILLIAMS, PhD, ABPP**, VISITING PROFESSOR EMERITA, RUTGERS GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ, UNITED STATES

This tight and efficient text by one of the most accomplished and conversant scholars in the field covers all of the major perspectives and issues in personality psychology. An engaging resource that will be fun and easy to read for students interested in this fascinating topic.

—**CHRISTOPHER J. HOPWOOD, PhD**, PROFESSOR OF PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF ZÜRICH, ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND

Robert F. Bornstein, who has received multiple awards both for his teaching and personality research, has taken his nearly 40 years of experience teaching personality courses to produce *Elements of Personality: Discovering Connections*. This concise, lively, and engaging undergraduate text distills the field to its four primary perspectives, which Bornstein covers in depth while enhancing their breadth with contemporary links to social, cognitive, developmental, and neurophysiological psychology. Students will appreciate this textbook for its clarity and organization, relatable daily life examples, and its value for understanding the personality of others and themselves.

—**GREGORY J. MEYER, PhD**, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO,
TOLEDO, OH, UNITED STATES

This book does a truly excellent job of introducing readers to what is known about personality. It was a really engaging book to read and I found myself finishing it much faster than I had anticipated. I strongly recommend it.

—**DR. VIRGIL ZEIGLER-HILL**, DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY,
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY, ROCHESTER HILLS, MI, UNITED STATES

One can feel the love Bornstein has for the subject of personality, for teaching, and for his students. He not only introduces theoretical and clinical wisdom, but integrates it with personal vignettes of the “fathers and mothers” of personality theories as well as his own thinking, thus offering himself as a wonderful role model for those in training to become clinical psychologists and practicing clinicians. The connections of personality theories with research, culture, neuropsychology, and ethics are inspiring, and are examined with a critical eye. This book will contribute immensely to the dialogue between clinicians and researchers.

—**ETY BERANT, PhD**, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE CLINICAL PROGRAM, BARUCH IVCHER
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, REICHMAN UNIVERSITY, HERZLIYA, ISRAEL

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What Is Personality?

“P ersonality” is an interesting word, one with many uses. Sometimes we use the term informally, as when we describe someone who’s fun to be with as having “lots of personality.” Sometimes we use the term to indicate we don’t really like a person that much (as in, “He’s nice enough, I suppose, but no personality”). Personality has a formal definition, of course, and we’ll discuss that in a moment, but perhaps the best way to begin thinking about what personality means is to think about yourself.

Consider your own personality—what are you like? Are you an outgoing person or someone who tends to be a bit shy? Are you spontaneous, or do you like to plan things carefully and follow a set routine? Do you always meet your deadlines (an important skill in a college student), or do you find that despite your best intentions, you sometimes turn in assignments late?

Perhaps you’re outgoing and spontaneous but also a stickler for meeting your deadlines. Or maybe you’re introverted, obsessive, and a bit of a procrastinator. Regardless of how you describe yourself, one thing you might have noticed in thinking about your personality is that it captures what makes you unique—the ways that your traits and behaviors differ from those of other people. For this reason, personality has sometimes been referred to as “the study of individual differences.” Just as no two fingerprints are exactly alike, no two personalities are exactly alike either.

So how do psychologists define personality? No definition is perfect and captures all of personality’s subtle elements, but here’s a pretty good starting

point: *Personality* is each person's unique way of adapting to life's challenges and opportunities.

Let's take a moment to unpack that definition. We already discussed the first half: Personality is what makes you unique. What about the second half, "adapting to life's challenges and opportunities"?

I first taught Theories of Personality in 1986, and since then, I've taught it once or twice each year, probably about 60 times in all (I've lost count). On the first day of each semester, I walk into the room, a bit nervous, hoping everything will go well. I look out on my new class, and everyone seems to be in a good mood, optimistic about the start of a new semester, and ready to learn. Aside from a few telltale clues (how a person dresses, whether they chose to sit in the first row or somewhere near the back), I know little about my students as individuals.

All that changes as the semester goes on, and I have an opportunity to chat with students after class, during office hours, and via email—now I begin to know you better. But the "moment of truth" occurs when I give back the first exam. Some people are happy with their grade, others seem disappointed, and that's when my students' personalities begin to reveal themselves. Some people do not hide the fact that they're thrilled or unhappy; others reveal little about how they're feeling. Some people who didn't do well on the exam seem disappointed; others seem angry (I guess those students thought the test was unfair).

The bottom line: Getting back an exam sometimes represents a challenge (if you didn't do as well as you'd hoped); at other times, it represents an opportunity (if you did better than expected). How you react—how you cope with that challenge or opportunity—tells me something about your personality. And the same thing occurs in other situations: When you lose a job or get promoted, when you begin a new friendship or end a longstanding one. These are the things that force us to cope with change. These are the events that bring to the surface our unique way of adapting to life's opportunities and challenges.

WHY STUDY PERSONALITY?

Beyond making us unique, our personalities shape many aspects of our lives. Consider dating—something most of us have done at some point. What causes you to be attracted to one person but not to another? Research shows that, as you might expect, a potential date's physical appearance matters: We are more attracted to good-looking people than to people who are not as good-looking. Beyond physical appearance, however, one of the most important factors in choosing among potential romantic partners is their personality. Studies have shown that we are attracted to people who exhibit personality traits like kindness, honesty, openness, and compassion—traits that we believe are important in a romantic partner (Oh et al., 2020; Smith, 2018).

That all makes sense, and I doubt it surprises you. What you might find a bit surprising, though, is that having desirable personality traits causes a person to

appear more attractive—I mean literally to be better looking. Consider a study wherein researchers asked 78 college students to rate the physical attractiveness of photographs of potential romantic partners. To determine the impact of potential partners' personalities on students' attractiveness ratings, the researchers randomly paired the photos with descriptions of personality traits that were either positive (honest, polite, intelligent) or negative (unstable, unfair, rude). Students rated the people in the photographs as being significantly better looking in the "positive trait" condition than in the "negative trait" condition, even though they were looking at the exact same photographs in both conditions, and the only thing that differed was the personality traits paired with each photo (Lewandowski et al., 2007).

Personality affects not only our romantic relationships but also our health. Certain personality traits (for example, hostility and pessimism) increase the likelihood that a person will develop serious illness, like heart disease or cancer (Deary et al., 2010). On average, hostile people actually die at a younger age than people who are less hostile. However, certain personality traits—optimism, for example—are associated with decreased illness risk and a longer life.

In addition to influencing the likelihood that we will become ill, personality also affects how effectively we cope with illness when it occurs. For example, people who score high on measures of conscientiousness follow their physician's advice carefully (getting regular checkups, taking medication as instructed, eating healthier foods, etc.). People who score low on conscientiousness are less likely to follow their physician's advice—and their health suffers as a result (Stephan et al., 2019).

BOX 1.1 | PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

If you are a frequent user of social media, you are not alone. Based on a survey conducted in early 2021, nearly 70% of adults in the United States spend time on Facebook, while 40% log on to Instagram, and 25% use Snapchat (Pew Research Center, 2021). For younger adults surveyed—those between 18 and 29—Instagram and Snapchat use was reported at 71% and 65%, respectively (Facebook remains about the same, at 70%).

Given the popularity of social media, it is not surprising that there has been a great deal of research examining various features of our "online lives," and studies suggest that what we post (and what we like) reveal a great deal about our personalities. Here's what we know.

Most People Present Themselves Accurately Online

Research does not support the widely held belief that our "online selves" bear little resemblance to our real selves. When Wilson et al. (2012) reviewed more than 400 studies assessing the accuracy of people's online self-presentation by
(continues)

BOX 1.1 | PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE (*Continued*)

comparing Facebook profiles and postings to descriptions of the person provided by friends and family members, they found that, in general, people's online selves are a pretty accurate reflection of who they really are.

Personality Predicts Social Media Use—and Vice Versa

In two separate studies, D. Liu and Campbell (2017) and Lampropoulos et al. (2022) found that extroverted people are more frequent users of social media than are introverted people. Approaching this topic from the opposite perspective, Youyou et al. (2015) found that what you find appealing on social media tells us a great deal about who you are: People's patterns of Facebook "likes" predict their scores on widely used personality tests with surprising accuracy (even better than descriptions provided by people who know the person well).

Too Much Social Media Use Is Associated With Psychological Difficulties

In a study of Australian university students, researchers found that those who spent the most time online showed greater concern regarding their appearance, leading the researchers to conclude that excessive social media use may be associated with higher levels of "appearance anxiety" (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2021). Along somewhat different lines, Savci et al. (2021) found that adolescents and adults who score high on narcissism spend more time online than do those who score lower on narcissism and that very high levels of narcissism are associated with an increased likelihood of "social media addiction."

Trashing Other People Online Is Bad for Your Health

In a large-scale study of more than 826 million "tweets," Eichstaedt et al. (2015) found that a high proportion of angry and aggressive social media postings was associated with an elevated risk for heart disease. Frequent posting of hostile Twitter content was actually a better predictor of heart disease risk than well-established physical risk factors like smoking, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Deary et al. (2010) were correct: Hostility really is bad for you.

FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON PERSONALITY

What have we learned so far? In addition to a good basic definition of personality, we now know that personality impacts some important aspects of life and that certain personality traits seem more adaptive than others. If you want to get lots of dates and live a long and healthy life, be kind, compassionate, honest, and optimistic. But what causes certain people to be optimists while others are pessimists? Why are some people quick to anger while others are more laid back and easygoing?

Since personality first emerged as an area of interest to psychologists in the early part of the 20th century, many different theories of personality have been described. These theories can be grouped into four major approaches—four

perspectives on personality. Beginning with the next chapter, we will discuss these four perspectives in detail. For now, let's review the key elements of each one briefly, so we have a common language that we can use to consider these four perspectives in greater detail later.

The Psychodynamic Perspective

Most closely associated with the work of Sigmund Freud (though there are actually many variants of Freud's basic framework), the psychodynamic perspective on personality emphasizes the importance of early childhood experiences—especially those that take place within the family—on personality development and dynamics. In particular, psychoanalysts believe that relationships with one's parents are a key determinant of one's personality later in life. The other distinguishing feature of the psychodynamic approach is its emphasis on unconscious processes: Psychoanalytic theorists argue that much of our behavior is influenced by thoughts, feelings, and motives that exist partly (sometimes completely) outside conscious awareness.

Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral Frameworks

John B. Watson, B. F. Skinner, and other behaviorists argued that our personalities are shaped by learning and conditioning—that if we are reinforced for behaving in certain ways, we are more likely to exhibit those behaviors. If your parents taught you that children should obey adults without question, you may become passive and compliant; if your parents taught you that standing up for yourself is appropriate, you'll likely be more assertive. Although "strict behaviorists" (like Watson and Skinner) focus almost exclusively on learning and conditioning, cognitive-behavioral theorists believe that personality is also shaped by our cognitions and thought processes (for example, our beliefs regarding which situations are most likely to bring rewards and which situations should best be avoided).

Trait and Interpersonal Approaches

Trait theorists argue that personality is best understood in terms of a core set of traits on which we all differ and that once we know where you stand with respect to each of these traits, we'll have a good understanding of your personality. Beginning in the 1930s, Gordon Allport, Raymond B. Cattell, and others attempted to describe the fundamental traits that comprise personality, to develop measures that assess these traits, and to understand what causes us to differ on various trait dimensions (for example, why some of us tend to be introverted while others are extroverted). In recent years, interpersonal theorists have extended the trait approach by studying how a given trait may be expressed differently in different social situations—how context influences trait-related behaviors.

Humanistic and Existential Theories

Believing that psychoanalytic models place too much emphasis on psychopathology and that behavioral frameworks are too mechanistic (treating people as though they respond mindlessly to external contingencies), humanistic personality theorists like Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers emphasize healthy psychological functioning and people's potential for growth and positive change. Building on the work of humanistic theorists, existential personality theorists argue that people not only have a need to fulfill their potential (or "self-actualize," as Maslow and Rogers would say) but also to find meaning and purpose in life—to have a positive impact on the world and on those around them.

CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

Although the four major perspectives disagree regarding the best way to conceptualize and study personality, all agree that culture plays an important role in personality development and dynamics. But what exactly is "culture"? Like personality, it's a term we use frequently, but we may not have in mind a precise definition of the term.

Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and others define *culture* as a set of shared attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices that characterize a social group (Keith, 2018). Cultural norms vary across societies, but they also differ across different subcultures within a society (Arshad & Chung, 2022). In other words, Japan, Tanzania, and the United States may be described as having somewhat different cultures, but it is also true that within each nation there is considerable variability in cultural norms, beliefs, and practices.

Culture and the Self

Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede devoted much of his career to studying cultural values and how these values vary in different societies. He concluded that, broadly speaking, these differences in cultural values can be captured by evaluating each society along six key dimensions (Hofstede, 2001a; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Hofstede's six dimensions of culture are summarized in Table 1.1. All six dimensions inform us in important ways about how societies differ, but research indicates that the cultural value that has the greatest impact on personality is individualism versus collectivism—the first dimension in Table 1.1 (Burton et al., 2021; Taras et al., 2010). Individualistic societies tend to value competition and individual achievement, whereas collectivist societies emphasize interpersonal ties over individual achievement.

Studies show that this cultural dimension helps shape our self-concept in important ways. People from individualistic societies tend to describe themselves in terms of their accomplishments and emphasize traits and behaviors that distinguish them from others (for example, they may describe themselves as being intelligent and hardworking). Such people have what Susan

TABLE 1.1. Hofstede's Six Dimensions of Culture

Cultural dimension	Definition
Individualism–collectivism	Degree to which a society emphasizes individual achievement (individualism) versus interpersonal connection and close ties with other people (collectivism)
Power distance	Degree to which less powerful members of a society accept unequal distributions of power among different segments of society; high power distance reflects acceptance of the status quo, whereas low power distance reflects greater questioning of unequal power distribution
Masculinity–femininity	Degree to which a society values assertiveness and competition for resources (masculinity) versus cooperation, modesty, and supporting those in need of assistance (femininity)
Uncertainty avoidance	Degree to which members of a society tolerate non-conformity (low uncertainty avoidance) or employ rigid norms and rules regarding acceptable beliefs and behaviors (high uncertainty avoidance)
Long-term versus short-term normative orientation	Degree to which long-standing traditions are valued and maintained (short-term orientation) versus an emphasis on innovation and adaptation (long-term orientation)
Indulgence–restraint	Degree to which a society employs strict social norms to regulate behavior (restraint) or instead permits flexibility in peoples' behavior as they seek to gratify basic human needs (indulgence)

Cross, Pamela Bacon, and Michael Morris (2000) termed an “independent self-concept.” Unlike people from individualistic societies, people from collectivist cultures describe themselves in terms of their interpersonal ties and emphasize characteristics that capture their friendships and family relationships (like “good daughter” or “caring friend”); they have what Cross and her colleagues termed an “interdependent self-concept.” Research confirms that having an independent versus an interdependent self-concept predicts important aspects of one’s personality traits, relationship patterns, and interpersonal behaviors (Herrera et al., 2020).

How Cultural Values Are Internalized

The question remains: How does one acquire the values and expectations of one’s culture? What is the process by which cultural norms are internalized and shape our self-concept? First and foremost, cultural values are communicated to us by important people in our life, especially members of our family. Parents are often key in this socialization process; for those of us who were raised in households with extended, multi-generational families, other people (such as grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles) also played a significant role. Other elements of society help determine our cultural expectations and

beliefs as well (for example, schools, religious institutions, and even social media). Once internalized, cultural values affect how we think, feel, and behave. They also affect how we interact with others and how we interpret other people's behavior.

PERSONALITY RESEARCH METHODS

A sound theoretical framework is essential for understanding personality development and dynamics and for designing treatments to help people cope with psychological problems. But psychology is a scientific discipline, and like biology, chemistry, economics, and sociology, we rely on evidence to test and refine our theoretical models. A useful theory of personality must be able to generate predictions that can be tested empirically.

With this in mind, it is important to note that in any scientific discipline (psychology included), researchers do not actually test entire theories—they test hypotheses derived from these theories. A *hypothesis* is a prediction derived from a theory that is stated in clear, precise terms and in a way that allows the prediction to be evaluated using scientific methods.

Confirming one or two hypotheses derived from a theory is encouraging—but one or two supportive studies are not enough. For a theory to be considered both valid and useful, a broad array of hypotheses that capture key predictions from various parts of the theory must be tested empirically. No theory is perfect (and one goal of theory testing is to identify limitations in a particular framework so those limitations can be corrected), but for a theory of personality to be considered valid and useful, the majority of predictions derived from that theory should hold up to empirical scrutiny.

Each of the four theoretical perspectives discussed in this book has been tested extensively and each has been modified over the years in response to accumulating scientific evidence. As we move forward in Chapters 2 to 5, we'll discuss those aspects of each perspective that have been supported and those aspects that have not. We'll also discuss how psychologists have updated each perspective to accommodate relevant empirical findings.

As is true of every field of science—and every subfield in psychology—personality theorists and researchers have developed their own tests and measures to quantify key elements of each perspective. And like every other scientific field, personality researchers use established scientific methods to test their hypotheses. In the following sections, we'll discuss the four major research methods used to evaluate predictions derived from different theories of personality: case studies, naturalistic investigations, correlational studies, and experiments.

Case Studies

A *case study* is an intensive investigation of an individual in an effort to learn as much as possible about that person's personality. Many case studies use

information obtained directly from the person and from those close to that person (for example, friends, relatives, and romantic partners). This information is usually gathered by conducting interviews with the person and those who know that person well. Many case studies also incorporate information obtained from existing records (often called “archival information”). This archival information may include, among other things, the person’s school records, work history, and legal history, along with personal artifacts (like diaries, blogs, personal correspondence, and information from social media).

The advantage of a case study is that it draws upon a variety of information sources, providing a rich and nuanced picture of the person’s personality and life experience. The primary disadvantage of a case study is that because the information is not collected systematically under controlled conditions, case studies are not considered as truly scientific as other research methods, like correlational studies and experiments.

Naturalistic Investigations

Naturalistic investigations involve observing people as they go about their daily lives and creating records of their behavior and interpersonal interactions in vivo (that is, “in the real world”). Most often, these records consist of notes taken by researchers as they observe people interacting, but in some naturalistic investigations, audio or video recordings may be used in addition to (or in lieu of) notes made by the observer. In some naturalistic investigations, the researcher interacts directly with the people being studied; in other naturalistic investigations, the researcher observes unobtrusively without interacting with the people they are observing.

The primary advantage of a naturalistic investigation is that the researcher is observing people in their “natural habitat” rather than in the artificial setting of a laboratory. For this reason, naturalistic studies have great *ecological validity* (Fahmie et al., 2023): The researcher’s observations are likely to be an accurate reflection of how people behave in real-world settings. The primary limitation of naturalistic studies is that because the information is not collected under controlled conditions (as would occur in a laboratory), naturalistic investigations can only provide limited information regarding the underlying causes of observed behaviors.

Correlational Studies

Before we can discuss correlational studies, we must define one key component of these studies: the variable. A *variable* is anything that can vary on its own or be changed deliberately by a researcher. In other words, a variable is anything that can be measured or manipulated. In correlational studies, variables are typically measured but not manipulated. As we’ll see in a moment, when researchers manipulate one or more variables, they usually do so as part of an experiment.

Correlational studies assess the degree to which two variables covary—the degree to which the two variables are associated with each other, such that a

high score on one variable indicates that there will also be a high score on the other variable. A wide range of variables are assessed by personality researchers in correlational studies. These include various features of personality (like introversion, hostility, and narcissism), as well as variables that are hypothesized to be related to these personality features. For example, high levels of hostility might be associated with increased likelihood of interpersonal conflict. High levels of narcissism would likely be associated with an inflated self-image and overestimation of one's skills and abilities. In these examples, hostility, interpersonal conflict, narcissism, inflated self-image, and overestimation of one's skills and abilities are all variables.

The magnitude of association between two variables in a correlational study is usually represented by a numerical index called a *correlation coefficient*, represented as r . Correlation coefficients can range from -1.00 (when two variables are perfectly negatively correlated) to $+1.00$ (when two variables show a perfect positive correlation). Most correlation coefficients in personality are smaller than that, however. For example, the correlation between hostility and risky driving behavior is $r = .39$ (Akbari et al., 2019). The correlation between introversion and altruism is $r = -.40$, a negative correlation, which suggests that introverted people tend to be less generous than extroverts (Batool et al., 2019).

It is important to keep in mind that merely because two variables are correlated, it does not mean that one variable caused the other to change. One of the fundamental principles of science, the study of personality included, is that correlation does not imply causation. In other words, if researchers find that there is a positive correlation between shyness and depression, it does not mean that being shy causes one to be depressed. It might be the other way around: Perhaps being depressed causes one to withdraw from social contact. Or perhaps shyness and depression both result from some other variable (like low energy levels) that was not assessed by the researcher.

So how do we understand which variables actually cause other variables to change? To do that, personality researchers conduct experiments.

Experiments

In an *experiment*, the researcher manipulates one variable and assesses the effect of this manipulation on another variable. The variable that is manipulated is called the independent variable; the variable that is measured is called the dependent variable. In the study of personality and attractiveness that we discussed earlier in this chapter—the study by Lewandowski et al. (2007), wherein different personality traits were paired with different photographs—the independent variable was type of personality trait (positive vs. negative), and the dependent variable was participants' attractiveness ratings of the people pictured in the photos.

Experiments are often used to assess the effectiveness of different treatments for psychological disorders—an important issue in personality and clinical psychology. If, for example, a researcher was interested in understanding which form of psychotherapy was most effective in alleviating anxiety in college

students, that researcher might randomly assign college students seeking treatment for anxiety to one of two conditions. Half the students would receive psychoanalytic therapy to help alleviate their anxiety (we'll discuss psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy in Chapter 2); the remaining students would receive cognitive-behavioral therapy (we'll discuss behavioral and cognitive-behavioral therapy in Chapter 3). After some predetermined number of therapy sessions—let's say 10—the students' anxiety levels would be assessed. In this experiment, the independent variable is the type of therapy (psychodynamic vs. cognitive-behavioral), and the dependent variable is the students' anxiety levels at the end of treatment.

The main advantage of an experiment is that it allows researchers to draw strong conclusions regarding the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. In our psychotherapy example, if the students in the cognitive-behavioral therapy condition had lower anxiety levels than students in the psychodynamic therapy condition at the end of treatment, we can conclude with some confidence that cognitive-behavioral therapy is more effective than psychodynamic therapy in alleviating anxiety—at least in college students. Whether similar findings would emerge if other participants (for example, older adults) were studied is open to question, and to address this question, a second experiment—this time involving older adults with anxiety difficulties—would have to be conducted.

Experiments are often considered the “gold standard” in psychological research, but they are not perfect. They are often conducted under conditions that differ somewhat from how people behave in vivo. For example, in the Lewandowski et al. (2007) attractiveness study, participants made ratings of photographs—not actual people—but that rarely happens in the real world. In the anxiety treatment experiment we just discussed, students were randomly assigned to the two psychotherapy conditions, but perhaps some of the people in the cognitive-behavioral condition would have preferred psychodynamic therapy. In the real world, those students might have sought their preferred treatment, and perhaps they would have shown greater improvement as a result.

PERSONALITY: DISCOVERING CONNECTIONS

In this book, we'll explore the four major perspectives on personality. Each chapter describes key concepts within a particular perspective, along with classic and contemporary research findings associated with that perspective. As the title of this book suggests, we'll also discuss how different perspectives address common issues in the study of personality (like the roots of our individual differences and what sorts of treatments are most helpful when people encounter psychological challenges). By exploring these common issues, we'll make explicit some of the underlying similarities—some of the “hidden connections”—among the four perspectives.

In addition to learning about how different perspectives on personality grapple with similar issues, we'll discover connections in three other ways.

Connections With Other Areas of Psychology

Personality theory and research do not exist in a vacuum; it has been influenced by ideas and findings from other areas of psychology. Within each chapter, we'll discuss how a particular perspective on personality connects with other psychological subfields. Table 1.2 summarizes in general terms the ways in which social, cognitive, developmental, and neuropsychology have enhanced our understanding of personality theory and research. These connections will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 2 to 5.

Connections With Disciplines Beyond Psychology

We'll also connect each perspective on personality with ideas and findings from a discipline outside psychology. For example, we'll learn how anthropological research has influenced the psychodynamic perspective on parent-child relationships and how aspects of humanistic personality theory have been applied in business and organizational settings. We'll discuss some of the philosophical assumptions that underlie behaviorism and how the trait perspective on personality draws upon ideas and findings from evolutionary theory and genetics.

Connections With Your Own Life Experience

Perhaps most important, throughout this book, we'll explore how concepts and findings from the four perspectives on personality connect with your own life experience. We'll discuss how you have used certain Freudian ego defenses (like rationalization and denial) to deal with challenges at work and conflicts in your friendships and romantic relationships. We'll explore the ways that humanistic personality theory helps explain your career aspirations, your life goals, and why you've chosen to enroll in this course and not another. By the time you finish this book, you will have discovered things about yourself and your relationships that you never thought about before. Let's get started.

TABLE 1.2. How Personality Connects With Other Areas of Psychology

Psychological subfield	Connections with personality theory and research
Developmental	Roots of our individual differences—how personality develops, how personality changes as we age, and how early experiences shape personality
Social	Personality in interpersonal contexts—how personality-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors affect (and are affected by) our relationships with other people
Cognitive	The characteristic ways of thinking, perceiving, and remembering that are associated with different personality styles
Neuroscience	Biological underpinnings of individual differences and the ways in which physiological factors shape personality

BOX 1.2 | MY ROUNDABOUT JOURNEY FROM BIOLOGY TO PSYCHOLOGY

Many college students have settled on their career path before they arrive on campus, but if you are still uncertain about how you want to spend your professional life, you are not alone. When I entered college, I did not intend to become a psychologist. From early childhood, I aspired to enter the field of medicine and become a doctor. So off I went in the fall of 1977 to begin my first year at Amherst College in Massachusetts, completely committed to majoring in biology. Things didn't work out exactly as I had planned, and when I received my third C grade (it might actually have been my fourth), I was summoned to the office of the professor who ran the premed program and told to find something else to do with my life. I switched from biology to psychology and decided to major in art as well to try my hand at painting.

In the midst of my transition to psychology, I made an interesting choice—one that I still don't understand completely but which had a significant impact on my career. During my freshman year, while still in Amherst's premed program, I had obtained a summer position as a research assistant in the Department of Biochemistry at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, not too far from where I grew up. Even though I switched from biology to psychology during my sophomore year at college, I continued doing my summer biochemistry research—all four summers, in fact—and the experience gave me a unique perspective on the differences between research in biochemistry, traditionally considered a "hard science," and research in psychology, which is typically grouped among the social sciences, along with sociology and economics. (Spoiler alert: Psychology research isn't really all that different from biochemistry research. The content may be different, but the process is very similar.)

At Mount Sinai, I had the good fortune to work for an extraordinarily generous person, Terry Ann Krulwich, whose mission in life was to give young people a leg up on their graduate school applications by awarding them coauthorship on publications whenever possible. My understanding of biochemistry was modest at best—we were studying the dynamics of sodium-proton antiporters in membrane vesicles of alkalophilic bacteria—but I did my job as well as I could, and by the time I applied to clinical psychology doctoral programs in the fall of my senior year, I was coauthor on two (soon to be three) publications. I applied to 24 clinical psychology PhD programs, was accepted at three, and began my clinical training at the State University of New York at Buffalo in the fall of 1981. I received my doctorate in May of 1986, began teaching at Gettysburg College that fall, and I've been a professor now for nearly 40 years (the last 20 or so at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York).

CHAPTER REVIEW

- *Personality* describes each person's unique way of adapting to life's challenges and opportunities. Beyond making us unique, our personalities shape many aspects of our lives—everything from friendships and romantic relationships to health and health-related behavior.
- Since personality first emerged as an area of interest to psychologists in the early part of the 20th century, many different theories of personality have been described. These theories can be grouped into four major approaches: the psychodynamic perspective, behavioral and cognitive-behavioral models, trait and interpersonal models, and the humanistic/existential framework.
- Although the four major approaches often disagree regarding the best ways to conceptualize and study personality, all agree that culture plays an important role in personality development and dynamics.
- As is true in other scientific disciplines, personality researchers use established scientific methods to test predictions derived from their theoretical models. No theory is perfect, and one goal of theory testing is to identify limitations in a particular framework so those limitations can be corrected. But for a theory of personality to be considered valid and useful, the majority of predictions derived from that theory should hold up to empirical scrutiny.
- Among the most important research methods used to study personality are *case studies* (which involve intensive investigation of an individual in an effort to learn as much as possible about that person), *naturalistic observations* (which involve observing people as they go about their daily lives to create records of their everyday behavior), *correlational studies* (which assess the degree to which two variables covary, such that a high score on one variable indicates that there will also be a high score on the other variable), and *experiments* (wherein researchers manipulate one variable and assess the effect of this manipulation on another variable).

CRITICAL THINKING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Hofstede's six dimensions of culture are summarized in Table 1.1 on page 9. We've already discussed where the United States falls on the individualism–collectivism dimension. How would you describe U.S. culture with respect to the other five dimensions? If you were raised in a country outside the United States, where does your country of origin fall on Hofstede's dimensions?
2. One of the fundamental principles of science, personality included, is that correlation does not imply causation. Just because two variables covary, this does not mean that one variable actually caused the other to change. Suppose a researcher discovers that there is a negative correlation between

the level of depression and grade point average (GPA) in college students: The more depressed a student is, the lower their GPA. What are some possible explanations for this inverse relationship between depression and GPA?

3. Experiments are often considered the “gold standard” in personality research methods. In what ways are experiments more rigorous than the other research methods we discussed? Do experiments have any limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting their results?

KEY TERMS

case study: An intensive investigation of an individual, in an effort to learn as much as possible about that person.

correlational study: A study examining the degree to which two variables covary, such that a high score on one variable indicates that there will also be a high score on the other variable. The magnitude of association between the two variables is represented by a numerical index called a *correlation coefficient* (r).

culture: A set of shared attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices that characterize a social group.

ecological validity: The degree to which research findings are likely to be an accurate reflection of how people behave in real-world settings.

experiment: A study wherein the researcher manipulates one variable and assesses the effect of this manipulation on another variable. The variable that is manipulated is called the *independent variable*; the variable that is measured is called the *dependent variable*.

hypothesis: A prediction derived from a theory that is stated in clear, precise terms, allowing the prediction to be evaluated using scientific methods.

naturalistic investigation: A study wherein the researcher observes people as they go about their daily lives, creating records of their behavior and interpersonal interactions.

personality: Each person’s unique way of adapting to life’s challenges and opportunities.

variable: Anything that can vary on its own or be changed deliberately by a researcher. Experiments involve manipulating variables; in correlational studies, variables are typically measured but not manipulated.

ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

Bornstein, R. F. (2016). Personality traits and dynamics. In J. C. Norcross, G. R. VandenBos, & D. K. Freedheim (Eds.), *APA handbook of clinical psychology: Vol. III. Applications and methods* (pp. 81–101). <https://doi.org/10.1037/14861-005> American Psychological

Association. A student-friendly overview of basic concepts in personality theory and research, including ideas and findings from the four perspectives we'll discuss in this book.

- Brady, L. M., Fryberg, S. A., & Shoda, Y. (2018). Expanding the interpretive power of psychological science by attending to culture. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(45), 11406–11413. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1803526111> This article discusses the importance of integrating different cultural perspectives into psychological theory and research, moving beyond our longstanding emphasis on studying individuals from Western, industrialized nations.
- Dumont, F. (2010). *A history of personality psychology: Theory, science, and research from Hellenism to the twenty-first century*. Cambridge University Press. Discusses the evolution of personality theory and research from its earliest origins to the present, including various ways that the topics taken up by personality theorists have changed over the years.
- Fischer, R. (2018). *Personality, values, culture: An evolutionary approach*. Cambridge University Press. Fischer uses evolutionary theory as a framework to describe key concepts and findings from personality, primarily those from trait theory (the material presented in this book is a great way of connecting personality to biology, for those who are interested in doing so).
- Robins, R. W., Fraley, R. C., & Krueger, R. F. (Eds.). (2009). *Handbook of research methods in personality psychology*. Guilford Press. This edited volume includes chapters by leading researchers describing the major approaches used to study contemporary personality theories. This book will be particularly useful for students who are interested in a more in-depth discussion of the empirical aspects of personality.
- Wilson, T. D. (2009). Know thyself. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4(4), 384–389. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2009.01143.x> A compelling article discussing the degree to which we humans—all of us—have limited awareness of our underlying thoughts, feelings, motives, and desires.