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Theories of Personality



DUANE P. SCHULTZ  **SYDNEY ELLEN SCHULTZ**

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Theories of Personality



ELEVENTH EDITION

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DUANE P. SCHULTZ

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

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preface to the Eleventh Edition

Each edition of a textbook must be as vital, dynamic, and responsive to change as the field it covers. To remain an effective teaching instrument, it must reflect the development of the field and continue to challenge its readers. We have seen the focus of personality study shift from global theories, beginning with Sigmund Freud's 19th-century psychoanalytic theory of neuroses, to 21st-century explorations of more limited personality facets or dimensions. And we have seen the basis of personality exploration change from case studies of emotionally disturbed persons to more scientifically based research with diverse populations. Contemporary work in the field reflects differences in gender, age, and sexual orientation as well as ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural heritage.

New and Expanded Coverage

New biographical material has been included for the theorists, to suggest how the development of their theory may have been influenced by events in their personal and professional lives. This approach shows students that the development of science through theory and research is not always totally objective. It may also derive from intuition and personal experience later refined and extended by more rational, analytic processes. Social and cultural influences on the theorists' beliefs about human nature are also described.

The sections on personality research have been updated with nearly 400 new references to maintain the emphasis on current issues. Research findings have been summarized throughout the text in "Highlights" boxes; this feature presents bullet point lists to help the student organize and compare the results of research studies.

Some of the topics with new and expanded coverage include the following:

- Do we present our true selves on social media? How does the use of social media influence our personality? How does our personality influence our use of social media? Do selfies show the real you?
- Updated work on the MMPI, the Rorschach, and the Thematic Apperception Test.
- The Mechanical Turk—a new way to conduct personality research online.
- New findings on the Freudian concepts of ego resilience, the Oedipus complex, and defense mechanisms. New findings on dreams, and the use of computers to interpret dreams.
- Social companion robots to facilitate psychoanalysis.
- Research on Jung's Psychological Types conducted in Arab cultures.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of neglect in childhood.
- New findings on Adler's concept of birth order.
- Over 30 new studies on Erikson's concepts of ego identity, gender preference, virtual ethnic identity, gender differences in toy preferences, and his stages of development.
- Cultural differences from Allport's work extended to the facial expression of emotions.
- More on the five-factor model of personality and the Dark Triad—an approach that includes narcissism, machiavellianism, and psychopathy.
- The Smartphone Basic Needs Scale—a self-report inventory designed to measure how Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be satisfied by smartphone use.

- New research findings on self-efficacy and locus of control.
- Techniques to measure sensation seeking. The relationship between sensation seeking and cyberbullying.
- More on Seligman's life and his development of positive psychology. Defining and finding happiness. The concept of flourishing. And how learned helplessness was used in developing techniques of torture in the war on terror.

Organization of the Text

The eleventh edition of *Theories of Personality* retains its orientation toward undergraduate students who have had little previous exposure to personality theories. Our purpose is to reach out to beginning students and ease their task of learning about the study of personality. We have chosen theorists who represent psychoanalytic, neopsychoanalytic, lifespan, genetics, humanistic, cognitive, behavioral, and social-learning approaches, as well as clinical and experimental work. The concluding chapter reviews these perspectives that describe personality development and suggests ways to help students draw conclusions and achieve closure from their studies.

Each theory in the text is discussed as a unit. Although we recognize the value of an issues or problems approach that compares theories on specific points, we believe that the issues-oriented book is more appropriate for higher-level students. The theories-oriented text makes it easier for beginning students to grasp a theory's essential concepts and overall flavor. We try to present each theory clearly, to convey its most important ideas, assumptions, definitions, and methods. We discuss each theorist's methods of assessment and empirical research and offer evaluations and reflections. Except for placing Freud first in recognition of his chronological priority, we have not arranged the theories in order of perceived importance. Each theory is placed in the perspective of competing viewpoints.

A Note on Diversity

The first person to propose a comprehensive theory of the human personality was Sigmund Freud, a 19th-century clinical neurologist who formulated his ideas while treating patients in Vienna, Austria. His work, called *psychoanalysis*, was based largely on sessions with wealthy White European women who came to him complaining of emotional distress and disturbing thoughts and behaviors. From his observations of their progress, or lack of it, he offered a theory to explain everyone's personality. Freud's system was important for the concepts he proposed—many of which are now part of popular culture—as well as for the opposition he provoked, inspiring other theorists to examine and promote their own ideas to explain personality.

Today, personality theorists and researchers recognize that an explanation based on a small, homogeneous segment of the population cannot be applied to the diverse groups of people sharing space in our world. The situation is similar in medicine. Medical researchers recognize, for example, that some medications and treatments appropriate for young adults are not suitable for children or elderly people. Diseases prevalent in certain ethnic groups are rare in others, requiring differences in medical screening and testing for diverse populations. Contemporary personality theory strives to be inclusive, studying the influences of age, gender, race, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and child-rearing practices. We see examples of this diversity throughout the text.

Features

For the student, we offer chapter outlines, summaries, research highlights, review questions, annotated reading lists, margin glossary terms, a cumulative glossary, tables and figures, a reference list, and referrals to relevant Web sites.

For instructors, the instructor's manual with test bank has been thoroughly revised and offers lecture outlines, ideas for class discussion, projects, useful web links, and test items. The test bank is available in digital formats. PowerPoint Lecture Slides and electronic transparencies are available on eBank. The transparencies feature select figures and tables from the text loaded into Microsoft PowerPoint. Contact your local sales representative for details.

Duane P. Schultz
Sydney Ellen Schultz

chapter 1

Personality: What It Is and Why You Should Care

Take a Look at the Word

Everybody Has One
Describing Your Personality
How Does Personality Develop?
Ways of Looking at Personality
How Others See Us
Stable and Predictable Characteristics
Unique Characteristics

Personality and the Social Media

Are You the Same Person Online?
How Does the Social Media Influence Our Personality?
How Does Our Personality Influence Our Use of Social Media?

The Role of Race and Gender in Shaping Personality

The Role of Culture in Shaping Personality

Different Cultural Beliefs about Destiny
Individualism
Child-Rearing Practices
Self-Enhancement
A Diversity of Cultures

Assessing Your Personality

The Concepts of Reliability and Validity
Self-Report Personality Tests
Online Test Administration
Projective Techniques
Clinical Interviews

Behavioral Assessment
Thought and Experience Assessment
Gender and Ethnic Issues That Affect Assessment

Research in the Study of Personality

The Clinical Method
The Experimental Method
Virtual Research
The Correlational Method

The Role of Theory in Personality Theories

The Autobiographical Nature of Personality Theories

Questions about Human Nature: What Are We Like?

Are We in Charge of Our Lives? Free Will versus Determinism
What Dominates Us? Our Inherited Nature or Our Nurturing Environment?
Are We Dependent or Independent of Childhood?
Is Human Nature Unique or Universal?
Our Life Goals: Satisfaction or Growth?
Our Outlook: Optimism or Pessimism?

Chapter Summary

Review Questions

Suggested Readings

Take a Look at the Word

Let's start by examining the word you're going to be dealing with this semester. It not only defines this course, but it will also help define your life as well.

Here are three standard dictionary definitions of the word taken at random:

- The state of being a person.
- The characteristics and qualities that form a person's distinctive character.
- The sum total of all the physical, mental, emotional, and social characteristic of a person.

You get the idea. It's everything about you that makes you what you are—a unique individual who is different, in large and small ways, from everybody else. It's a simple word, but a difficult concept to truly comprehend, which is why it takes a book and a semester to begin to come to grips with it. We're going to try to understand it, or at least learn something about it, by exploring the various ideas that psychologists have advanced over the years to try to explain it.

We have organized those ideas—those theories—in terms of their different outlooks on human nature, beginning with Sigmund Freud. We will deal with extensions that grew out of his theory of psychoanalysis and talk about the men and women who revised his ideas or rebelled against them. After that, we will move on to what is called the life-span approach, tracking personality development from birth all the way to old age. We'll then discuss theories that focus on individual personality traits, on psychological health, on predetermined behavior patterns, and on cognitive learning from social situations. We will also introduce current ideas for the 21st century and offer some suggestions and conclusions from our exploration of personality.

It's important to recognize that personality theorists from the last century rarely considered the importance of ethnic and cultural differences. We will see that it is not meaningful to generalize to all people from, for example, ideas that one theorist based on clinical observations of neurotic European women, or that another theorist based on tests given to American male college students. Therefore, when we discuss research conducted on these theories, and describe their use for real-world problems of diagnosis and therapy, we'll also try to show the influence of age, gender, race, ethnic and national origin, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation.

To make your study easier, we will include Highlights sections, giving brief summaries of research findings, as well as chapter outlines, summaries, review questions, and reading lists. Important words will be defined in the margins, and these definitions will also be listed in the glossary in the back of the book. In addition, check out the Web sites in our “Log On” features included in each chapter. For direct links, log on to the student companion site at www.cengagebrain.com.

Everybody Has One

Everybody has one—a personality, that is—and yours will help determine the boundaries of your success and life fulfillment. It is no exaggeration to say that your personality is one of your most important assets. It has already helped shape your experiences up to now, and it will continue to do so for the rest of your life. Everything you have accomplished to date, all of your expectations for the future, whether you will make a good husband, wife, partner, or parent, even your health can be influenced by your personality and the personalities of those around you. Your personality can limit or expand your options and choices in life, prevent you from sharing certain experiences, or enable you to take full advantage of them. It restricts, constrains, and holds back some people and opens up the world of new opportunities to others.

How often have you said that someone has a *terrific* personality? By that you typically mean the person is affable, pleasant, nice to be around, and easy to get along with—the kind of person you might choose to be a friend, roommate, or colleague at work. If you are a manager, you might choose to hire this person. If you are ready to commit to a relationship, you might want to marry this person, basing your decision on your perception of his or her personality. You also know people you describe as having a *terrible* personality. They may be aloof, hostile, aggressive, unfriendly, unpleasant, or difficult to get along with. You would not hire them or want to associate with them, and they may also be shunned, rejected, and isolated by others.

Keep in mind that, while you are making judgments about the personalities of other people, they are making the same kinds of judgments about you. These mutual decisions that shape the lives of both the judged and the judges are made countless times, every time we are in a social situation that requires us to interact with new people. Of course, the number and variety of social situations you are involved in are also determined by your personality—for example, your relative sociability or shyness. You know where

you rate on that characteristic, just as you no doubt have a reasonably clear picture of what your overall personality is like.

Describing Your Personality

Of course, it's glib and overly simple to try to sum up the total constellation of someone's personality characteristics by using such fuzzy terms as *terrific* and *terrible*. The subject of personality is too complex for such a simplified description, because humans are too complex and changeable in different situations and with different people. We need to be more precise in our language to adequately define and describe personality. For that reason, psychologists have devoted considerable effort to developing tests to assess, or measure, personality, as we'll see throughout the book.

You may think you don't need a psychological test to tell you what your personality is like, and, in general, you may be right. After all, you probably know yourself better than anyone else. If you were asked to list the words that best describe your personality, no doubt you could do it without too much thought, assuming you were being honest with yourself.

Try it. Write down as many adjectives as you can think of to describe what you are really like—not how you would like to be, or what you want your teachers or parents or Facebook friends to think you are like—but the real you. (Try not to use the word *terrific*, even if it does apply in your case.) How many words did you find? Six? Ten? A few more? A widely used personality test, the Adjective Check List, offers an astonishing 300 adjectives that describe personality.

People taking the test choose the ones that best describe themselves. No, we're not going to ask you to go through all 300 adjectives, only the 30 listed in Table 1.1. Place a check mark next to the ones you think apply to you. When you're done, you'll have a description of your personality in greater detail, but remember that in the actual test, you would have another 270 items to pick from.

How Does Personality Develop?

Our focus here is not on what *your* personality is like. You don't need a psychology course to learn that. What we will be studying are the forces and factors that shape your personality. Later in this chapter, and throughout the book, we will deal with

TABLE 1.1 Adjective check list

Make a check mark next to the words you believe apply to your personality.		
<input type="checkbox"/> affectionate	<input type="checkbox"/> ambitious	<input type="checkbox"/> assertive
<input type="checkbox"/> boastful	<input type="checkbox"/> cheerful	<input type="checkbox"/> cynical
<input type="checkbox"/> demanding	<input type="checkbox"/> dominant	<input type="checkbox"/> fearful
<input type="checkbox"/> forceful	<input type="checkbox"/> generous	<input type="checkbox"/> high-strung
<input type="checkbox"/> impatient	<input type="checkbox"/> insightful	<input type="checkbox"/> meek
<input type="checkbox"/> moody	<input type="checkbox"/> optimistic	<input type="checkbox"/> opinionated
<input type="checkbox"/> persistent	<input type="checkbox"/> prudish	<input type="checkbox"/> relaxed
<input type="checkbox"/> sarcastic	<input type="checkbox"/> sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> sociable
<input type="checkbox"/> submissive	<input type="checkbox"/> tolerant	<input type="checkbox"/> trusting
<input type="checkbox"/> uninhibited	<input type="checkbox"/> vindictive	<input type="checkbox"/> withdrawn

some basic questions about the nature of personality—for example, whether we are born with a certain type of personality or learn it from our parents, whether personality is influenced by unconscious forces, and whether it can change as we get older.

We will cover a variety of theories that have been proposed to help answer these and related questions about human nature. After we have discussed them—what they are, how they came about, and what their current status is—we will evaluate how useful they are in answering our questions and contributing to our understanding of how personality develops. We may think of each of these theorists as contributing individual pieces to a huge online jigsaw puzzle, which is why we study their ideas, even though some of their concepts are decades old. Psychologists continue to try to fit these pieces together to bring forth a clearer image, a more complete picture of what makes us the way we are and determines how we look at the world.



Personality Project – Northwestern University

Discusses major approaches to personality theory and offers links to resources, advice for students, and information about personality tests.

Personality Theories e-textbook – Professor C. George Boeree

Downloadable chapters about major personality theorists and links to relevant web sites.

Society for Personality and Social Psychology

The world's largest organization of personality and social psychologists; a division of the American Psychological Association. Members work in academics, industry and government. The site offers information on training and careers.

Ways of Looking at Personality

We talked about formal definitions of personality earlier. Now let's get away from dictionary definitions and take a look at how we use the word in our everyday lives. We use it a lot when we are describing other people and ourselves. One psychologist suggested that we can get a very good idea of its meaning if we examine our intentions—what we mean—whenever we use the word *I* (Adams, 1954). When you say *I*, you are, in effect, summing up everything about yourself—your likes and dislikes, fears and virtues, strengths and weaknesses. The word *I* is what defines you as an individual, separate from everybody else.

How Others See Us

Another way of trying to understand personality is to look to its source. The word goes back to about the year 1500, and derives from the Latin word *persona*, which refers to a mask used by actors in a play. It's easy to see how *persona* came to refer to our outward appearance, the public face we display to the people around us. Based on its derivation, then, we might conclude that personality refers to our external and visible characteristics, those aspects of us that other people can see. Our personality would then be defined in terms of the impression we make on others—that is, what we appear to be. Viewed from that perspective, personality is the visible aspect of one's character,

Our personality may be the mask we wear when we face the outside world



Cristian Batig/Photographer's Choice/Getty Images

as it impresses others. In other words, our personality may be the mask we wear when we face the outside world.

But is that all we mean when we use the word *personality*? Are we talking only about what we can see or how another person appears to us? Does personality refer solely to the mask we wear and the role we play? Surely, when we talk about personality, we mean more than that. We mean to include many different attributes of an individual, a totality or collection of various characteristics that goes beyond superficial physical qualities. The word encompasses a host of subjective social and emotional qualities as well, ones that we may not be able to see directly, that a person may try to hide from us, or that we may try to hide from others.

Stable and Predictable Characteristics

We may in our use of the word *personality* refer to enduring characteristics. We assume that personality is relatively stable and predictable. Although we recognize, for example, that a friend may be calm much of the time, we know that he or she can become excitable, nervous, or panicky at other times. Thus, sometimes our personality can vary with the situation. Yet although it is not rigid, it is generally resistant to sudden changes. In the 1960s, a debate erupted within psychology about the relative impact on behavior of such enduring personal variables as traits and needs versus variables relating to the situation (see Mischel, 1968, 1973).

The controversy continued for some 20 years and concluded with the realization that the “longstanding and controversy-generating dichotomy between the effect of the situation versus the effect of the person on behavior ... is and always was a fake” (Funder, 2001, p. 200). And so the issue was resolved by accepting an interactionist

approach, agreeing that enduring and stable personal traits, changing aspects of the situation, and the interaction between them must all be considered in order to provide a full explanation for human nature.

Unique Characteristics

Our definition of personality may also include the idea of human uniqueness. We see similarities among people, yet we sense that each of us possesses special properties that distinguish us from all others. Thus, we may suggest that **personality** is an enduring and unique cluster of characteristics that may change in response to different situations.

Even this, however, is not a definition with which all psychologists agree. To achieve more precision, we must examine what each personality theorist means by the term. Each one, as we will see, offers a unique version, a personal vision, of the nature of personality, and that viewpoint has become his or her definition. And that is what this book is all about: reaching an understanding of the different versions of the concept of personality and examining the various ways of defining the word *I*.

personality

The unique, relatively enduring internal and external aspects of a person's character that influence behavior in different situations.

Personality and the Social Media

Our increasing, almost constant use of the various social media to interact with other people in a virtual reality rather than in person has led to a great deal of recent research which attempts to relate our personalities to the online world in which we now live. There are at least three ways in which social media and personality may interact to affect one another, leading to three questions to which psychologists are increasingly seeking answers.

1. Do we present our real selves on social media?
2. Does the use of social media influence or change our personalities?
3. Do people with different personalities use social media in different ways?

Are You the Same Person Online?

We saw earlier that one way of defining personality is in terms of the mask we wear, the public face we display to the people around us. Increasingly, many of us display another face, not in person, but through the Internet on social networking Web sites such as Facebook. As a result, another way of defining our personality may include how others see us online.

But are they seeing us as we really are, or are we creating online some idealized self-image that we want to display to other people? Are we pretending to be someone we are not, or are we conveying an accurate description of our personality? Some research suggests that most people are honest about their online faces. Studies conducted in the United States and in Germany found that social networking sites do convey accurate images or impressions of the personality profiles we offer. The researchers concluded that depictions of personalities presented online are at least as accurate as those conveyed in face-to-face interactions (Gosling, Gaddis, & Vazire, 2007; Back et al., 2010).

A more recent large-scale study in Germany, however, found that many people have a tendency to present themselves online as being much more emotionally stable than they really are (Blumer & Doring, 2012). Other later studies have found that those who are introverted, neurotic, lonely, and socially awkward find it easier to express their true selves (their real personalities) online instead of in person (Marriott & Buchanan, 2014). It has also been found that those who feel they are able to express their true selves

are more active on Facebook and other social media sites than those who do not feel that way about themselves (Seidman, 2014).

And what about selfies, those photos we take of ourselves? How accurate are they in showing our true selves? Or are they merely posing and posturing for effect, to impress others—to make our own little “reality shows?” Research has found that more women than men send selfies and that excessive use of them can make the sender less likeable and even reduce the intimacy or closeness of friendships. They can even reinforce the idea that how people look is more important than how they actually behave in real life toward their friends (Drexler, 2013; Rutledge, 2013).

Of course, as you know, we are not always honest in how we depict ourselves in person either, particularly when we meet new people we want to impress, like a date or an employer. With people we have known for a while, with whom we feel secure, and who represent no threat, we may be less likely to pretend to be something we are not. Perhaps the major difference with social networking sites is that there is a much wider and more instantly reachable audience than in our everyday offline lives.

In addition, we now know that what we post about ourselves can also have great potential consequences to our careers and future when prospective employers find “inappropriate content” such as drunkenness, sexual display, and use of profanity on a candidate’s social media sites. One study found that evaluations of Facebook pages containing negative content resulted in false perceptions of that person’s personality. Sites of those with no inappropriate displays resulted in more accurate evaluations of the person’s personality, which, in the real world, can make the difference between being hired for a job or accepted by a graduate school (Goodman, Smith, Ivancevich, & Lundberg, 2014).

How Does the Social Media Influence Our Personality?

Psychologists have found that the use of online social networking sites like Facebook can both shape and reflect our personalities. One study of adolescents in China aged 13 to 18 found that excessive time spent using the Internet resulted in significant levels of anxiety and depression when compared to teenagers who spent considerably less time online (Lam & Peng, 2010). Other research found that high levels of social media use can reduce psychological well-being (how happy we feel) and decrease the quality of relationships with friends and romantic partners (Blais, Craig, Pepler, & Connolly, 2008; Huang, 2010a; Kross et al., 2013).

An online survey of college students in the United States showed that those who spent time talking with their parents on the telephone had more satisfying personal and supportive relationships with them than students who kept in touch with the parents through social networking sites. In addition, college students who communicated with their parents on social networking sites reported greater loneliness, anxiety, and conflict in their relationships with their parents (Gentzler, Oberhauser, Westerman, & Nadorff, 2011).

Studies conducted in such diverse countries as the Netherlands, Serbia, Hong Kong, and Korea have demonstrated that those who reported excessive use of social media tend to be more lonely, introverted, and low in self-esteem than those who use it less (Baek, Bae, & Jang, 2013; Milosevic-Dordevic & Zezelj, 2013; Muusses, Finkenauer, Kerkhof, & Billede, 2014; Yao & Zhong, 2014). Spending too much time online can also lead to addiction, which can be just as obsessive and excessive as addiction to alcohol, drugs, or gambling. Excessive online use has also been shown to change portions of the brain that are linked to depression and increased irritability (Mosher, 2011).

How Does Our Personality Influence Our Use of Social Media?

In addition to affecting our personalities, social networking sites can also reflect them. Studies in both Eastern and Western cultures found that those who were more extraverted and narcissistic (who had an inflated, unrealistic self-concept) were much more likely to use Facebook than those who did not score high on those personality characteristics. The more narcissistic teenagers were also more likely to update their Facebook status more frequently (Kuo & Tang, 2014; Michikyan, Subrahmanyam, & Dennis, 2014; Ong et al., 2011; Panek, Nardis, & Konrath, 2014; Winter et al., 2014).

Other studies suggest that those who report high use of social networking sites tend to be more extraverted, more open to new experiences, lower in self-esteem and socialization skills, less conscientious, and lower in emotional stability than those who report lower levels of usage (Blackhart, Ginette, Fitzpatrick, & Williamson, 2014; Correa, Hinsley, & de Zuniga, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Papastyliaou, 2013; Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, & Orr, 2009; Weiss, 2014; Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010).

Personality differences among cell phone users have also been found. Research involving teenagers and adults in Australia found that extraverts and those with a strong sense of self-identity spent much more time making calls and changing their ring tones and wallpaper than those scoring lower on these personality characteristics. The studies also found that those who were more neurotic and less conscientious and shy spent more time texting on their phones than those who were less neurotic and more conscientious (Bardi & Brady, 2010; Butt & Phillips, 2008; Walsh, White, Cox, & Young, 2011).

Finally, what about the personalities of people who engage in Internet trolling—deliberately hurting, harassing, and upsetting others by posting hateful, inflammatory, and derogatory comments about them. What are they like? The evidence shows that trolls are mostly male with an average age of 29, who, as you might expect, score high in sadism. They take pleasure in degrading others. It makes them feel good (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014; Lewis, 2014).

The Role of Race and Gender in Shaping Personality

The personality theorists we cover in this book offer diverse views of the nature of the human personality. Despite their disagreements and divergences, however, they all share certain defining characteristics in common. All are White, of European or American heritage, and almost all are men. There was nothing unusual about that, given the period during which most of these theorists were developing their ideas. At the time, nearly all of the great advances in the arts, philosophy, literature, and the sciences, including the development of the scientific methods, were propounded and promoted by White men of European or American background. In most fields, educational and professional opportunities for women and people of ethnic minority groups were severely limited.

In addition, in the field of personality theory, virtually all the patients and subjects the earlier theories were based on were also White. Even the laboratory rats were white. Also, the majority of the patients and subjects were men. Yet, the personality theorists confidently offered theories that were supposed to be valid for all people, regardless of gender, race, or ethnic origin.

None of the theorists stated explicitly that his or her views applied only to men or to Whites or to Americans, or that their ideas might not be useful for explaining personality in people of other backgrounds. Although the theorists accepted, to some degree, the importance of social and environmental forces in shaping personality, they tended to ignore or minimize the influence of gender and ethnic background.

We know from our own experiences that our brothers, sisters, and friends were exposed to different childhood influences than we were and that, as a result, they grew up to have different personalities. We also know from research in social psychology that children from different environments—such as a predominantly White Midwestern town, a Los Angeles barrio, an Appalachian mountain village, or an affluent Black suburb—are exposed to vastly different influences. If the world in which people live and the factors that affect their upbringing are so different, then surely their personalities can be expected to differ as a result. They do.

We also know that boys and girls are usually reared according to traditional gender stereotypes, and this upbringing also influences personality in different ways. Research has documented many differences between men and women on specific personality factors. For example, one large-scale study of the intensity of emotional awareness and expression compared male and female college undergraduates at two American universities and male and female students at medical schools in the United States and in Germany.

The results showed that women from both countries displayed greater emotional complexity and intensity than did men (Barrett, Lane, Sechrest, & Schwartz, 2000). A study of more than 7,000 college students in 16 Islamic nations found that women measured significantly higher in anxiety than men did in 11 of the 16 samples studied (Alansari, 2006). We will see many examples throughout the book of gender and sex differences in personality.

The Role of Culture in Shaping Personality

The influence of cultural forces on personality is widely recognized in psychology. A specialty area called cross-cultural psychology has fostered a great deal of research supporting the conclusion that personality is formed by both genetic and environmental influences. “Among the most important of the latter are cultural influences” (Triandis & Suh, 2002, p. 135).

This was demonstrated in a study of Japanese who emigrated to the United States, compared to those who stayed in Japan. Those who moved became much more “American” in their personalities. They changed in significant ways in response to their changed culture (Gungor, Bornstein, De Leersnyder, Cote, Ceulemans, & Mesquita, 2013).

Other research showed that recent Chinese immigrants to Canada demonstrated the same low level of introversion as the Hong Kong Chinese who did not emigrate. However, Chinese immigrants who had lived in Canada at least 10 years and thus had greater exposure to Western culture, scored significantly higher in extraversion than did more recent immigrants or the Hong Kong subjects. Cultural forces had exerted a significant impact on this basic personality characteristic (McCrae, Yi, Trapnell, Bond, & Paulhus, 1998).

Anxiety and other negative emotions may also be related to cultural differences. When the experiences of Asian-American students were compared with those of European-American students in a daily diary study, it was found that the Asian Americans reported a far greater number of negative emotions in social situations than the European-Americans did (Lee, Okazaki, & Yoo, 2006). Western people in general, and Americans, in particular, also exhibit greater optimism and view themselves and their future more positively. They even consider their sports teams, cities, and friends to be superior, when compared to those of Asian cultures (Endo, Heine, & Lehman, 2000).

There are even large-scale cultural differences in brain activity and genetic makeup, which have been demonstrated in the field of cultural neuroscience (Azar, 2010). Using measures of brain wave activity, researchers found differences in brain function between