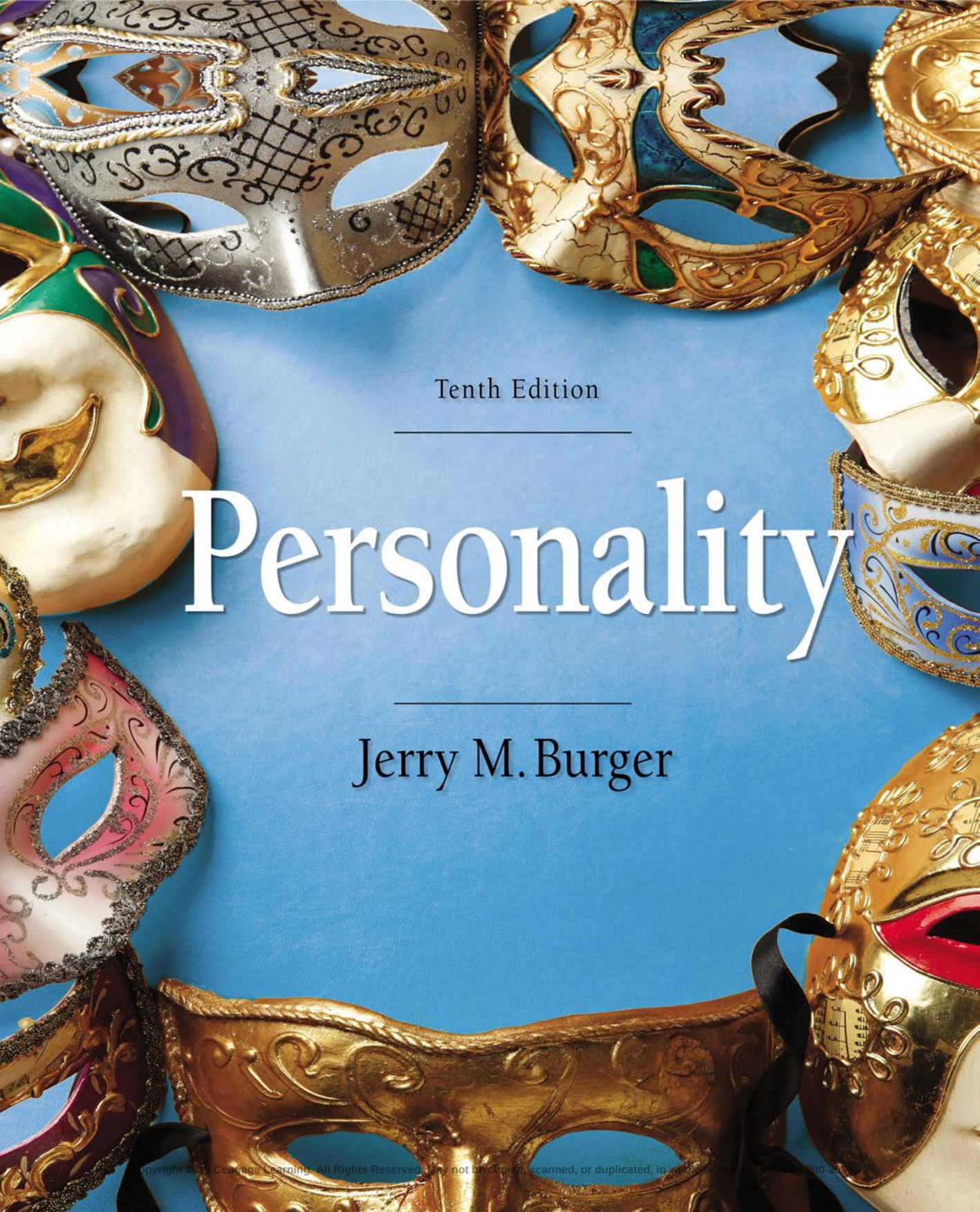

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Tenth Edition

Personality

Jerry M. Burger

Santa Clara University

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Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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Preface

This is the 10th edition of this book. There is something magical—or at least noteworthy—about the number 10. It's the basis of our numerical system, probably because we have 10 fingers and 10 toes. Each birthday and anniversary that can be divided by 10 takes on greater significance than the one just before or just after it. And 10 editions of a textbook by the same author represent a professional lifetime of chronicling the ongoing development of an academic field. When I thumb through earlier editions, I am struck by how much the book has changed over its lifetime—changes that reflect, among other things, the vibrancy of the field. And yet, the essence of the book—the structure, the philosophy—has remained intact. That balance between change and stability is also at the heart of this most recent edition; that is, number 10.

What's New?

As in previous revisions, each chapter has been updated to reflect new research findings and new developments in the field. More than 300 references have been added to this edition. I've devoted more space to topics that have generated an increasing amount of research in recent years. For example, the section on anxiety and coping (Chapter 6) now includes a discussion of research on resilience, and the section on gender roles (Chapter 14) has been rewritten to include, among other topics, a discussion of the effects of social pressure to act masculine or feminine. I've also reduced or eliminated coverage of topics that seem to have fallen out of favor with personality researchers. The discarded topics include the application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to job satisfaction (previously in Chapter 11) and self-discrepancies (previously in Chapter 15).

What's the Same?

The philosophy that guided the organization and writing of the first nine editions remains. I wrote this book to organize within one textbook the two approaches typically taken by instructors of undergraduate personality courses. Many instructors focus on the great theories and theorists—a chapter each on Freud, Jung, Rogers, Skinner, and so on. Students in these classes gain insight into the structure of the mind and issues of human nature, as well as a background for understanding psychological disorders and psychotherapy. However, these students are likely to be puzzled when they pick up a current journal of personality research only to find they recognize few, if any, of the topics. Other instructors emphasize personality research. Students in these classes learn about current studies on individual differences and personality processes. But they probably see little relationship between the abstract theories they may touch upon in class and the research topics that are the focus of the course.

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However, these two approaches to teaching the course do not represent separate disciplines that happen to share the word *personality* in their titles. Indeed, the structure of this book is designed to demonstrate that the classic theories stimulate research and that research findings often shape the development and acceptance of the theories. Limiting a student's attention to either theory or research provides an unnecessarily narrow view of the field.

Something else that remains from the earlier editions is my belief that students learn about research best by seeing *programs* of research rather than a few isolated examples. Twenty-six research programs are covered in the seven research chapters in this edition. In each case, I have tried to illustrate how the questions being investigated are connected to a larger theory, how early researchers developed their initial hypotheses and investigations, and how experimental findings lead to new questions, refined hypotheses, and ultimately a greater understanding of the topic. Through this process, students are exposed to some of the problems researchers encounter, the fact that experimental results are often equivocal, and a realistic picture of researchers who don't always agree on how to interpret findings.

I also have preserved the structure used in previous editions for the theory chapters. Each of these chapters contains a section on application and a section on assessment. The application sections demonstrate how the sometimes abstract theories relate to everyday concerns and issues. Students discover in the assessment sections that how each approach to understanding personality brings with it unique assumptions and problems when attempting to measure relevant personality constructs.

I've retained the personality tests students can take and score themselves. There are now 14 "Assessing Your Own Personality" boxes scattered throughout the book. I've discovered in my own teaching that discussions about, for example, social anxiety are more engaging after students discover how they score on a social anxiety test. This hands-on experience not only gives students a better idea of how personality assessment works but also often generates a little healthy skepticism about relying too heavily on such measures. I've also retained the biographies of prominent personality theorists in this edition. Feedback from students indicates that knowing something about the person behind the theory helps to make the theory come alive. My students often speculate about how a theorist's life affected the development of his or her theory. Students and instructors tell me that they like the *In the News boxes* I introduced six editions ago. I also have received positive feedback about the Appendix, a new addition to the ninth edition that allows students to combine all the information they gain about themselves from the personality inventories into one comprehensive picture. Consequently, these features have been retained in this edition.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are extended to all the people who helped with the production of this book.

And, as always, I thank Marlene, whose understanding and support through all 10 editions have made this book possible.

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About the Author

Jerry M. Burger is a professor of psychology at Santa Clara University. He is the author of more than a hundred journal articles and book chapters and has published two books: *Desire for Control: Personality, Social and Clinical Perspectives* and *Returning Home: Reconnecting with Our Childhoods.* He has been on the editorial board of several academic journals, including the *Journal of Personality* and the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, and has served as an associate editor for the "Personality Processes and Individual Difference" section of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. In his spare time, he likes to run, read, and write. You can send comments about the book to him at jburger@scu.edu.

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1

What Is Personality?

The Person and the Situation

Defining Personality

Six Approaches to Personality

Personality and Culture

The Study of Personality: Theory, Application, Assessment, and Research

Summary

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A few years ago, without warning, a devastating tornado touched down in the suburbs of Oklahoma City. The 1.3-mile-wide tornado plowed a 17-mile path through the community, leaving piles of rubble and debris where minutes earlier homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses had been standing. Wind speeds reached as high as 210 miles per hour. By the time the storm lifted 50 minutes later, a large part of Moore, Oklahoma, and other nearby cities had been destroyed. More than 12,000 homes were damaged, many of them completely obliterated by the storm. Twenty-four people were dead, including 10 children.

In the days that followed, residents discovered the extent of their losses, considered how their lives were changed, and helped those who had lost the most. While the community grieved, condolences and concern for the victims and their families poured in from public officials and citizens from across the country.

Powerful events have a way of bringing out similar reactions in people. Someone might point to this tragedy to illustrate how much alike each of us really is, how all people are basically the same. Yet if we look a little more closely, even in this situation, we can see that not everyone reacted in the same way. Some people joined rescue teams to search through the piles of bricks and boards. Others pitched tents on their lawns vowing to protect what remained of their possessions. Some opened their homes to strangers who no longer had a home of their own. Others expressed anger at officials who had failed to build storm shelters in the basements of the elementary schools where children had died. Some dropped off food, clothing, diapers, and checks at quickly assembled donation centers. Others struggled to cope with the emotional aftermath of the storm and a growing sense of helplessness. Many turned to religion to find meaning and comfort, but some struggled to find the hand of God in so much suffering. Some residents who had lost everything vowed to rebuild. Others decided it was time to leave.

In many ways, the reactions to the Oklahoma tornado are typical of people who are suddenly thrown into a unique and tragic situation. At first, the demands of the situation overwhelm individual differences, but soon each person's characteristic way of dealing with the event and the emotional aftermath begins to surface. The more we look, the more we see that people are not all alike. The closer we look, the more we begin to see differences among individuals. These characteristic differences are the focus of this book. They are part of what we call personality. Moreover, personality psychologists have already studied many of the topics and issues that surfaced in the Oklahoma tragedy. Emotions, coping with stress, religion, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and many other relevant topics are covered in various places in this book.

The Person and the Situation

Is our behavior shaped by the situation we are in or by the type of person we are? In the Oklahoma tornado tragedy, did people act the way they did because of the events surrounding them, or were their reactions more the result of the kind of people they were before the incident? This is one of the enduring questions in psychology. The generally agreed-upon answer today is that both the situation and the person contribute to behavior. Certainly, how we act depends on the situation. Depending

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"The outstanding characteristic of man is his individuality. There was never a person just like him, and there never will be again."
Gordon Allport

on where we are and what is happening, each of us can be outgoing, shy, aggressive, friendly, depressed, frightened, or excited. But it is equally apparent that not everyone at the same party, the same ball game, or the same shopping center behaves identically. The debate among psychologists has now shifted to the question of how the situation influences behavior as well as how behavior reflects the individual.

We can divide the fields of study within psychology along the answer to this question. Many psychologists concern themselves with how people *typically* respond to environmental demands. These researchers recognize that not everyone in a situation reacts the same. Their goal is to identify patterns that generally describe what most people will do. Thus, a social psychologist might create different situations in which participants encounter someone in need of help. The purpose of this research is to identify the kinds of situations that increase or decrease helping behavior. But personality psychologists turn this way of thinking completely around. We know there are typical response patterns to situations, but what we find more interesting is why Peter tends to help more than Paul, even when both are presented with the same request.

You may have heard the axiom, "There are few differences between people, but what differences there are, really matter." That tends to sum up the personality psychologists' viewpoint. They want to know what makes you different from the person sitting next to you. Why do some people make friends easily, whereas others are lonely? Why are some people prone to bouts of depression? Can we predict who will do well in the business world and who will fall short? Why are some people introverted, whereas others are so outgoing? Each of these questions is explored in this book. Other topics covered include how your personality is related to hypnotic responsiveness, reactions to stress, how well you do in school, and even your chances of having a heart attack.

This is not to say that situations are unimportant or of no interest to personality psychologists. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 7, many of the questions posed by personality researchers concern how a certain kind of person behaves in a particular situation. However, the emphasis of this book is on what makes you different from the next person—that is, your personality. Before addressing that question, let's start by defining "personality."

Defining Personality

Anyone who has been in college a while can probably anticipate the topic of the first lecture of the term. The philosophy professor asks, "What is philosophy?" The first class meeting in a communication course centers on the question, "What is communication?" Those who teach geography, history, and calculus have similar lectures. And so, for traditional and practical reasons, psychology professors too begin with the basic question, "What is personality?"

Although a definition follows, bear in mind that psychologists do not agree on a single answer to this question. In fact, personality psychologists are engaged in an ongoing and perhaps never-ending discussion of how to describe human personality and what topics belong within this subfield of psychology (Fajkowska & DeYoung, 2015; McAbee & Connelly, 2016; Yang et al., 2014). As you will see, each personality

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theorist covered in this book has a different idea about what personality psychologists ought to study. Whereas one theorist points to unconscious mechanisms, another might look at learning histories, and still another at the way people organize their thoughts. Although some students might find this lack of agreement frustrating, let me suggest from the outset that these different viewpoints provide a rich and exciting framework within which to explore the complexities of the individual.

Personality can be defined as *consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes originating within the individual*. Several aspects of this simple definition need elaboration. Notice that there are two parts to it. The first part is concerned with consistent patterns of behavior. Personality researchers often refer to these as *individual differences*. The important point here is that personality is *consistent*. We can identify these consistent behavior patterns across time and across situations. We expect someone who is outgoing today to be outgoing tomorrow. Someone who is competitive at work is also quite likely competitive in sports. We acknowledge this consistency in character when we say, "It was just like her to do that" or "He was just being himself." Of course, this does not mean that an extraverted person is boisterous and jolly all the time, on solemn occasions as well as at parties. Nor does it mean people cannot change. But if personality exists and behavior is not just a reflection of whatever situation we find ourselves in, then we must expect some consistency in the way people act.

The second part of the definition concerns intrapersonal processes. In contrast to *inter*personal processes, which take place between people, intrapersonal processes include all the emotional, motivational, and cognitive processes that go on inside of us that affect how we act and feel. Thus, you will find that many personality psychologists are interested in topics like depression, information processing, happiness, and denial.

It also is important to note that, according to the definition, these consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes originate within the individual. This is not to say that external sources do not influence personality. Certainly, the way parents raise their children affects the kind of adults the children become. And, of course, the emotions we experience are often a reaction to the events we encounter. The point is that behavior is not solely a function of the situation. The fear we experience while watching a frightening movie is the result of the film, but the different ways we each express or deal with that fear come from within.

Six Approaches to Personality

What are the sources of consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes? One reason for the length of this book is that personality psychologists have answered this question in many different ways. To help make sense of the wide range of personality theories proposed over the past century, we'll look at six general approaches to explaining personality. These are the psychoanalytic approach, the trait approach, the biological approach, the humanistic approach, the behavioral /social learning approach, and the cognitive approach. Although the fit is not always perfect, each of the major theories of personality can be placed into one of these six general approaches.

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Why so many theories of personality? Let me answer this question by way of analogy. Nearly everyone has heard the story about the five blind men who encounter an elephant. Each feels a different part of the animal and then tries to explain to the others what an elephant is like. The blind man feeling the leg describes the elephant as tall and round. Another feels the ear and claims an elephant is thin and flat, whereas another, holding onto the trunk, describes the animal as long and slender. The man feeling the tail and the one touching the elephant's side have still different images. The point to this story, of course, is that each man knows only a part of the whole animal. Because there is more to the elephant than what he has experienced, each man's description is correct but incomplete.

In one sense, the six approaches to personality are analogous to the blind men. That is, each approach does seem to correctly identify and examine an important aspect of human personality. Psychologists who subscribe to the *psychoanalytic approach* argue that people's unconscious minds are largely responsible for important differences in their behavior styles. Other psychologists, who favor the *trait approach*, identify where a person might lie along a continuum of various personality characteristics. Psychologists advocating the *biological approach* point to inherited predispositions and physiological processes to explain individual differences in personality. In contrast, those promoting the *humanistic approach* identify personal responsibility and feelings of self-acceptance as the key causes of differences in personality. *Behavioral/social learning* theorists explain consistent behavior patterns in terms of conditioning and expectations. Those promoting the *cognitive approach* look at differences in the way people process information.

It's tempting to suggest that by simply combining all six approaches, we can obtain an accurate picture of why people act the way they do. Unfortunately, the blind men analogy can only be stretched so far. Although different approaches to a given question in personality often vary only in emphasis—with each providing a legitimate, compatible explanation—in many instances, the explanations from two or more approaches may be entirely incompatible. Thus, people who work in the field often align themselves with one or another of the six approaches as they decide which of the competing explanations makes the most sense to them.

Returning to the blind men and the elephant, suppose someone were to ask how an elephant moves. The man feeling the trunk might argue that the elephant slithers along the ground like a snake. The one holding the elephant's ear might disagree, saying that the elephant must fly like a bird with its big, floppy wings. The man touching the leg would certainly have a different explanation. Although in some instances more than one of these explanations might be accurate (e.g., a bird can both walk and fly), it should be obvious that at times not every theory can be right. It also is possible that one theory may be correct in describing one part of human personality, whereas another theory may be correct in describing other aspects.

No doubt some theories will resonate with you more than others. But it is worth keeping in mind that each approach has been developed and promoted by a large number of respected psychologists. Although not all these men and women are correct about every issue, each approach has something of value to offer in our quest to understand what makes each of us who we are.

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Two Examples: Aggression and Depression

To get a better idea of how the six approaches to understanding personality provide six different, yet legitimate, explanations for consistent patterns of behavior, let's look at two common examples. Aggressive behavior and the suffering that comes from depression are widespread problems in our society, and psychologists from many different perspectives have looked into their causes.

Example 1: Aggression

Unfortunately, there are many people in the world today who frequently act in an aggressive manner. People arrested for assault often have a history of violence that goes back to playground fights in childhood. Why are some individuals consistently more aggressive than others? Each of the six approaches to personality provides at least one answer. As you read these answers, think about an aggressive person you have encountered or read about. Which of the six explanations seems to do the best job of explaining that person's behavior?

The classic psychoanalytic explanation of aggression points to an unconscious death instinct. That is, we are all said to possess an unconscious desire to self-destruct. However, because people with a healthy personality do not hurt themselves, these self-destructive impulses may be turned outward and expressed against others in the form of aggression. Other psychoanalysts argue that aggression results when we are blocked from reaching our goals. A person who experiences a great deal of frustration, perhaps someone who is constantly falling short of a desired goal, is a likely candidate for persistent aggressive behavior. However, in most cases, the person is unaware of the real reasons for the aggression.

Personality theorists who follow the trait approach focus on individual differences and the stability of aggressive behavior (Bettencourt, Talley, Benjamin, & Valentine, 2006). For example, one team of researchers measured aggressiveness in 8-year-old children (Huesmann, Eron, & Yarmel, 1987). The investigators interviewed the participants again when the participants were 30 years old and discovered that the children identified as aggressive in elementary school were the most likely to have become aggressive adults. Children who pushed and shoved their classmates grew into adults who abused their spouses and engaged in violent criminal behavior.

Personality psychologists from the biological perspective point to a genetic predisposition to act aggressively (Miles & Carey, 1997). That is, some people may be born with aggressive dispositions that, depending on their upbringing, result in their becoming aggressive adults. Other psychologists explain aggression in terms of evolutionary theory (Shackelford & Hansen, 2014). For example, the fact that men tend to be more aggressive than women might be explained by the male's inherited need to exercise control over rivals so that he can survive and pass along his genes. Other researchers from this approach look at the role hormones and neurotransmitters play in aggressive behavior (Berman, McCloskey, Fanning, Schumacher, & Coccaro, 2009; Klinesmith, Kasser, & McAndrew, 2006).

Psychologists who take a humanistic approach to personality explain aggression in yet another way. These theorists deny that some individuals are born to be aggressive. In fact, many argue that people are basically good. They believe all people can

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become happy, nonviolent adults if allowed to grow and develop in an enriching and encouraging environment. Problems develop when something interferes with this natural growth process. Aggressive children often come from homes in which basic needs are not met adequately. If the child develops a poor self-image, he or she may strike out at others in frustration.

The behavioral/social learning approach contrasts in many ways with the humanistic view. According to these psychologists, people learn to be aggressive the same way they learn other behaviors. Playground bullies find that aggressive behavior is rewarded. They get to bat first and have first choice of playground equipment because other children fear them. People also become aggressive from watching models. Children may learn from observing aggressive classmates that hurting others is sometimes useful. As discussed in Chapter 14, many people are concerned that the aggressive role models children routinely watch on television may be responsible for increasing the amount of violence in society.

Cognitive psychologists approach the question of aggressive behavior from yet another perspective. Their focus is on the way aggressive people process information. Certain cues in the environment, such as images of guns and fighting, often trigger a network of aggressive thoughts and emotions. When aggressive thoughts are highly accessible, people are more likely to interpret situations as threatening and respond to those perceived threats with violence. Although most of us ignore unintended insults and accidental bumps in the hallway, individuals with highly accessible aggressive thoughts are likely to respond with threats of violence and angry shoves.

Now, let's return to the original question: Why do some people show a consistent pattern of aggressive behavior? Each of the six approaches to personality offers a different explanation. Which is correct? One possibility is that only one is correct and that future research will identify that theory. A second possibility is that each approach is partially correct. There may be six (or more) different causes of aggressive behavior. Still a third possibility is that the six explanations do not contradict one another but rather differ only in their focus. That is, it's possible that aggressiveness is relatively stable and reflects an aggressive trait (the trait approach). But it might also be the case that some people tend to interpret ambiguous events as threatening (the cognitive explanation) because of past experiences in which they were assaulted (the behavioral/social learning explanation). These people may have been born with a tendency to respond to threats in an aggressive manner (the biological approach). But perhaps if they had been raised in a nonfrustrating environment (the psychoanalytic approach) or in a supportive home in which their basic needs were met (the humanistic approach), they would have overcome their aggressive tendencies. The point is that each approach appears to contribute something to our understanding of aggression.

Example 2: Depression

Most of us know what it is like to be depressed. We have all had days when we feel a little blue or melancholy. Like many college students, you may also have suffered through longer periods of intense sadness and a general lack of motivation to do anything. However, some people seem more prone to depression than others. Once again,

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each of the six approaches to personality has a different explanation for individual differences in depression.

According to Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic approach, depression is anger turned inward. That is, people suffering from depression hold unconscious feelings of anger and hostility. They may want to strike out at family members, but a healthy personality does not express such feelings overtly. Psychoanalysts argue that each of us has internalized the standards and values of society, which typically discourage the expression of hostility. Therefore, these angry feelings are turned inward, and people take it out on themselves. As with most psychoanalytic explanations, this process takes place at an unconscious level.

Trait theorists are concerned with identifying depression-prone individuals. Researchers find that a person's general emotional level today is a good indicator of that person's emotions in the future. People who experience an episode of depression during their teen years are likely to have recurring episodes in adulthood (Kovacs, Obrosky, & George, 2016). One study found that depression levels in 18-year-olds could be predicted from looking at participants' behavior from as early as 7 years of age (Block, Gjerde, & Block, 1991).

Biological personality psychologists point to evidence that some people may inherit a genetic susceptibility to depression (McGue & Christensen, 1997). A person

Photo courtesy of Emily Murphy

What causes depression? Depending on which approach to personality you adopt, you might explain depression in terms of anger turned inward, a stable trait, an inherited predisposition, low self-esteem, a lack of reinforcers, or negative thoughts.

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born with this vulnerability faces a much greater likelihood than the average individual of reacting to stressful life events with depression. Because of this inherited tendency, these people often experience repeated bouts of depression throughout their lives.

Humanistic personality theorists explain depression in terms of self-esteem. That is, people who frequently suffer from depression are those who have failed to develop a good sense of their self-worth. A person's level of self-esteem is established while growing up and, like other personality concepts, is fairly stable across time and situations. The ability to accept oneself, even one's faults and weaknesses, is an important goal for humanistic therapists when dealing with clients suffering from depression.

Psychologists from the behavioral/social learning approach point to learning histories as a cause of depression. Behaviorists argue that depression results from a lack of positive reinforcers in a person's life. That is, you may feel down and unmotivated because you see few activities in your life worth doing. A more extensive behavioral model of depression, covered in Chapter 14, proposes that depression develops from experiences with aversive situations over which people have little control. This theory maintains that exposure to uncontrollable events creates a perception of helplessness that is generalized to other situations and may develop into classic symptoms of depression.

Cognitive personality psychologists argue that some people are prone to episodes of depression because of the way they process information. Depressed individuals have negative thoughts about themselves, are pessimistic about the future, and tend to interpret events in a negative manner. Cognitive psychologists maintain that some individuals use a depressive filter to interpret and process information. Depressed people can easily recall unhappy experiences and are prepared to see the world in the most depressing terms possible.

Which of these accounts of depression strikes you as the most accurate? If you have been depressed, was it because of your low self-esteem, because you experienced an uncontrollable situation, or because you tend to look at the world through a depressing lens? As in the aggression example, more than one of these approaches may be correct. You may have found that one theory could explain an experience you had with depression last year, whereas another seems to better account for a more recent bout. In addition, the theories can at times complement each other. For example, people might interpret events in a depressing way because of their low self-esteem.

One more lesson can be taken from these two examples: You need not align yourself with the same approach to personality when explaining different phenomena. For example, you may have found that the cognitive explanation for aggression made the most sense to you, but that the humanistic approach provided the best account of depression. This observation demonstrates the main point of this section: Each of the six approaches has something to offer the student interested in understanding personality.

Personality and Culture

Psychologists have increasingly recognized the important role culture plays in understanding personality. To some students, this observation at first seems inconsistent with the notion of personality as distinct from situational influences

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