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Theories of Personality



DUANE P. SCHULTZ  **SYDNEY ELLEN SCHULTZ**

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DUANE P. SCHULTZ

University of South Florida

SYDNEY ELLEN SCHULTZ



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.		
☐ affectionate	☐ ambitious	☐ assertive
☐ boastful	☐ cheerful	☐ cynical
☐ demanding	☐ dominant	☐ fearful
☐ forceful	☐ generous	☐ high-strung
☐ impatient	☐ insightful	☐ meek
☐ moody	☐ optimistic	☐ opinionated
☐ persistent	☐ prudish	☐ relaxed
☐ sarcastic	☐ sensitive	☐ sociable
☐ submissive	☐ tolerant	☐ trusting
☐ uninhibited	☐ vindictive	☐ 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.

LOG ON

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 Baig/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 & Zedelj, 2013; Muusses, Finkenauer, Kerkhof, & Billello, 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

people in Eastern and Western cultures when responding to the same stimuli (Park & Huang, 2010). One study found brain wave activity of Japanese and Americans to differ in reaction to the same visual stimuli; the differences paralleled each culture's measured level of submissiveness or dominance (Freeman, Rule, & Ambady, 2009).

We will see a number of other examples in this section, and throughout the book, of the many ways in which the culture we live in shapes and molds our personalities.

Different Cultural Beliefs about Destiny

The concept of *karma* has for centuries shaped the outlook of the people of India and other countries that accept Hinduism or Buddhism. It may be seen as a fatalistic and deterministic view of human nature. The consequences of our present and past actions are believed to determine our destiny or fate, our happiness or unhappiness in the future. In other words, events don't occur because we make them happen but because they were destined to happen.

Thus, in this view, our fortune or misfortune, health or sickness, happiness or unhappiness are preordained and independent of our own actions. You can see how this belief may lead to a passive, resigned personality type, accepting of whatever comes one's way and not being motivated to take action to change it. Contrast this with a view more typical of American culture that emphasizes free choice and action, and the role of our own personal effort and initiative in bringing about our personal success or failure.

Research shows substantial cultural differences between East and West in this notion of fate attribution or destiny (Norenzayan & Lee, 2010). However, there is also evidence that as Eastern cultures such as China modernize and become more Westernized, that cultural belief is reduced (Wong, Shaw, & Ng, 2010).

Individualism

Individual competitiveness and assertiveness are often seen as undesirable and contrary to Asian cultural standards. Western cultures are typically depicted as the opposite. For example, when college students in Australia were compared with college students in Japan, the Australians were found to emphasize the importance of individuality much more than the Japanese, who were more oriented toward the collective or the group (Kashima, Kokubo, Kashima, Boxall, Yamaguchi, & Macrae, 2004). In another example, an Asian-American job applicant who is a recent immigrant to the United States and not yet fully acculturated to American values and beliefs is likely to score low on a personality test measuring such factors as competitiveness, assertiveness, and self-promotion. This person would probably be judged as deficient—as not measuring up to American standards—and thus unlikely to be offered a job.

In an individualistic society, the focus is on personal freedom, choice, and action. In a collectivist society, the focus is on group norms and values, group role expectations, and other cultural constraints on behavior. People in individualistic cultures show greater extraversion, self-esteem, happiness (or subjective well-being), optimism about their future, and a belief in their ability to control and direct it. For example, one massive study of over 400 million people in 63 countries found that the personality trait of individualism was strongly and consistently related to positive well-being (Fischer & Boer, 2011).

Genetic differences between people in collectivistic versus individualistic cultures have been linked to lower levels of anxiety and depression in collectivistic cultures and higher levels in individualistic cultures (Chiao & Blizinsky, 2010).

College students in the United States scored significantly higher than college students in Japan on measures of self-efficacy—the feeling of being adequate, efficient and competent in coping with life and in exerting control over life events (Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto,

2002). College students in Australia were found to be significantly more agreeable, conscientious, optimistic, and satisfied with their lives than students in Singapore (Wong, Lee, Ang, Oei, & Ng, 2009).

Other research found differences in subjective well-being between Asian-American students and European-American students at the same university in the United States. The European-American students attained their feeling of well-being by pursuing goals for the purpose of personal satisfaction. The Asian-American students seemed to “attain and maintain their well-being by achieving goals that they pursue to make important others [such as their parents] happy and [to] meet the expectations of others” (Oishi & Diener, 2001, p. 1680).

Thus, the motivations and satisfactions of these students and their corresponding images of human nature differed with their cultural backgrounds. In addition, a comparison of Japanese and American college students revealed that the American students were far more likely to use positive terms to describe themselves. The Japanese students were more likely to use negative terms (Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001).

Thus, the degree to which a culture focuses on and encourages individualism has a powerful effect on the personality of its citizens.

Child-Rearing Practices

The impact on behavior and personality of cultural differences in child-rearing practices is also substantial. In the individualistic culture of the United States, parents tend to be noncoercive, democratic, and permissive in their child-rearing techniques. In collectivist cultures, such as Asian and Arab societies, parental practices tend to be more authoritarian, restrictive, and controlling.

Studies of adolescents in several Arab countries showed that they felt a greater connection with their parents than did American adolescents. The researchers noted that Arab adolescents “follow their parents’ directions in all areas of life, such as social behavior, interpersonal relationships, marriage, occupational preference, and political attitudes.... they do not feel that they suffer from their [parents’] authoritarian style and are even satisfied with this way of life” (Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserie, & Farah, 2006, p. 264). The study concluded that these authoritarian parental practices did not adversely affect the mental health and emotional well-being of the Arab teenagers as they would in more liberal Western cultures.

Chinese mothers living in Canada were found to be more authoritarian in raising their children than non-Chinese mothers in Canada (Liu & Guo, 2010). Turkish mothers living in Germany who were more assimilated into the German culture emphasized individualistic goals for their children much more than Turkish mothers who were not so assimilated (Durgel, Leyendecker, Yagmurlu, & Harwood, 2009).

Clearly, such differences in child-rearing practices and their resulting values will influence the development of different kinds of personalities.

Self-Enhancement

Self-enhancement is defined as the tendency to promote oneself aggressively and make one conspicuous. The opposite of that, self-effacement, is considered to be more in agreement with the cultural values of Asian societies. This was supported in a laboratory study comparing Canadian and Japanese college students. Self-enhancement was far more prevalent among the Canadian students; self-criticism was significantly more evident among the Japanese students (Heine, Takata, & Lehman, 2000).

Similar results were obtained in three additional studies comparing self-ratings and questionnaire responses in collectivist versus individualistic cultures. The subjects in

these instances were Japanese college students compared with American college students, and Chinese high school and college students in Singapore compared with Jewish high school and college students in Israel. The results from both studies showed that those from collectivist cultures (Japan and China) showed significantly greater self-criticism and significantly lower self-enhancement than those from individualistic cultures (the United States and Israel) (Heine & Renshaw, 2002; Kurman, 2001). A study comparing people in the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, and China found that the Chinese demonstrated the strongest tendency toward self-effacement than those in the other cultures (Church et al., 2014).

Nordic cultures such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark provide another example of cultures encouraging self-effacement. The cultural concept of *Janteloven* enjoins people not to place their own interests above those of their community and to show humility in the presence of others. A comparison of college students in the United States and Norway found that the Americans rated themselves significantly higher than average on positive personality traits and lower than average on negative traits than the Norwegian students did. This tendency to self-enhancement among the U.S. students, which was not found to the same degree among the Norwegian students, appears to be culturally induced, determined by the values taught in the different countries (Silvera & Seger, 2004).

Large differences in individualism have also been found in cultures that are not so far apart geographically. One might reasonably expect differences between Eastern cultures such as Japan and Western cultures such as the United States, as we have seen. But differences have also been reported between European cultures, such as Spain and the Netherlands. A comparison using a self-report inventory of people found that the Spanish people were more concerned with matters of honor and family-related values, such as family security, respect for parents, and recognition from others. In contrast, the Dutch people scored much higher on individualistic values such as ambition, capability, and independence (Rodriguez-Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2000).

If you consider yourself to be self-enhancing, take heart. Maybe it's not so bad. Research in various countries in Europe found that self-enhancers were rated by others as being emotionally stable, socially attractive, and socially influential (Dufner, Denissen, Sedilides, Van Zalk Meeus, & Van Aken, 2013). And finally, a study of American college students found that those high in self-esteem and self-enhancement look for mates who share their own characteristics. In other words, self-enhancers are looking for someone who is as great as they think they are (Brown, Brown, & Kovatch, 2013).

A Diversity of Cultures

As we have just seen, there have been major advances in exploring a wide range of cultural differences in personality research in recent years. However, it still remains true that much less research has been conducted on personality in African and South American nations than in English-speaking countries, or in many of the countries of Europe and Asia. Also, much of the research that has been conducted among those populations has not been made widely available in English-language sources.

Another problem limiting the applicability of cross-cultural personality research is that the majority of studies in personality use American college students as subjects. One of the goals of this book is to cover research results from a more diverse and representative selection of people. The studies you will read about here are from more than 40 different countries, all of which are listed on the inside back cover, and from a variety of age groups, cultures, religions, and ethnic backgrounds. We will not be dealing only with the personalities of White American college students.

LOG ON

Race, Ethnicity, and Multicultural Issues

The Social Psychology Network provides links to diverse sites related to racial, ethnic, and multicultural issues, especially African, Asian, Hispanic, Jewish, and Native American cultures.

Assessing Your Personality

To assess something means to measure or evaluate it. The assessment of personality is a major area of application of psychology to a number of real-world concerns. For example, clinical psychologists try to understand the symptoms of their patients or clients by assessing their personalities, by differentiating between normal and abnormal behaviors and feelings. Only by evaluating personality in this way can clinicians diagnose disorders and determine the best course of therapy.

School psychologists evaluate the personalities of the students referred to them for treatment in an attempt to uncover the causes of adjustment or learning problems. Industrial/organizational psychologists assess personality to select the best candidate for a particular job. Counseling psychologists measure personality to find the best job for a particular applicant, matching the requirements of the position with the person's interests and needs. Research psychologists assess the personalities of their subjects in an attempt to account for their behavior in an experiment or to correlate their personality traits with other measurements.

No matter what you do in your life and your working career, it is difficult to avoid having your personality assessed in some way at some time. Indeed, much of your success in the workplace will be determined by your performance on various psychological tests. Therefore, it is important that you have some understanding of what they are and how they work.

The Concepts of Reliability and Validity

The best techniques of personality assessment adhere to the principles of **reliability** and **validity**.

reliability The consistency of response to a psychological assessment device.

validity The extent to which an assessment device measures what it is intended to measure.

Reliability Reliability involves the consistency of response to an assessment device. Suppose you took the same test on two different days and received two widely different scores. How would you know which score is the most accurate one? A test like that would not be considered reliable because its results were so inconsistent. No one could depend on that test for an adequate assessment of your personality. It is common to find some slight variation in scores when a test is taken a second time, but if the variation is large, then something is wrong with the test or with the method of scoring it.

Validity Validity refers to whether an assessment device measures what it is intended to measure. Does an intelligence test truly measure intelligence? Does a test of anxiety actually evaluate anxiety? If a test does not measure what it claims to, then it is not valid and its results cannot be used to predict behavior. For example, your score on an invalid intelligence test, no matter how high, will be useless for predicting how well you will do in college or in any other situation that requires a high level of intelligence. A personality test that is not valid may provide a totally misleading portrait of your emotional strengths and weaknesses and will be of no value to you or a potential employer.

Methods of Assessment The personality theorists discussed in this book devised different methods for assessing personality that were the most useful for their theories. By applying these methods, they obtained the data on which they based their formulations. Their techniques vary in objectivity, reliability, and validity, and they range from dream interpretation and childhood recollections to computer-administered objective tests. The major approaches to personality assessment are:

- Self-report or objective inventories
- Projective techniques
- Clinical interviews
- Behavioral assessment procedures
- Thought and experience sampling procedures

Self-Report Personality Tests

self-report inventory A personality assessment technique in which subjects answer questions about their behaviors and feelings.

The **self-report inventory** or test approach involves asking people to report on themselves by answering questions about their behavior and feelings in various situations. These tests include items dealing with symptoms, attitudes, interests, fears, and values. Test-takers indicate how closely each statement describes themselves, or how much they agree with each item. There are a number of self-report personality tests in use today as we will see in later chapters, but one of the most useful is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI).

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) The MMPI has been translated into more than 140 languages and is the world's most widely used psychological test (see Butcher, 2010; Cox, Weed, & Butcher, 2009). First published in 1943, the MMPI was revised in 1989 to make the language more contemporary and nonsexist. The latest revision is the MMPI-2-RF (Restructured Form), which appeared in 2008. The MMPI is a true-false test that consists of 567 statements.

The test items cover physical and psychological health; political and social attitudes; educational, occupational, family, and marital factors; and neurotic and psychotic behavior tendencies. The test's clinical scales measure such personality characteristics as gender role, defensiveness, depression, hysteria, paranoia, hypochondriasis, and schizophrenia. Some items can be scored to determine if the test-taker is deliberately faking or careless, or misunderstood the instructions.

For example, research has shown that the MMPI-2-RF can successfully distinguish between those who have genuine physical pain and those who are faking it in order to claim disability payments (Crighton, Applegate, Wygant, Granacher, & Ulauf, 2013). The test has also been shown to distinguish between those who are faking symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and those whose symptoms are genuine (Mason et al., 2013). It has also been found that those who are mentally ill can learn (through online instruction) how to respond on the MMPI so as to hide their symptoms and appear to be mentally healthy (Hartmann & Hartmann, 2014).

Examples of the types of statements in the MMPI are shown in Table 1.2.

The MMPI-2 is used with adults in research on personality as a diagnostic tool for assessing personality problems, for employee selection, and for vocational and personal counseling. In 1992, the MMPI-A was developed for use with adolescents. The number of questions was decreased from 567 to 478, to reduce the time and effort needed to administer it.

Both forms of the test have their shortcomings, however, one of which is length. It takes a lot of time to respond attentively to the large number of items. Some people

TABLE 1.2 Simulated items from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)

ANSWER “TRUE” OR “FALSE.”
At times I get strong cramps in my intestines.
I am often very tense on the job.
Sometimes there is a feeling like something is pressing in on my head.
I wish I could do over some of the things I have done.
I used to like to do the dances in gym class.
It distresses me that people have the wrong ideas about me.
The things that run through my head sometimes are horrible.
There are those out there who want to get me.
Sometimes I think so fast I can’t keep up.
I give up too easily when discussing things with others.

lose interest and motivation long before they finish. Also, some of the items on this and other self-report personality tests deal with highly personal characteristics, which some people consider an invasion of privacy, particularly when being required to take the test to get a job. Nevertheless, despite the length and privacy issues, the MMPI in its various forms is a valid test that discriminates between neurotics and psychotics and between the emotionally healthy and the emotionally disturbed. Thus, it remains a highly valuable diagnostic and research tool.

Assessment of Self-Report Inventories Although there are self-report inventories to assess many facets of personality, as we will see in later chapters, the tests are not always appropriate for people whose level of intelligence is below normal, or for those with limited reading skills. Even minor changes in the wording of the questions or the response alternatives on self-report measures can lead to major changes in the results. For example, when adults were asked what they thought was the most important thing for children to learn, 61.5 percent chose the alternative “to think for themselves.” But when adult subjects were asked to supply the answer themselves—when no list of alternatives was provided—only 4.6 percent made that or a similar response (Schwarz, 1999).

There is also the tendency for test-takers to give answers that appear to be more socially desirable or acceptable, particularly when they are taking tests as part of a job application. Suppose you were applying for a job you really wanted and were asked this question on a test—“I am often very tense on the job.” Would you answer “yes” to that question? We wouldn’t either.

When a group of college students took a self-report test with instructions to make themselves appear as good, or as socially acceptable, as possible, they were more careful with their answers and took longer to complete the test than students who were not deliberately trying to look good (Holtgraves, 2004). Similar results have been shown with other self-report inventories. Most subjects find it easy to give false answers when asked to do so in research studies (McDaniel, Beier, Perkins, Goggins, & Frankel, 2009).

Despite these problems, self-report inventories remain the most objective approach to personality assessment. Their greatest advantage is that they are designed to be scored objectively and quickly through automated personality assessment programs, providing a complete diagnostic profile of the test-taker’s responses.

Online Test Administration

Self-report inventories, like everything else now, can be taken online. Many employers prefer that job applicants take tests this way as a prescreening method, rather than taking up time and space at the company's office. The advantages of computerized test administration include the following:

- It is less time-consuming for both the applicant and the organization
- It is less expensive
- The scoring is more objective
- The method is readily accepted by younger members of the workforce
- It prevents test-takers from looking ahead at questions (which they can do with a traditional paper-and-pencil test), and it prevents them from changing answers already given

A sizable body of research has confirmed the usefulness of this approach. No significant differences in responses to most self-report inventories have been found between paper-and-pencil tests and the same tests administered online (see, for example, Chuah, Drasgow, & Roberts, 2006; Clough, 2009; Luce, Winzelberg, Das, Osborne, Bryson, & Taylor, 2007; Naus, Philipp, & Samsi, 2009).

It has also been found that most of us are significantly more likely to reveal sensitive, even potentially embarrassing, information when responding online to self-report inventories than to paper-and-pencil tests given in person by a live test administrator. Understandably, many people feel a greater sense of anonymity and privacy when interacting with a computer and so reveal more personal information.

Projective Techniques

projective test A personality assessment device in which subjects are presumed to project personal needs, fears, and values onto their interpretation or description of an ambiguous stimulus.

Clinical psychologists developed **projective tests** of personality for their work with the emotionally disturbed. Inspired by Sigmund Freud's emphasis on the importance of the unconscious, projective tests attempt to probe that invisible portion of our personality. The theory underlying projective techniques is that when we are presented with an ambiguous stimulus, like an inkblot or a picture that can be interpreted in more than one way, we will project our innermost needs, fears, and values onto the stimulus when we're asked to describe it.

Because the interpretation of the results of projective tests is so subjective, these tests are not high in reliability or validity. It is not unusual for different people giving the test to form quite different impressions of the same person, based on the results of a projective test. In such a case, the inter-scorer reliability of the test is low. Nevertheless, these tests are widely used for assessment and diagnostic purposes. Two popular projective tests are the Rorschach Inkblot Technique and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

Rorschach and His Inkblots The Rorschach was developed in 1921 by the Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach (1884–1922), who had been fascinated by inkblots since childhood. As a youngster, he had played a popular game called *Klecksographie*, or *Blotto*, in which children gave their interpretations of various inkblot designs. Rorschach was known to be so intensely interested in inkblots that as a teenager, he acquired the nickname *Klecks*, which means, in German, blot of ink. Later, when Rorschach was serving a hospital residency in psychiatry after receiving his M.D., he and a friend played Blotto with patients to pass the time. Rorschach noticed consistent differences between the responses of patients and the responses offered by school children to the same inkblots.

In developing his test, Rorschach created his own inkblots simply by dropping blobs of ink on blank paper and folding the paper in half (see Figure 1.1). After trying a variety

FIGURE 1.1

An inkblot similar to a Rorschach inkblot.



Kovalchuk Oleksandr/Shutterstock.com

of patterns, he settled on 10 blots for the very practical reason that he could not afford to have more than 10 printed. He wrote about his work with inkblots, but the publication was a failure. Few copies were sold, and the few reviews it received were negative. Although the test eventually became immensely popular, Rorschach became depressed and died 9 months after his work was published.

Using the Rorschach The inkblot cards (some black, others in color) are shown one at a time, and test-takers are asked to describe what they see. Then the cards are shown a second time, and the psychologist asks specific questions about the earlier answers. The examiner also observes behavior during the testing session, including the test-takers' gestures, reactions to particular inkblots, and general attitude.

Responses can be interpreted in several ways, depending on whether the patient reports seeing movement, human or animal figures, animate or inanimate objects, and partial or whole figures. Attempts have been made to standardize the administration, scoring, and interpretation of the Rorschach. The most successful of these, the Comprehensive System, claims, on the basis of considerable research, to lead to improved reliability and validity (see Exner, 1993).

There is no universal agreement about the Rorschach's usefulness and validity, even with the Comprehensive System for scoring. Some researchers have concluded that there is no scientific basis for the Rorschach; others insist that the test is as valid as any other personality assessment measure. Nevertheless, the Rorschach continues to be a popular assessment technique in personality research and clinical practice.

The Rorschach is also widely used in research in Europe and South America. Overall, validity research is generally more supportive of the MMPI than of the Rorschach. Thus, the MMPI can be used with greater confidence, especially for ethnic minority groups and diverse cultural groups (see, for example, Wood, Garb, Lilienfeld, & Nezworski, 2002).

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Hermann Rorschach and the Rorschach Test

[Serious information sources about Hermann Rorschach and the Rorschach test.](#)

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan developed the TAT (Morgan & Murray, 1935). The test consists of 19 ambiguous pictures, showing one or more persons, and 1 blank card. The pictures are vague about the events depicted and can be interpreted in different ways. People taking the test are asked to tell a story about the people and objects in the picture, describing what led up to the situation shown, what the people are thinking and feeling, and what the outcome is likely to be. In clinical work, psychologists consider several factors in interpreting these stories, including the kinds of personal relationships involved, the motivations of the characters, and the degree of contact with reality shown by the characters.

There are no objective scoring systems for the TAT, and its reliability and validity are low when used for diagnostic purposes. However, the TAT has proven useful for research purposes, and scoring systems have been devised to measure specific aspects of personality, such as the needs for achievement, affiliation, and power. It also continues to be useful in clinical practice. (Gieser & Wyatt-Gieser, 2013).

Other Projective Techniques Word association and sentence completion tests are additional projective techniques that psychologists use to assess personality. In the word-association test, a list of words is read one at a time to the subject, who is asked to respond to each with the first word that comes to mind. Response words are analyzed for their commonplace or unusual nature, for their possible indication of emotional tension, and for their relationship to sexual conflicts. Speed of response is considered important.

The sentence-completion test also requires verbal responses. Subjects are asked to finish such sentences as “My ambition is ...” or “What worries me is ...” Interpretation of the responses with both of these approaches can be highly subjective. However, some sentence-completion tests, such as the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank, provide for more objective scoring.

Clinical Interviews

In addition to specific psychological tests used to measure an individual’s personality, assessment often includes clinical interviews. After all, it is reasonable to assume that valuable information can be obtained by talking to the person being evaluated and asking relevant questions about past and present life experiences, social and family relationships, and the problems that led the person to seek psychological help. A wide range of behaviors, feelings, and thoughts can be investigated in the interview, including general appearance, demeanor, and attitude; facial expressions, posture, and gestures; preoccupations; degree of self-insight; and level of contact with reality.

Armed with the results of psychological tests like the MMPI, which are usually administered before or during a series of interview sessions, the psychologist can focus

on problems indicated by the test results and explore those areas in detail. Interpretation of interview material is subjective and can be affected by the interviewer's theoretical orientation and personality. Nevertheless, clinical interviews remain a widely used technique for personality assessment and a useful tool when supplemented by more objective procedures.

Behavioral Assessment

In the behavioral assessment approach, an observer evaluates a person's behavior in a given situation. The better the observers know the people being assessed and the more frequently they interact with them, the more accurate their evaluations are likely to be (Connelly & Ones, 2010). Psychologists Arnold Buss and Robert Plomin developed a questionnaire to assess the degree of various temperaments present in twins of the same sex (Buss & Plomin, 1984). The mothers of the twins were asked, on the basis of their observations of their children, to check those items on the questionnaire that best described specific and easily discernible instances of their children's behavior. Sample items from the questionnaire are listed in Table 1.3.

As we noted in the section on clinical interviews, counselors routinely observe their clients' behavior—considering, for example, facial expressions, nervous gestures, and general appearance—and use that information in formulating their diagnoses. Such observations are less systematic than formal behavioral assessment procedures, but the results can provide valuable insights.

Thought and Experience Assessment

In the behavioral approach to personality assessment, we saw that specific behavioral actions are monitored by trained observers. In the thought-sampling approach to assessment, a person's thoughts are recorded systematically to provide a sample over a period of time. Because thoughts are private experiences and cannot be seen by anyone else, the only person who can make this type of observation is the individual whose thoughts are being studied.

In this procedure, then, the observer and the person being observed are the same. The thought-sampling assessment procedure is typically used with groups, but it has also been applied to individuals to aid in diagnosis and treatment. A client can be asked to write or record thoughts and moods for later analysis by the psychologist.

A variation of thought sampling is the experience sampling method. This is conducted very much like thought sampling, but the participants are asked also to describe the social and environmental context in which the experience being sampled occurs. For example, subjects might be asked to note whether they were alone or with other people when an electronic beeper sounded, alerting them to record their experiences. Or they

TABLE 1.3 Sample items from the Buss and Plomin EASI Temperament Survey

Child tends to cry easily.
Child has a quick temper.
Child cannot sit still long.
Child makes friends easily.
Child tends to be shy.
Child goes from toy to toy quickly.

might be asked precisely what they were doing or where they were. The goal of this method is to determine how one's thoughts or moods may be influenced by the context in which they occur.

Thought sampling research relies on technological developments such as smartphones to allow participants to record their assessments quickly and easily. Electronic entries can be timed and dated. Thus, researchers can determine whether assessments are being recorded at the times and intervals requested. If they are entered sometime after the experience, they could be influenced by the vagaries of memory.

An example of the experience sampling approach to personality assessment involved a group of college students who kept daily Internet diaries for 28 days. Each entry described their moods as well as stressful events and how they coped with them. It may not surprise you to learn that the primary type of negative event involved academic issues. The second most reported type of negative issue dealt with interpersonal issues—getting along with others (Park, Armeli, & Tennen, 2004). Other approaches to personality assessment might not have uncovered this information so easily.

An experience sampling study of Japanese students found that those who reported having repetitive thoughts at night and obsessing about something in their lives had problems going to sleep, slept fitfully, and for not as long as compared to students who did not report having repetitive thoughts (Takano, Sakamoto, & Tanno, 2014).

A possible limitation of the experience sampling approach is that subjects might be so busy doing other things that they forget to record their activities when signaled to do so. As a result, the useful data might be restricted only to the most conscientious research participants. It is also possible that emotions or moods—such as anger or sadness—affect the nature of the information reported (Scollon, Kim-Prieto, & Diener, 2009). Overall, however, the method is useful to researchers and provides data comparable to those from self-report inventories.

Gender and Ethnic Issues That Affect Assessment

Gender The assessment of personality can be influenced by a person's gender. For example, women tend to score lower than men on tests measuring assertiveness, a difference that may result from sex-role training that traditionally teaches girls and young women in some cultures not to assert themselves. Whatever the cause, personality test results often show differences between males and females on a number of characteristics and at every age. For example, a study of 474 children, median age 11, reported that girls showed a higher level of depression and a greater concern with what other people thought of them than boys did (Rudolph & Conley, 2005).

In addition, considerable data from personality tests, clinical interviews, and other assessment measures indicate differential rates of diagnosis based on gender for various emotional disorders. Women are more often diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and related disorders than are men. Several explanations have been offered. There actually may be a higher incidence of these disorders among women, or the differential rate may be related to gender bias or gender stereotyping in interpreting the assessment results.

Also, the therapists who recommend treatment options based on the assessment results may exhibit a bias against women. The average course of therapy for women tends to be longer than that for men, and doses of psychoactive medications prescribed for women tend to be higher than those for men.

Asians The Asian-American population in the United States is a complex, heterogeneous group, which includes people of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Thai, Korean, and Vietnamese extraction, among others. A psychological test such as the MMPI, which

has been validated in a major city in China, may not be valid for Chinese people living in the United States, or even for Chinese people living in other parts of China. Although the MMPI and other personality tests have been translated into Asian languages, little research has been conducted on their reliability and validity for use with Asian Americans.

We saw earlier that there are substantial and consistent cultural differences in personality between people of Asian and non-Asian background. Asian cultures also differ from Western societies in their attitudes toward having and being treated for mental illness, one of the major reasons for assessing personality.

Asian Americans tend to view any form of mental disorder as a shameful condition that they are embarrassed to admit. As a result, they are less likely to seek treatment from a therapist or counselor for emotional problems. Research consistently shows that Asian Americans, particularly first-generation immigrants, underutilize mental health treatment services. Those born in the United States are almost twice as likely to seek treatment as those born outside the United States (Meyer, Zane, Cho, & Takeuchi, 2009). First-generation Chinese students in the United States were found to be significantly less likely to seek treatment for emotional issues than first-generation European students in the United States (Hsu & Alden, 2008). Asian Americans also tend to wait until the disturbance is severe before seeking help and less likely to benefit from it (Hwang, 2006).

A psychologist in New York City reported that her immigrant Chinese patients initially complained only about physical symptoms such as backache or stomachache, and never about depression. Several sessions were required before they built up enough trust to venture to describe a problem such as depression. Some Asian languages, such as Korean, do not even have a specific word for depression. The psychologist reported that one Korean client finally struck his chest with his fist and said he had a “down heart,” thus describing the mental condition in physical terms (Kershaw, 2013). Asian Americans are also far less likely to take antidepressant medications as compared to Whites (Gonzalez, Tarraf, Brady, Chan, Miranda, & Leong, 2010).

With such contrasting beliefs about the nature of a particular disorder, it is easy to understand why people of diverse cultural backgrounds may score differently on assessment measures of personality. In addition, the practice of using American values, beliefs, and norms as the standard by which everyone is judged may help explain much research that shows that Asian Americans tend to receive different psychiatric diagnoses than American patients of European heritage.

Blacks Research conducted in the 1990s showed generally consistent differences between Black and White subjects on self-report personality tests. Based on such test score differences, some psychologists concluded that popular and frequently used personality tests, such as the MMPI, are biased against African Americans and should not be used to assess their personalities. Evidence to support this viewpoint has been contradicted by later research using the MMPI. For example, in a study of psychiatric patients (both Blacks and Whites) who were hospitalized at a Veterans Administration (VA) center, no significant differences were found on any of the test’s scales (Arbisi, Ben-Porath, & McNulty, 2002).

However, Black and White college students were found to differ on a test designed to measure paranoia. Black students scored significantly higher on items measuring a lack of trust in other people, a suspicion of their motives, and a tendency to be on guard with others. Similar results, showing a higher level of distrust and paranoid personality patterns, were shown in later research using older Black subjects between the ages of 55 and 64 (Iacovino, Jackson, & Oltmanns, 2014).

Do these consistent findings mean that Blacks are more paranoid than Whites? No. We must evaluate and interpret these and similar findings within the appropriate racial and ethnic context. Thus, the researchers noted that “the group differences may reflect mistrust or interpersonal wariness caused by pervasive discrimination and perceived racism” (Combs, Penn, & Fenigstein, 2002, p. 6). The same conclusion was reached in the 2014 study.

Other research found that African-American college students who identified strongly with Black cultural values had lower levels of depression and hopelessness than those without a strong cultural identification (Walker, Alabi, Roberts, & Obasi, 2010). However, Black teenagers who scored high in perceived discrimination reported greater depression and lower self-esteem and life satisfaction than teens who scored low in perceived discrimination against them (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2010).

What about the effect of race on the interpretation of MMPI test results? Do White researchers interpret test results differently when they know the person who took the test is Black or White? The answer seems to be consistently “No,” as shown by two recent studies, which found no differences in interpretations between Black or White test-takers (Knaster, 2013; Knaster & Micucci, 2013).

Research on the effects of counseling and therapy conducted with Black college students showed that they rated Black therapists more favorably than they did White therapists. The students were also more accepting and understanding of the treatment options when they met with Black therapists, and they were more likely to believe that the therapy would benefit them (Thompson & Alexander, 2006; Want, Parham, Baker, & Sherman, 2004).

Hispanics Studies show that scores obtained on the MMPI by people of Hispanic origin are similar to those obtained by Whites (see, for example, Handel & Ben-Porath, 2000). With projective techniques, however, the situation is different. Rorschach scores for subjects from Mexico and from Central American and South American countries differ significantly from the norms of the comprehensive scoring system. Thus, it is questionable whether these norms are useful with Hispanic populations (Wood et al., 2002).

It has also been found that Hispanics are less likely than other minority groups to seek psychological counseling or treatment. Among Hispanics who do seek counseling, half never follow up on their first visit by returning for additional sessions (Dingfelder, 2005). A study of White and Hispanic adolescents found that significantly more Whites received adequate mental health care than Hispanics (Alexandre, Martins, Silvia, & Richard, 2009). Foreign-born Hispanics are even less likely to use mental health services than Hispanics born in the United States (Bridges, deArellano, Rheingold, Danielson, & Silcott, 2010).

Hispanic adolescents who do seek mental health treatment are typically seen by clinicians for shorter periods of time than White adolescents (Edman, Adams, Park, & Irwin, 2010). However, a study of Mexican-American college students found that as they became more integrated in the mainstream U.S. culture, their attitudes toward counseling became more favorable (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009). One confounding factor is the shortage of Spanish-speaking clinical psychologists and other mental health personnel.

Hispanic Americans tend to be more satisfied with mental health personnel who understand their culture, which typically is highly collectivist in nature and thus more group-oriented than individual-oriented (see, for example, Malloy, Albright, Diaz-Loving, Dong, & Lee, 2004). And they are more likely to benefit from therapy with Hispanic psychologists, who, unfortunately, account for only 1 percent of the psychologists in the United States. That may explain why older Hispanic people (ages 65 and up) prefer to seek mental health advice from their family physician rather than counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrists who are not likely to speak Spanish (Dupree, Herrera, Tyson, Jang, & King-Kallimans, 2010).

HIGHLIGHTS: Personality Assessment

Asians tend to score:

- High in collectivism
- Low in individual competitiveness and assertiveness
- Low in self-enhancement and optimism
- Low in the tendency to seek mental health treatment

African Americans tend to score:

- Low on trust of other people
- Low on hopelessness and depression (if they identify with Black cultural values)
- High on depression
- Low on self-esteem if they perceive discrimination against them

Hispanics tend to score:

- Low in tendency to seek mental health treatment
- High in collectivism
- High in PTSD symptoms following injuries

The collectivist orientation may help explain the higher rates of PTSD found in a study of Hispanic police officers when compared to Black officers and non-Hispanic White officers. The Hispanic officers reported receiving significantly less social support following critical incidents on the job that lead to PTSD. The researchers noted that for the Hispanic officers, “their culturally valued collectiveness may have left these officers particularly sensitive to social isolation, thus exacerbating their symptoms” (Pole, Best, Metzler, & Marmar, 2005, p. 257). A study of civilian survivors with physical injuries also found a higher rate of PTSD symptoms among Hispanics as compared to Whites (Marshall, Schell, & Miles, 2009).

Other Cultural Issues in Assessment Hermann Rorschach was one of the first to recognize the effects of cultural differences in performance on personality assessment techniques. In 1921, he found differences in responses to his Inkblot Test from people living in two culturally distinct areas of Switzerland. He wrote that such responses “should be very different in various people and races” (quoted in Allen & Dana, 2004, p. 192). A study of American Indians using the MMPI-2 demonstrated how responses to test questions reflected behavior that was considered normal in that culture but pathological in the mainstream White culture (Hill, Pace, & Robbins, 2010). Other research reinforces this idea that what is normal in one culture may be judged undesirable, wrong, sick, or just plain weird in other cultures (Cheung, 2009).

Although some personality tests have been translated for use in other cultures, there are potential problems with their cross-cultural application (see, for example, Gudmundsson, 2009). This is particularly crucial when a test designed for the population of a Western culture is administered to people in a non-Western culture, such as Chinese or Filipino. For example, among traditional Chinese people, important personality characteristics include being gracious, having a family orientation, emphasizing harmony with others, and showing frugality in everyday behavior. None of these factors is typical of those measured by American personality inventories.

When the MMPI-2 was first translated into Arabic, the issue arose of how to treat questions about one's sex life. In Arab countries, any open discussion of sex is considered inappropriate, even offensive. The researchers decided to retain the sex questions in the test but to specify in the instructions that the subjects' responses to these items were optional. A study of college students in Iran showed that more than 90 percent chose not to respond to items relating to sex (Nezami, Zamani, & DeFrank, 2008).

The TAT cannot be used in Islamic cultures because of the Muslim prohibition against representing humans in pictorial form. When groups of European women and Muslim women were asked to make up stories in response to the TAT pictures, the European women did so readily and easily, whereas the Muslim women hesitated. The researcher noted that the Muslim women "consistently refused to give coherent interpretations. They refused to invent or fictionalize [the pictures]" (Bullard, 2005, p. 235).

Translators of American personality tests for use in other cultures also face the problem of American slang and colloquial expressions. Phrases such as "I often get the blues," or "I like to keep up with the Joneses" might have little meaning or relevance when translated into another language. It should be noted that there are a growing number of examples of personality tests developed in America being successfully translated into Arabic. This is particularly true for personality characteristics that are common to both cultures such as Internet addiction among the young. The Internet Addiction Test developed in the United States has been shown to be an equally valid predictor of such addiction in teenagers in Arab countries (Hawi, 2013).

Even the way people in the United States answer test questions may differ from other cultures. Responding to items in a true-false format or multiple-choice format seems natural to American college students, who have been taking these types of tests since childhood. To others, it may be an awkward and alien way of answering questions. When the MMPI was first introduced in Israel in the 1970s, many people there found it difficult to respond because they were unfamiliar with the true-false answer format. The test instructions had to be rewritten to explain to the respondents how they were supposed to record their answers (Butcher, 2004). The reworking of personality tests to ensure that they accurately reflect and measure relevant personality variables is difficult and requires knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural differences.

Research in the Study of Personality

Psychologists conduct research on personality in different ways. The method used depends on which aspect of personality is under investigation. Some psychologists are interested only in overt behavior—what we do and say in response to certain stimuli. Other psychologists are concerned with feelings and conscious experiences as measured by tests and questionnaires. Such self-report inventories are among the most frequently used research techniques. Still other investigators try to understand the unconscious forces that may motivate us. A method useful for examining one aspect of personality may be inappropriate for another aspect.

The major methods used in personality research are the clinical method, the experimental method, virtual research, and the correlational method. Although different in their specifics, these methods depend in varying degrees on objective observation, which is the fundamental defining characteristic of scientific research in any discipline.

case study A detailed history of an individual that contains data from a variety of sources.

The Clinical Method

The primary clinical method is the **case study** or case history, in which psychologists probe their patients' past and present lives for clues to the source of their emotional problems.

Undertaking a case study is similar to writing a mini-biography of a person's emotional life from the early years to the present day, including feelings, fears, and experiences.

Freud used case studies extensively in developing his theory of psychoanalysis, as we will see in Chapter 2. He probed into his patients' childhood years, looking for those events and conflicts that may have caused their present neuroses. One such patient was Katharina, an 18-year-old woman suffering from anxiety attacks and shortness of breath. In reconstructing what he considered to be the relevant experiences in her childhood, Freud traced Katharina's symptoms to several early sexual experiences she reported, including a seduction attempt by her father when she was 14. With another patient, Lucy, Freud linked her reported hallucinations to events in her past that related to her love for her employer that had been rebuffed.

It was through such case studies that Freud developed his theory of personality, with its focus on sexual conflicts or traumas as causal factors in neurotic behavior. Freud and later theorists who used the case study method searched for consistencies and patterns in their patients' lives. On the basis of what they perceived as similarities among the reports of their patients, these theorists generalized their findings to everyone.

Psychologists also use a variety of other clinical methods in addition to case studies, including tests, interviews, and dream analysis. Although the clinical method attempts to be scientific, it does not offer the precision and control of the experimental and correlational methods. The data obtained by the clinical method are more subjective, involving mental and largely unconscious events and early life experiences.

Such data are open to different interpretations that may reflect the therapist's own personal biases, more so than data obtained by other methods. Also, memories of childhood events may be distorted by time, and their accuracy cannot easily be verified. However, the clinical method can provide a window through which to view the depths of the personality, and we shall see many examples of its use, especially by the psychoanalytic and neo-psychoanalytic theorists.

independent variable

In an experiment, the stimulus variable or condition the experimenter manipulates to learn its effect on the dependent variable.

dependent variable In an experiment, the variable the experimenter desires to measure, typically the subjects' behavior or response to manipulation of the independent variable.

experimental group In an experiment, the group that is exposed to the experimental treatment.

control group In an experiment, the group that does not receive the experimental treatment.

The Experimental Method

An experiment is a technique for determining the effect of one or more variables or events on behavior. We are constantly exposed to stimuli going on around us in our everyday world—lights, sounds, phone screens, voices, sights, odors, instructions, and trivial conversations. When psychologists want to determine the effect of just one stimulus variable, they arrange an experimental situation in which only that variable is allowed to operate.

All other variables are eliminated or held constant during the experiment. Then, if the behavior of the subjects changes while only that one stimulus variable is in operation, we can be certain that it alone is responsible for that changed behavior. The change could not have been caused by another variable because no other variable was allowed to influence the subjects during the experiment.

There are two kinds of variables in an experiment. One is the **independent** or stimulus **variable**, which is the one manipulated by the experimenter. The other is the **dependent variable**, which is the subjects' behavior in response to that manipulation. To be certain that no variable other than the independent variable can affect the results, researchers study two groups of subjects: the experimental group and the control group. Both groups are chosen at random from the same population of subjects.

The **experimental group** includes those subjects to whom the experimental treatment is given. This is the group exposed to the stimulus or independent variable. The **control group** is not exposed to the independent variable. Measures of the behavior being studied are taken from both groups before and after the experiment. In this way, researchers can determine if any additional variables might have influenced the subjects' behavior.

If some other variable was operating, then both groups would show the same changes in behavior. But if no other variable was in operation—if the independent variable alone influenced the subjects—then only the behavior of the experimental group would change. The behavior of the control group would remain the same.

Applying the Experimental Method Here's an example of the experimental method in action, using data from Albert Bandura's social-learning theory of personality (see Chapter 13). Bandura wanted to find out if children would imitate the aggressive behavior they saw in adults. He could have observed children on neighborhood streets or at a playground, hoping to catch their reactions if they happened to witness a violent incident. He could then have waited to see whether the children would imitate the aggressive behavior they had seen.

That approach is obviously unsystematic and uncontrolled. Observing children who just happened to be present on a street corner would not provide an appropriate sample of subjects. Some of the children might already possess a tendency to behave aggressively, regardless of the violent behavior they observed. Therefore, it would be impossible to decide whether their aggressive behavior resulted from witnessing that violent act or from some factor that had been part of their personality long before the observation took place.

Also, observing children at random would not allow the researcher to control the type of aggressive act to which the subjects might be exposed. Children see many kinds of violence every day—on video games, movies, and television as well as on the streets or in playgrounds. In the experiment Bandura wanted to run, it was necessary that all the children he observed be exposed to the same instance of aggressive behavior. He approached the problem systematically by designing an experiment in which children whose preexperiment levels of aggression had been measured were then exposed to the same display of adult aggression. Children in the control group witnessed nonaggressive adults in the same setting. Both groups of children were watched by trained observers to see how they would behave.

The results showed that those children who watched the aggressive adult behaved aggressively, while children in the control group showed no change in aggressiveness. Bandura therefore concluded that aggressiveness can be learned by imitating the aggressive behavior of others.

Limitations of the Experimental Method There are situations in which the experimental method cannot be used. Some aspects of behavior and personality cannot be studied under rigorously controlled laboratory conditions because of safety and ethical considerations. For example, psychologists might be better able to treat emotional disturbances if they had data from controlled experiments on different child-rearing techniques to determine what kinds of early experiences might lead to problems in adulthood. Obviously, however, we can't take groups of children from their parents at birth and expose them to various child-rearing manipulations to see what happens.

Another difficulty with the experimental method is that the subjects' behavior might change simply because they know they are being observed. They might behave differently if they thought no one was watching their responses. When people know they are participating in an experiment, they sometimes try to guess the purpose of it and behave in ways to either please or frustrate the experimenter. This kind of response defeats the purpose of the experiment because the resulting behavior (the dependent variable) has been influenced by the subjects' attitudes rather than by the experimental treatment. This is quite a different response from what the researcher intended to study.

Experimental research has its limitations, but when it is well controlled and systematic, it provides excellent data. We will see examples throughout the book of how the experimental method applies to understanding many aspects of personality.

Virtual Research

Psychologists routinely conduct research online, including administering psychological tests, taking opinion surveys, and presenting experimental stimuli and recording the subjects' responses. They are doing much the same kinds of research they once could conduct only in person in the laboratory. Now, through crowd-sourcing and other online employment services, they can rapidly and inexpensively find enough subjects for their studies. One highly popular source is the Mechanical Turk on Amazon, on which people are paid modest amounts for a variety of services including serving as subjects in psychological surveys and experiments (see Emanuel 2014; Mason & Suri, 2012; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014).

Virtual research offers advantages over traditional experimental research. Studies conducted on the Web produce faster responses, are less costly, and have the potential to reach a broader range of subjects of different ages, levels of education, employment, income, social class, and ethnic origin. Online research can assess a population far more diverse than that found on a typical college campus (Crump, McDonnell, & Gurieckis, 2013).

However, online research also has disadvantages. Web users tend to be younger, more affluent, and better educated than nonusers, thus limiting the chances that an online sample will be truly representative of the population as a whole (though still likely to be more representative than a group of college student subjects). Those not likely to be represented in online research include older adults, low-income people, visually impaired, or non-English speakers (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Suarez-Balcazar, Balcazar, & Taylor-Ritzler, 2009).

People who respond to online research may also differ from nonresponders on important personality characteristics. Research conducted in Germany and in the United States found that people who failed to respond to an online survey were judged, on the basis of their personal Web sites, to be more introverted and disagreeable, less open to new experiences, and lower in self-esteem than those who did respond to the survey (Marcus & Schutz, 2005).

A study in which American college students were given the choice of participating in psychological research online or in person found that the more extraverted chose to participate in person and the more introverted chose the online method (Witt, Donnellan, & Orlando, 2011). Other research found no significant differences between online and telephone survey respondents in their willingness to disclose sensitive personal information. The average response rate for online participants was approximately 10 percent lower than for telephone or mail surveys. Also, some 10 percent of online survey participants were found to engage in excessive clicking and mouse movements when responding (Fan & Yan, 2010; Hines, Douglas, & Mahmood, 2010; Stieger & Reips, 2010).

It is difficult to determine how honest and accurate online subjects will be when they provide personal information on factors such as age, gender, ethnic origin, education, or income. Nevertheless, a significant number of studies comparing online and traditional laboratory research methods show that the results are, in general, consistent and similar.

correlational method

A statistical technique that measures the degree of the relationship between two variables, expressed by the correlation coefficient.

The Correlational Method

In the **Correlational method**, researchers investigate the relationships that exist among variables. Rather than manipulating an independent variable, the experimenters deal with the variable's existing attributes. For example, instead of experimentally creating stressful

situations in subjects in the psychology lab and observing the effects, researchers can study people who already function in stressful situations—such as police officers, race car drivers, or college students suffering from test anxiety.

Another way the correlational method differs from the experimental method is that in the correlational approach subjects are not assigned to experimental and control groups. Instead, subjects who differ on an independent variable—such as age, gender, order of birth, level of aggressiveness, or degree of neuroticism—are compared with their performance on some dependent variable, such as personality test responses or job performance measures.

Applying the Correlational Method Researchers applying the correlational method are interested in the relationship between the variables—in how behavior on one variable changes or differs as a function of the other variable. For example, is birth order related to aggressiveness? Do people who score high on an IQ test make better computer scientists than people who score low? Do people with high anxiety use social media to a greater extent than those low in anxiety? The answers to such questions are useful not only in research but also in real-world situations where predictions have to be made about a person's chances of success. The college entrance examinations you took are based on correlational studies that show the relationship between the two variables of standardized test scores and classroom success.

Suppose a psychologist wanted to determine whether people high in the need for achievement earn higher grades in college than people low in the need for achievement. Using the correlational method, the psychologist would measure the achievement-need levels of a group of already admitted college students using a self-report inventory and compare them with their grades. The independent variable (the different levels of the need for achievement, from high to low) was not manipulated or changed in this case. The researcher worked with existing data and found that students high in the need for achievement did earn higher grades than students low in the need for achievement (Atkinson, Lens, & O'Malley, 1976).

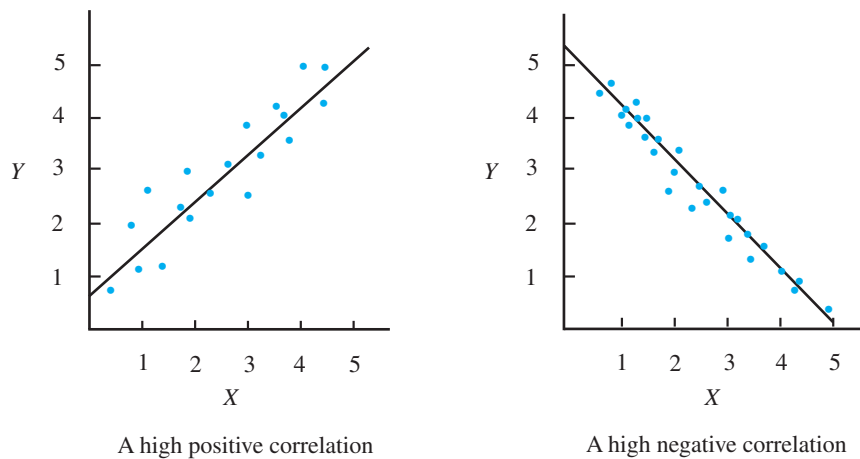
We will see many examples of the use of the correlational method in personality research throughout the book, especially in discussions of the development of assessment techniques. The reliability and validity of assessment devices are typically determined through the correlational method. In addition, many facets of personality have been studied by correlating them with other variables.

The Correlation Coefficient The primary statistical measure of correlation is the correlation coefficient, which provides precise information about the direction and strength of the relationship between two variables. The direction of the relationship can be positive or negative. If high scores on one variable accompany high scores on the other variable, the direction is positive. If high scores on one variable accompany low scores on the other variable, the direction is negative (see Figure 1.2). Correlation coefficients range from +1.00 (a perfect positive correlation) to −1.00 (a perfect negative correlation). The closer the correlation coefficient is to +1.00 or −1.00, the stronger the relationship and the more confidently we can make predictions about one variable from the other.

Cause and Effect The primary limitation of the correlational method relates to the matter of cause and effect. Just because two variables show a high correlation with each other, we cannot conclude that one has caused the other. There may indeed be such a relationship, but researchers cannot automatically conclude that one exists, as they can with a well-controlled, systematic experiment.

Suppose a psychologist found a strong negative relationship between the two personality variables of shyness and self-esteem: The higher the level of shyness, the lower the

FIGURE 1.2
Graphs of high positive
and high negative
correlations.



level of self-esteem. Conversely, the lower the level of shyness, the higher the level of self-esteem. The relationship is clear and straightforward: People who are shy tend to score low on measures of self-esteem. We cannot conclude with certainty, however, that being shy causes people to have low self-esteem. It could be the other way around. Maybe low self-esteem causes people to be shy. Or perhaps some other variable, such as physical appearance or parental rejection, could cause both shyness and low self-esteem.

This restriction on drawing conclusions from correlational research presents problems for researchers, whose goal is to identify specific causes. However, for practitioners, whose goal is to predict behavior in the real world, the correlational method is extremely satisfactory. To be able to predict success in college on the basis of the need for achievement, for example, we need only establish that the two variables have a high correlation.

If a college applicant scores high on a test of the need for achievement, we can predict that he or she will earn good grades in college. In this case, we are not concerned with determining whether the level of the achievement need causes good academic performance, only with whether the two variables are related and whether one can be predicted from the other.

The Role of Theory in Personality Theories

Theories are sometimes referred to in dismissive and contemptuous terms. “After all,” people may say, “it’s only a theory!” It is popular to assume that a theory is something very vague, abstract, and speculative—really no more than a hunch or a guess and quite the opposite of a fact. It is true that a theory without research evidence to support it is speculation. However, a mass of research data can be meaningless unless and until it is organized into some sort of explanatory framework or context. A theory provides that framework for describing empirical data in a meaningful way. A theory can be considered a kind of map that represents and explains all the data in their interrelationships. It attempts to bring order to the data, to fit them into a meaningful pattern.

Theories are sets of principles used to explain a particular class of phenomena—in our case, the behaviors and experiences relating to personality. If personality theories are to be useful, they must be testable, capable of stimulating research on their various propositions. Researchers must be able to collect data through one or more of the research methods we talked about earlier to determine whether aspects of the theory should be accepted or rejected.

Personality theories must be able to clarify and explain the data of personality by organizing those data into a coherent framework. Theories should also help us understand and predict behavior. Those theories that can be tested and can explain, understand, and predict behavior may then be applied to help people change their behaviors, feelings, and emotions from harmful to helpful, from undesirable to desirable.

The Autobiographical Nature of Personality Theories

We saw that the intent of theories is toward greater objectivity. However, psychologists have long recognized that some personality theories have a subjective component, which may reflect events in the theorist's life as a sort of disguised autobiography. The theorist may draw on these events as a source of data to describe and support his or her theory. No matter how hard scientists try to be impartial and objective, their personal viewpoint is likely to influence their perception to some degree. This should not surprise us. Personality theorists are human too, as we will see, and like most of us they sometimes find it hard to accept ideas that diverge from their own experience.

In order to understand a personality theory fully then, we should learn something about the life of the person who proposed it. It is important to consider how the development of a theory may have been influenced by specific events in a theorist's life. In cases where sufficient biographical information is available, we will see examples of how a theory reflects those events. At least initially, the theorist may have been describing himself or herself. Later, the theorist may have sought appropriate data from other sources to support the generalization of that personal view to others.

The significance of personal events in a theorist's life has long been recognized. William James, who is considered by many to have been the greatest American psychologist, believed that biography was a crucial subject for anyone who attempts to study human nature. He argued that it was even more important to understand eminent persons' lives than it was to know their theories or systems if we wanted to learn about the different ways people approach human experience. Freud put it succinctly and clearly, when he wrote that his most important patient—the one from whom he learned the most about personality—was himself.

One historian noted that “More than any other professional discipline, psychologists have sought to publish biographical and autobiographical sketches of those in their calling.... At some level, at least, they seem to have acknowledged that their lives and values are the key to their ‘scientific knowledge’” (Friedman, 1996, p. 221).

We shall see many examples of the autobiographical nature of personality theories, but we must also introduce a note of caution into this intriguing relationship between theory and real life. Perhaps it is not the person's life experiences that influence the development of the theory. Maybe it's the other way around. Perhaps the theory influences what the theorists remember and choose to tell us about their lives. Much of our information about a theorist's life comes from autobiographical recollections. These accounts are usually written late in life, after the person has proposed and defended the theory.

The time spent developing a theory and affirming a public commitment to it may distort the theorist's memories of his or her earlier years. Does the person recall only those life events that support the theory? Are contradictory or troublesome events conveniently forgotten? Are experiences invented to enhance a theory's credibility? Although we cannot always answer these questions, we should keep them in mind while we explore the notion that personality theories may be at least partly autobiographical.

In the end, it may be a question you will have to answer for yourself, recognizing that perhaps experiences in your own life may influence how you come to understand and judge the lives of others—and their theories of personality.

Questions about Human Nature: What Are We Like?

An important aspect of any personality theory is the image of human nature it represents. Each theorist has a conception of human nature that addresses the basic issues of what it means to be human. For centuries, poets, philosophers, and artists have phrased and rephrased these questions, and we see their attempts at answers in our great books and paintings. Personality theorists, too, have addressed these troubling questions and have reached no greater consensus than artists or writers.

The various conceptions of human nature offered by the theorists allow for a meaningful comparison of their views. These ideas are frameworks within which the theorists perceive themselves and other people and then construct their theories. The following text describes the issues that define a theorist's image of human nature. As we discuss each theory, we will consider how the theorist deals with these fundamental issues.

Are We in Charge of Our Lives? Free Will versus Determinism

A basic question about human nature concerns the age-old controversy between free will and determinism. Theorists on both sides of the issue ask, can we consciously direct the course of our actions? Can we spontaneously choose the direction of our thoughts and behavior, rationally selecting among alternatives? Do we have a conscious awareness and a measure of self-control? Are we masters of our fate, or are we victims of past experience, biological factors, unconscious forces, or external stimuli—forces over which we have no conscious control?

Have external events so shaped our personality that we are incapable of changing our behavior? Some personality theorists take extreme positions on this issue. Others express more moderate views, arguing that some behaviors are determined by past events and some can be spontaneous and under our control.

What Dominates Us? Our Inherited Nature or Our Nurturing Environment?

A second issue has to do with the nature–nurture controversy. Which is the more important influence on behavior: inherited traits and attributes (our nature or genetic endowment) or features of our environment (the nurturing influences of our upbringing, education, and training)? Do the abilities, temperaments, and predispositions we inherit determine our personality, or are we shaped more strongly by the conditions under which we live? Personality is not the only topic affected by this issue. Controversy also exists about the question of intelligence: Is intelligence affected more by genetic endowment (nature) or by the stimulation provided by home and school settings (nurture)?

As with the free will–determinism issue, the alternatives are not limited to extreme positions. Many theorists assume that personality is shaped by both sets of forces. To some, inheritance is the predominant influence and environment of minor importance; others hold the opposite view.

Are We Dependent or Independent of Childhood?

A third issue involves the relative importance of our early childhood experiences, compared with events that occur later in life. Which is the more powerful shaper of personality? If we assume, as some theorists do, that what happens to us in infancy and childhood is critical to personality formation, then we must consequently believe that