Chapter Overview

- Personality: The Study of Individuals
  - Definition of Personality

- Description of Personality
  - Differences Between People: Groups or Gradations?
  - Comparing People or Studying Individuals

- Personality Dynamics
  - Adaptation and Adjustment
  - Cognitive Processes
  - Culture

Chapter Overview Cont.

- Personality Development
  - Biological Influences
  - Experience in Childhood and Adulthood

- The Scientific Approach
  - Theory
  - Criteria of a Good Theory
  - Relationship Between Theory and Research

- Methods in Personality Research
  - Personality Measurement
  - Correlational Studies
  - Experimentation
  - Studying Individuals

- One Theory or Many? Eclecticism and the Future of Personality Theory
Personality: The Study of Individuals

Definition of Personality

• Do Exercise Before Going On!
• The underlying causes within the person of individual behavior and experience

A More Detailed Definition

In Larsen & Buss’ book entitled Personality Psychology, personality is defined as: the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the environment (including the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments).

Description of Personality

| TABLE 1.1: Types, Traits, and Factors: Three Ways of Describing Personality |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Types**        | Type membership is an all-or-nothing (a qualitative variable). A person belongs to one and only one category. Theoretically, a small number of types describe everyone. A person fits into only one type. |
| **Traits**       | Trait scores are continuous (quantitative) variables. A person is given a numeric score to indicate how much of a trait the person possesses. Theoretically, there are a great many traits to describe everyone. A person can be described on every trait. |
| **Factors**      | Factor scores are also continuous (quantitative) variables. A person is given a numeric score to indicate how much of a factor the person possesses. Theoretically, a small number of factors describe everyone. A person can be described on every factor. |
Description of Personality

Comparing People or Studying Individuals

Nonthetic: involving comparisons with other individuals; research based on groups of people
- comparing various people’s scores on a test
- taking a personality test and seeing if you scored higher or lower than most people

Idiographic: focusing on one individual
- an intensive case study of a single individual
- a clinical report about an unusual psychiatric patient

Personality Dynamics

- Adaptation and Adjustment
- Cognitive Processes
- Culture

- How do people adapt to life’s demands?
- How does a mentally healthy person act?
- What behaviors or thoughts are unhealthy?

Personality Dynamics

- Adaptation and Adjustment
- Cognitive Processes
- Culture

- Do our thoughts affect our personality?
- What kinds of thoughts are important for personality?
- Do unconscious processes influence us?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personality Dynamics</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- Adaptation and Adjustment</td>
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<td>- Cognitive Processes</td>
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<td>- Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How does culture influence our functioning?</td>
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<td>- Does culture affect us by its expectations for men and women? For different classes?</td>
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**The Scientific Approach**

**Scientific method:** method of knowing based on systematic observation

**Examples:**
- conducting an experiment to see whether an intervention increases self-esteem
- correlating defense mechanisms with reports of childhood experience

**The Scientific Approach**

**Determinism:** the assumption that phenomena have causes that can be discovered by empirical research

**Examples:**
- neurotransmitter causes of experience
- thoughts that influence moods and choices

**Determinism... as in a chemical imbalance? It’s my parents’ fault? Violence in the media?**
The Scientific Approach

THEORY
A conceptual tool for understanding certain specific phenomena

Levels of Thinking in Theory

Figure 1.1 Levels of Thinking in Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEORETICAL LEVEL (theoretical constructs)</th>
<th>High self-esteem</th>
<th>Social responsibility</th>
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<td>OBSERVABLE LEVEL (operational definitions)</td>
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Levels of Thinking in Theory: Another View

Figure 1.2 Levels of Thinking in Theory: Another View

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEORETICAL LEVEL (theoretical constructs)</th>
<th>Low self-esteem</th>
<th>Look of social responsibility</th>
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<tr>
<td>OBSERVABLE LEVEL (empirical observations)</td>
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</table>
Hypotheses Derived From a Theoretical Proposition

Figure 1.2: Hypotheses Derived from a Theoretical Proposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS:</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Aggression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THEORETICAL PROPOSITION:</td>
<td>Procrastination leads to aggression.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:</td>
<td>Losing 75 cents in a soda machine, missing an exam, losing checkbook.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression:</td>
<td>Making the soda machine, failing the instruction test, breaking someone’s spouse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HYPOTHESES:
1. Students who lose 75 cents in a soda machine (which is rigged by the experimenter) will lack the soda machine more often than a control group, which does not lose money.
2. Students who are told they have failed an exam will rate their instructor lower than students who are told they have passed the exam.
3. When unemployment rates, the number of reported spouses' belongings will increase.

CRITERIA OF A GOOD THEORY

- verifiability
  - It can predict correctly or incorrectly (confirmation or disconfirmation).
- comprehensiveness
  - It applies to a variety of phenomena.
- applied value
  - It helps improve life.
- Applied research vs. basic research.
- parsimony and heuristic value
  - A small number of constructs to explain phenomena.
  - parsimony and heuristic value
- Zeitgeist must be ripe

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND RESEARCH

Theory  Research
**Relationship between theory and research**

*Implicit theories:* ideas about personality that are held by ordinary people (not based on formal theory)

*Examples:*
- assuming that attractive people are warm and trustworthy
- assuming that HIV positive people look different from HIV negative people

**Methods in Personality Research**

**Personality measurements:**

- reliability
- validity
- measurement techniques

**Reliability:**

*Examples:*
- a correlation between assessment of extraversion once and a month later shows good agreement
- two raters assess a person’s behavior, with similar results
Methods in Personality Research

Methods of Reliability Testing:

- test-retest reliability
- alternate forms reliability
- split-half reliability

Validity: desirable characteristic of a test, indicating that it actually does measure what it is intended to measure

Examples:
- a trait of extraversion
- a fixation from childhood conflict

Perfect Positive Correlation

Perfect Negative Correlation
Methods in Personality Research

Measurement Techniques

- direct self-report measures, i.e., “How important is achievement to you?” (on a 10-point scale)
- indirect methods
  - open-ended questions, i.e., “What would you look for in an ideal job?”
  - projective tests, i.e., inkblots
- behavioral measures
  - How often does the person choose to spend time alone instead of with other people?
  - How often does the student turn in assignments late?

Correlational research:

- research method that examines the relationships among measures

Examples:

- research that correlates intelligence measures with career success
- research that correlates maladjustment with childhood abuse

Experimental research:

- research strategy that manipulates a cause to determine its effect

Examples:

- manipulating exposure to television violence to determine effect on aggressive behavior
- subliminal exposure to stimuli to determine effect on symptoms
Methods in Personality Research

Experimental research:
- Manipulate the variable thought to be a "cause," called the "independent variable."
  - for example, violent vs. nonviolent TV
  - experimental group watches violent TV
  - control group watches nonviolent TV
- Everything constant except the cause
- Random assignment to control 3rd variables
- Does the "effect" (dependent variable) change?

Methods in Personality Research

Case Studies & Psychobiography:
- case study
  - an intensive investigation of a single individual
  - e.g., clinical observation of one person
- psychobiography
  - the application of a personality theory to the study of an individual's life
  - theoretical emphasis

One Theory or Many? Eclecticism and the Future of Personality Theory

Eclectic:
- combining ideas from a variety of theories

Examples:
- accepting symbolic interpretation of dreams (psychoanalytic) and also effect of reinforcement on behavior (learning)
**ONE THEORY OR MANY? ECLECTICISM AND THE FUTURE OF PERSONALITY THEORY**

**Paradigm:**
a basic theoretical model, shared by various theorists and researchers

**Examples:**
- behavioral perspective
- humanistic perspective
- evolutionary perspective

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**TABLE 1.3** Kimble's Analysis of "Scientific" versus "Humanistic" Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scientific Culture</th>
<th>Humanistic Culture</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Setting</td>
<td>Laboratory</td>
<td>Field study and case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generality of Laws</td>
<td>Nomothetic</td>
<td>idiographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Analysis</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td>Holon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly Values</td>
<td>Scientific</td>
<td>Humanistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Knowledge</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Intuition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Personality: The Study of Individuals

Description of Personality

Personality Dynamics

Personality Development

The Scientific Approach

Methods in Personality Research

One Theory or Many? Eclecticism and the Future of Personality Theory

**QUESTIONS???