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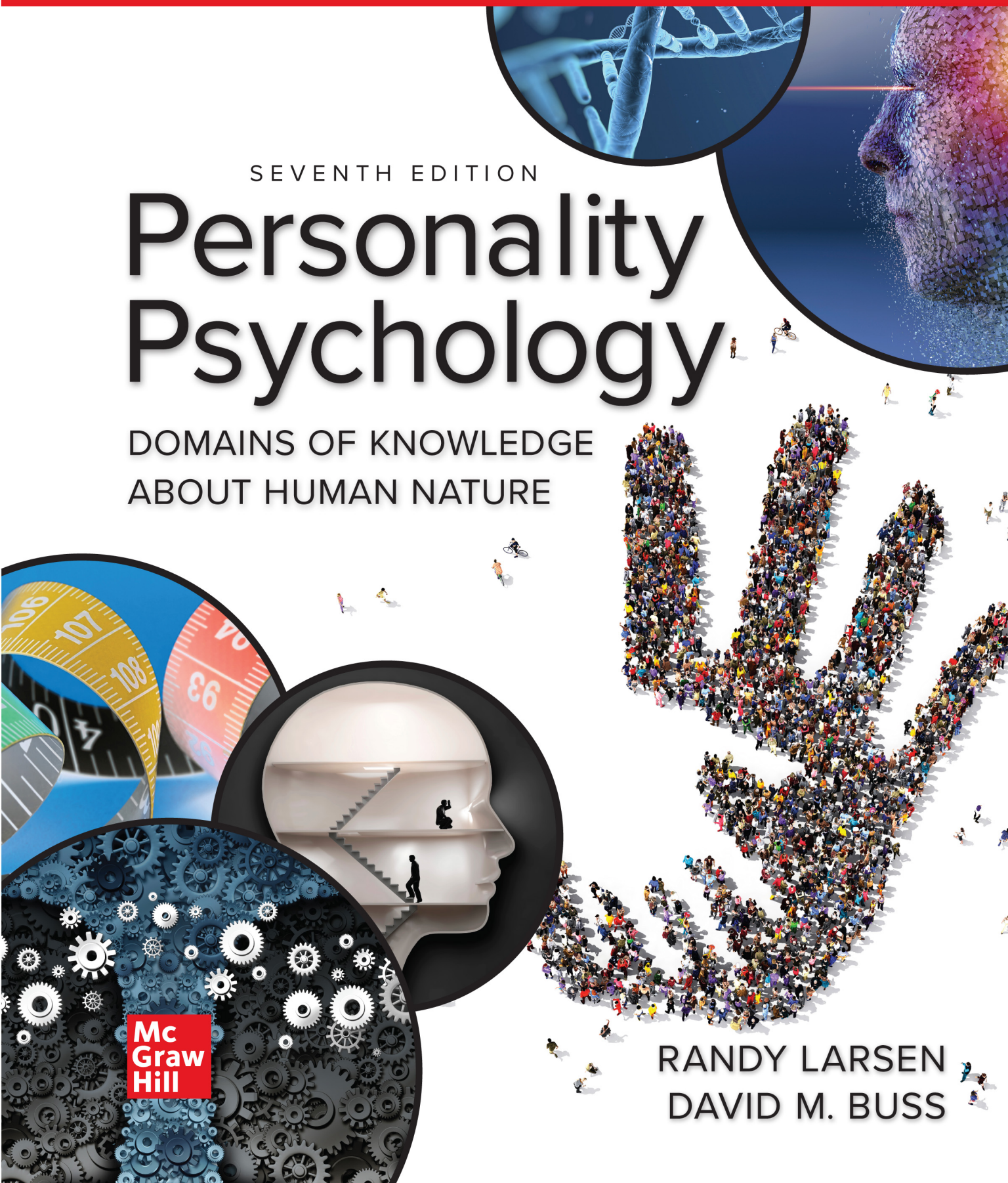
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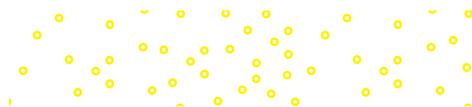
Personality Psychology

DOMAINS OF KNOWLEDGE
ABOUT HUMAN NATURE

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Hill**

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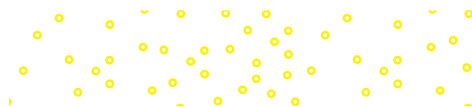
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PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

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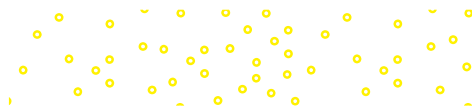
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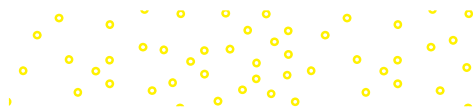
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Dedication

To all students of personality, past and future.

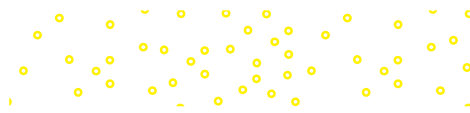
RL

To my father Arnold H. Buss.

DB



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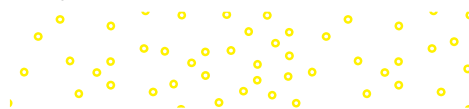
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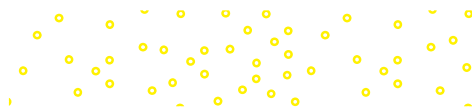
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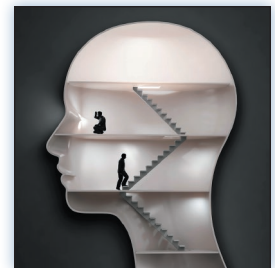
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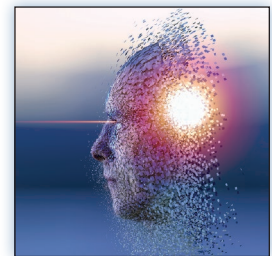
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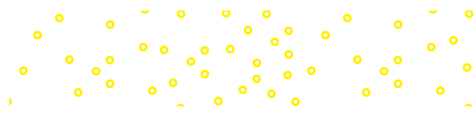
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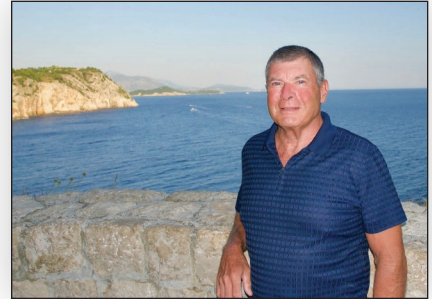
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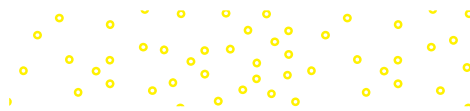


About the Authors

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



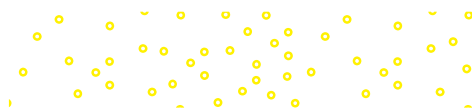
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David M. Buss received his PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. He served on the faculties of Harvard University and the University of Michigan before accepting a professorship at the University of Texas at Austin, where he currently teaches. Buss received the American Psychological Association (APA) Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Personality Psychology, the APA G. Stanley Hall Award, and the APA Distinguished Scientist Lecturer Award. Books by David Buss include *The Evolution of Desire: Strategies of Human Mating* (Revised Edition) (Basic Books, 2016), which has been translated into 10 languages; *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind* (6th ed.) (Taylor & Francis, 2019), which was presented with the

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



Preface

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1: Introduction to Personality Psychology

- Minor editing to streamline the writing a bit and update the language to reflect modern usage, such as referring to “gender” rather than “sex.”

Chapter 2: Personality Assessment, Measurement, and Research Design

- New discussion of Experience Sampling methods in personality, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter postings, as well as smartphone and Fitbit recordings. Discusses the strengths and limitations of these new forms of data sources.
- New discussion of Social Desirability response set; finding that highly religious people tend to exaggerate their level of Agreeableness, in part because they see this trait as highly socially desirable.

Chapter 3: Traits and Trait Taxonomies

- Those high in P, or Psychoticism, are more likely to become sexual predators.
- In modern personality research, P has made a resurgence in the form of “the Dark Triad,” which consists of psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism.
- Eysenck’s taxonomy continues to be used in modern personality testing that includes the development of new assessment questionnaires that are superior to previous ones.
- Replications of the five-factor model of personality have occurred in many countries, such as Belgium, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam.
- Introverts are more likely than extraverts to meet their romantic partners online, a context in which their interpersonal shyness is less of a handicap.
- Highly Conscientious individuals are also more likely to delay gratification, save money, and invest their money wisely over their lifespans.
- Having a romantic partner who is highly Conscientious is linked with being more physically healthy.
- While *frequency of sexual intercourse per week* is best predicted by extraversion in women, for men the combined traits of extraversion, emotional stability, and low agreeableness best predict sexual frequency.
- *Violent criminals* tend to be low on Agreeableness and high on Extraversion.

Chapter 4: Theoretical and Measurement Issues in Trait Psychology

- New information on personality matching in Internet dating sites.
- Updated research on Integrity testing in the workplace, identifying conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability as the three personality traits most highly correlated with integrity and ethical behavior in the workplace.
- Incorporates new research on the female underprediction effect (that women attain higher college GPAs than men with the same SAT or ACT scores), as well as the most recent research findings that women’s somewhat higher level of trait Conscientiousness accounts for this effect. This is one of several real-world examples of the importance of personality incorporated in this revision.
- Updated review and evaluation of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

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

- Studies documenting changes in narcissism by cohort and by single versus multiple-child families in China.
- Chinese married couples with individuals high on Mach and psychopathy show high levels of marital instability.
- New studies of impulsivity and problem drinking of alcohol.
- Couples congruent or similar in personality tend to be married longer; those who are dissimilar tend to break up.
- Neuroticism negatively affects adjustment to retirement.
- Those higher on Neuroticism may also be at greater risk of suicide when they perceive they are a burden to others.

Chapter 6: Genetics and Personality

- New heritability study of Shyness.
- New studies showing that genetic influences on perceived parent environment increase over adolescence.
- New study showing that children’s Agreeableness evokes parental warmth, a possible example of reactive genotype–environment correlation.
- Neuroticism is linked with perceived environmental stress, possibly because high scorers create a more stressful environment for themselves.

- The links between impulsive sensation-seeking and later antisocial behaviors are genetically mediated.
- A polygenic risk score predicts the so-called well-being spectrum of traits—depression, neuroticism, and low sense of well-being. These, in turn, predict loneliness and poor self-rated health.
- Heritability studies of gender identity.

Chapter 7: Physiological Approaches to Personality

- Updated research findings on digit ratio and competitiveness.
- Reorganized and updated research on the brain and personality, organized into brain function, brain structure, brain connectivity, and brain electrical activity.
- New application on the structure of Albert Einstein’s brain.
- More examples of constructs throughout.

Chapter 8: Evolutionary Perspectives on Personality

- New studies on homicides and chimpicides reveal that in both species, more than 90 percent of the killers are male and more than 70 percent of the victims are male.
- People who feel rejected or shunned by others experience worse physical health, higher blood pressure, and higher levels of perceived stress—findings that support the hypothesis that humans have a basic need to belong to social groups.
- Studies of people’s life regrets find that most regrets involve social relationships and lack of social connectedness, supporting the fundamental “need to belong” as part of our evolved human nature. Friends, in short, do provide benefits.
- New studies on gender differences in the emotion of sexual disgust.
- New studies of small-group traditional cultures find that men’s upset about sexual infidelity increased in cultures in which men invest heavily in their children.
- People with extraverted personalities have more offspring over the course of their lives.
- Exposure to harsh environments is linked with pursuing a fast life history strategy marked by high risk taking and short-term mating.

Chapter 9: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Personality

- Expanded discussion and new examples of slips of the tongue.
- Complete revision of ego depletion material, including coverage of multi-lab pre-registered failure to replicate (2016) and subsequent debate.
- Clarified that while Freud never used the Rorschach inkblots himself, the use of inkblots to assess personality is based on the Freudian idea of projection.
- Updated defense mechanisms material.

Chapter 10: Psychoanalytic Approaches: Contemporary Issues

- New “Application” using principles of memory formation to understanding the impact of “fake news,” presenting five principles that can be “weaponized” to influence what a population remembers/believes about some event or person.
- Updated statistics on childhood abuse and maltreatment in the United States.
- Updated examples of how family disruption—separating children from parents—can have long-term consequences for children, emphasizing the role of attachment and separation anxiety in the developing child. Linked to current events regarding immigrants to the United States.
- Update on the outcome of Lee Malvo and John Muhammad in the example of identity and role confusion that this case illustrates.
- New key terms: *identity*, *fixation*.
- Updated information and examples to illustrate Karen Horney’s feminist interpretation of Freudian theory.
- Updated discussion of Narcissistic Personality Disorder to DSM-5 criteria.

Chapter 11: Motives and Personality

- Clarifies the distinction between deficit motivation and growth motivation.
- Added some details on Henry Murray's "conversion" to psychoanalysis.
- Added detail on beta press and apperception.
- Streamlined material on implicit and explicit motivation.
- Updated examples of persons high on achievement motivation (Pete Buttigieg) and power motivation (Donald Trump) and personal responsibility versus self-destructive lifestyle (Amy Winehouse).
- More detail on conditional versus unconditional positive regard and the development of an inauthentic lifestyle.
- Better description of the cause of anxiety according to Carl Rogers self-discrepancy theory.
- Elaboration of the link between emotional intelligence and self-actualization.

Chapter 12: Cognitive Topics in Personality

- New table laying out the general findings regarding the perceptual trait of Field Independence-Field Dependence.
- New material on locus of control in situations where technology may control a portion of our lives—for example, autonomous vehicles.
- Provides more details on the Menendez brothers' murder trial, clarifying its relevance as an example of differences in interpretation regarding the facts of their case.
- Clarifies distinction between internal-external locus of control (LOC) and internal-external attributional style. LOC grew out of learning theory research on positive reinforcement, and refers mainly to control over *positive* events and outcomes. Attributional style, while also growing out of learning theory, was based more on punishment and aversive learning research (i.e., learned helplessness research) and refers primarily to attributions for the causes of *negative* events and outcomes.
- Additional information on intelligence, including using SAT and ACT measures to illustrate the distinction between ability and achievement testing, and their correlation with traditional IQ tests.

Chapter 13: Emotion and Personality

- Presents Aristotle's idea that happiness derives from living a virtuous life, with the related idea of eudaimonia, that a life of meaning and purpose is part of being happy.
- Restructured presentation of research on causes of happiness.
- Introduce the Easterlin paradox, the finding that, between nations, the richer nations have higher happiness but that within a nation, over time, there is no relationship between wealth and well-being.
- Present recent data on the most and least happy countries in the world, based on the 2019 United Nations World Survey on Happiness.
- Discuss possible reasons for the decline in happiness of the U.S. population observed in the past 20 years of survey research.
- New research findings on anxiety-proneness and depression.
- Discussion of anger-proneness in relation to recent mass shootings in the United States.

Chapter 14: Approaches to the Self

- Emphasis on self-esteem as the outcome of an evaluation of one's self-concept.
- Integrated new research on implicit self-esteem, including validity research examining neural activity in reward centers of the brain while subjects view images of themselves versus others.
- New section on social comparison and self-esteem in relation to problematic internet use.
- New material on social media use as a driver of lowered self-esteem, especially when social media is used to engage in social comparison.

Chapter 15: Personality and Social Interaction

- Research has confirmed that people who score higher on Conscientiousness, both women and men, tend to be higher in overall mate value or desirability on the mating market.
- When it comes to short-term mating, the traits of high Extraversion is linked with frequency of sex and number of different sex partners.
- People who feel loved tend to be higher on Extraversion and lower on Neuroticism, as well as scoring higher on a general sense of well-being.
- People high in Dark Triad traits, particularly psychopathy, gravitate toward the bright lights of big cities—geographical preferences that influence environments people subsequently inhabit.
- Those high on Dark Triad traits also engage in stronger and more varied forms of mate retention, including providing benefits and inflicting costs to keep their partner.
- Within romantic relationships, one tactic of manipulation sometimes used is jealousy induction, such as flirting with someone else in order to make one's partner jealous or upset. Those high on the Dark Triad traits of narcissism and psychopathy are especially prone to using jealousy induction. They do so with the goals of gaining control over the partner or extracting revenge on them.
- Women high in Machiavellianism are prone to faking sexual orgasm in order to manipulate or deceive their partner.
- High Machs are especially likely to undermine their co-workers in order to boost their own status in the workplace, often to the detriment of the organization they work for.

Chapter 16: Sex, Gender, and Personality

- Few topics in psychology can rival sex differences in their power to stir controversy and captivate both scientists and the public.
- Men high on Dark Triad traits and men low on lack empathy are most likely to report using sexual aggression.
- After puberty, women show a depression rate roughly twice that of men—a finding replicated in 25 different European countries.
- The current movement toward gender-neutral pronouns such as *they*, *them*, and *theirs*, or novel ones such as *ze* and *xe*, reflect people who do not identify with the gender binary. Sweden has formally introduced the gender-neutral pronoun *hen* as a replacement for *hon* (she) and *han* (he).
- A study of 26 nations concluded that gender stereotypes are in fact somewhat accurate, based on actual differences between women and men.
- Recent studies using sophisticated multivariate statistical techniques find that sex differences in personality are considerably larger than previous reviews concluded that relied solely on considering one personality trait at a time. When it comes to sex differences in across multiple traits, one can determine with 85 percent accuracy whether the personality profile comes from a man or a woman.
- A study of 1,283,110 individuals found large sex differences in occupational preferences, with women preferring people-oriented occupations and men preferring thing-oriented occupations.
- Another key psychological contributor to men's aggression is men's low level of empathy compared to women. Men are less likely to put themselves in the shoes of the victim and experience the pain that victims of aggression suffer.
- An evolutionary adaptationist theory proposes that moderate levels of depression send signals of distress to social partners to elicit help or prompt partners to invest

more in the relationship, as might be the case in a woman with a newborn who is not receiving as much investment from her husband and family as she needs.

- Women are also substantially more tender-minded and compassionate than men (e.g., caring, giving), with a large effect size of -0.97 , which is large.
- Men are more likely to have more permissive attitudes toward causal sex and view pornography more often—sex differences that seem to have remained stable over generations.
- In the domain of emotions, women experience the emotion of disgust more than men do.
- A detailed facet-level analysis of the Big Five measures show that women are especially high on fearfulness and feelings of vulnerability.

Chapter 17: Culture and Personality

- Studies find that higher emotional expression is linked to the personality trait of Extraversion. And because Americans tend to be more extraverted than Japanese, cultural differences in emotional expression may be due to these cultural differences in personality.
- Entirely new section on religion as a prime example of transmitted culture—ideas and beliefs that are transmitted vertically from parents and other authority figures to children and from one person’s mind to the minds of others.
- Discussion of competing theories of religious phenomena.
- The personality traits of Conscientiousness and Agreeableness are linked with receptivity to culturally transmitted religious beliefs—a finding found among Muslims in Iran and among Christians in Belgium.

Chapter 18: Stress, Coping, Adjustment, and Health

- Incorporates COVID-19 example when making the distinction pathogens that causes the illness, and behaviors that foster transmission of the illness.
- Introduce the concept of “healthy neuroticism.”
- Each of the five models for how personality can influence health is updated with recent research examples.
- *Epidemiological studies* is now a key term because this particular type of research is contributing to our understanding of personality and health.
- Section on optimism and health substantially updated and reorganized based on recent research.
- Now considers both possible causal directions: that personality can influence health and that health can influence personality. The majority of research supports the idea that personality influences later health more than the other causal direction.

Chapter 19: Disorders of Personality

- New key terms: *comorbidity*, *narcissistic paradox*.
- All personality disorder diagnostic references are now to DSM-5.
- Figure 19.1, which displays prevalence rates of all 10 personality disorders, is now based on multi-nation data published in 2018.
- Refined Table 19.11 to better illustrate how each personality disorder is manifest in the self-concept, emotion life, typical behaviors, and social relations.
- New information of female psychopaths.

Chapter 20: Summary and Future Directions

- Genetics of personality turning out to be more complex than initially envisioned.
- Progress in linking the six domains of human nature to each other via research collaborations.

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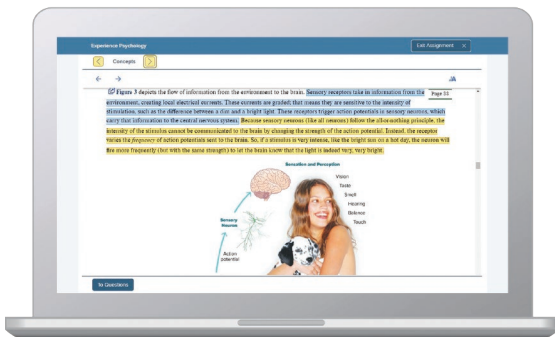
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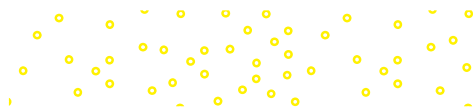
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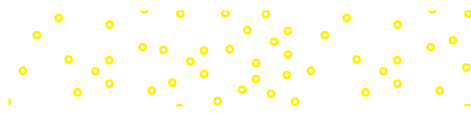
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Personality Psychology





Introduction to Personality Psychology

Personality Defined

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

Three Levels of Personality Analysis

Human Nature
 Individual and Group Differences
 Individual Uniqueness

A Fissure in the Field

Grand Theories of Personality
 Contemporary Research in Personality

Six Domains of Knowledge About Human Nature

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

The Role of Personality Theory

Standards for Evaluating Personality Theories

Is There a Grand Ultimate and True Theory of Personality?

KEY TERMS

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1

INTRODUCTION



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise

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

Personality Defined

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

Personality Is the Set of Psychological Traits . . .

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

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

Research on personality traits asks four kinds of questions:

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

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

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



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

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Courage is an example of a trait that is activated only under particular circumstances. For example, Hurlburt Field Medics Continue to Save Lives in Haiti—2010.

Source: U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. James L. Harper Jr.

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

And Mechanisms...

Psychological mechanisms are like traits, except that the term *mechanisms* refers more to the processes of personality. For example, most psychological mechanisms involve an information-processing activity. Someone who is extraverted, for example, may look for and notice opportunities to interact with other people, such as in elevators or coffee shops. That is, an extraverted person is prepared to notice and act on certain kinds of social information.

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

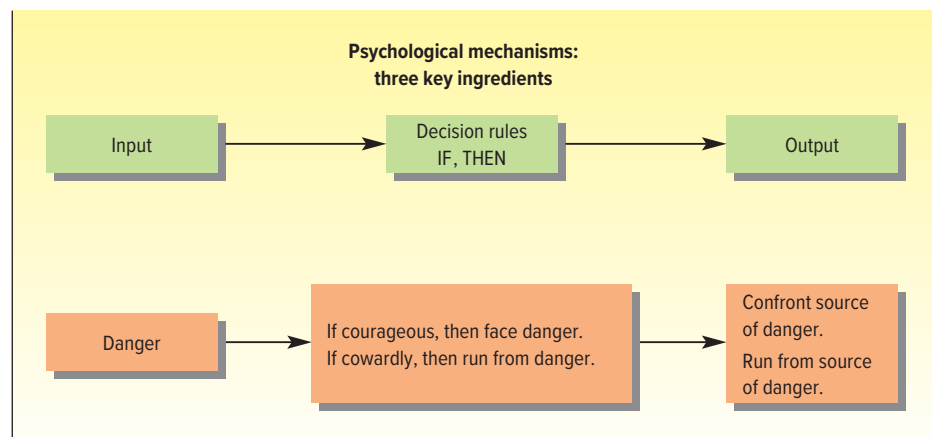


Figure 1.1

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

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

Within the Individual . . .

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

That Are Organized and Relatively Enduring . . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

And That Influence . . .

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

His or Her Interactions with . . .

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

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

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

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

And Adaptations to . . .

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

The Environment

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

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

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