

Please note: The following is a copy of a portion of the Preface of the 3rd Edition of Personality Psychology: A Systems Approach

Preface for the Instructor of Personality Psychology

A Vision

Our field grew out of a vision. The discipline of personality psychology was intended to integrate the findings from the rest of psychology in a coherent, broad picture of how an individual's mental life operated. This picture of personality would be global enough to permit discussion of the important questions about being human such as: "Who am I?" and "How should I live my life?" and yet would be rigorous enough to promote scientific research (Alexander, 1941; Allport, 1937; Greebie, 1932; Wundt, 1897).

Maintaining that vision throughout the field's history has been challenging. The advent of the grand theories of personality during the early part of the 20th century captured the imagination of many scholars. Enticing as those grand theories were, however, they diverted attention from the painstaking but gradual accumulation of research findings in the field. Many courses on personality psychology became courses about the personality theories of Freud, Jung, Maslow, and others (e.g., Hall & Lindzey, 1978). Each theory used a different language, and many denied the validity of the other theories. Thereafter, a return to a unified picture of the personality system, and to the original vision of the field faced certain obstacles. Moreover, a sense of how to begin to reintegrate the accumulating research in the field – and to teach it – was lost (e.g., Mendelsohn, 1993).

To be sure, some tried to integrate the field. Robert Sears (1950) hoped to return the field to a systematic view of personality. To do so, he laid out the topics he believed one should study when looking at a whole system: "Structure, Dynamics, and Development," as he put it. Unfortunately, the terms he employed went undefined, and even those psychologists who wanted to use his approach remained confused as to how to apply his vision (e.g., Messick, 1961).

In the fifty-odd years since Sears' simple formula, several advances have occurred that enabled this book to effectively and fully align itself with that powerful vision of the founders of the field.

- The first advance was the recognition that the grand theories of personality are not as contradictory as they first seemed. In fact, many such theories have been translated into one another's terminology, and, increasingly, a common terminology in the field is employed (e.g., Dollard & Miller, 1950; Erdelyi, 1980; Mayer, 1993-1994; 1995a; 1995b; 1998; 2001; 2004; Westen, 1991; 1998).
- Second, research has grown at a consistent rate, guided by mini-theories specifically relevant to the issues being researched. This, in turn, has led to a new and sizeable research base for the field – so that, when one describes what is known about personality, there is a fair amount to say.
- Third has been the development of the systems framework that is used in this book. The framework allows for personality to be discussed as a system without needing to be constrained by the jargon of general systems theory, cybernetics, and similar approaches. Rather, talking about personality as a system can be done simply and directly (Mayer, 1993-1994). The systems framework for personality has been published as a series of peer-reviewed articles. One of those articles was also the subject of public peer commentary. The development of this book has been greatly enhanced by such continuous and open review. (e.g., Craik, 1998; Emmons, 1998;

Funder, 1998; 2002, p. 5; Hogan, 1998; Mayer, 1993-1994; 1994; 1995a; 1995b; 1998a; 1998b; in press; Mayer & Carlsmith, 1997; McAdams, 1998; Singer, 1998; Tennen & Affleck, 1998).

With these developments, the stage has been set for a new integrated approach to personality psychology. It is my hope that this textbook will itself become a touchstone in the reorganization– and revitalization – of the field of personality psychology. I believe that this re-envisioning of the field can return us to the original conceptions and purposes for which the field was created, and integrate the most up-to-date and highest quality theory and research available.

Organization of the Book and the Course

Personality psychology is often taught today by examining a number of theoretical perspectives on the system such as the psychodynamic, behavioral, trait, and so on. This leads to a fragmented approach – and one that becomes strained when attempting to fit in current research.

PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY: A SYSTEMS APPROACH evolved from an intentional re-focusing on the central mission of personality psychology: To directly describe the personality system and its major psychological subsystems. The framework which organizes this textbook divides the study of personality into four areas. These proceed from: (a) describing personality and the discipline of personality psychology, to (b) examining personality’s parts, (c) personality’s organization, and (d) personality’s development. The framework’s four topics, and the chapters that accompany each, appear in Table PF-1.

Table PF-1: The Four Topics of the Present Book and How the Chapters are Organized According to those Topics			
Introductory Issues	Parts of Personality	Personality Organization	Personality Development
1. What Is Personality? 2. Research in Personality Psychology 3. Perspectives on Personality	4. Motivation and Emotion 5. Interior Selves; Interior Worlds 6. Mental Abilities and Skills 7. The Conscious Self	8. How the Parts of Personality Fit Together 9. Dynamics of Action 10. Dynamics of Self-Control	11. Personality Development in Childhood and Adolescence 12. Personality Development in Adulthood

Using the New Book

One natural concern for an instructor is: How much time will it take to use this new book, and how easy is it to convert to this new organization? Two qualities make it relatively easy to convert to this new approach. First, the book represents change primarily in the organization rather than content of the course. This means that one can use many materials that one has become accustomed to using with any course in personality psychology – just in a new order. Second, a variety of materials are available to assist instruction with the course – including a complete set of lecture outlines in powerpoint -- that make the switch as easy as possible.

Using Current Lectures in a New Order

The first aspect of the book that makes a switch to it easy is that most lectures commonly employed in a theories approach can be used with this new book. That is because the emphasis of this new book is on reorganization and integration. Examples of some common lectures from personality psychology that can be employed with only modest modification are shown in Table PF-2. There, such common topics as lectures on Freudian defense mechanisms, Murray’s work on the Thematic Apperception Test, Jung’s archetypes, Costa and McCrae’s Big Five personality

traits, George Kelly's personal constructs, and other topics, are arranged as they might be for a specific course using this textbook.

Table PF-2: How Current Lecture Topics Can Be Ordered So As To Employ This Book	
Common Lecture Topics in Personality Psychology	Placement of the Lecture Using this Textbook
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining personality and describing the field 	Chapter 1: What Is Personality?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliability and validity 	Chapter 2: Research in Personality Psychology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to the different theories of personality (e.g., Introduction to the psychodynamic, trait, humanistic, socio-cognitive, and other perspectives) 	Chapter 3: Perspectives on Personality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murray's TAT Eysenck's model of neuroticism and extroversion 	Chapter 4: Motives and Emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kelly's personal constructs Jung's archetypes Markus' possible selves Higgins' ideal and actual selves 	Chapter 5: Interior Selves; Interior Worlds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adler's creative personality Standard lecture on intelligence 	Chapter 6: Mental Abilities and Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freud's ego; Jung's ego Free will versus determinism 	Chapter 7: Consciousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Big Five traits Mischel's model of person-situation interactions MacLean's Triune brain The conscious versus unconscious 	Chapter 8: How the Parts of Personality Fit Together
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mood congruent phenomenon Interaction of motives Personal strivings; personal projects Latent versus manifest content of behavior 	Chapter 9: Dynamics of Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freud's mechanisms of defense Hypnotic phenomena Feedback loops Auto-suggestion 	Chapter 10: Dynamics of Self-Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erikson's eight stages of development Attachment theory Birth order The identity crisis 	Chapter 11: Personality Development in Childhood and Adolescence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levinson's stages of adult development Adult relationships and marriage Maslow's self-actualized person Erikson's generativity versus despair 	Chapter 12: Adult Personality Development

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