Perspectives on Personality

Eighth Edition

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CSC

To Meredith and Jeremy, who bring great joy to my life
MFS
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Preface

Perspectives on Personality, Eighth Edition, examines one of the most engaging topics in all of life: human personality. As the title of the book implies, there are many viewpoints on personality, many ways to think about human nature. This book describes a range of perspectives that are taken by personality psychologists today.

The content of this book reflects two strongly held beliefs. The first is that ideas are the most important part of a first course on personality. For this reason, concepts are stressed throughout the book rather than theorists. Our first priority has been to present as clearly as we can the ideas that form each theoretical viewpoint.

The second belief is that research is important in personality psychology. Ideas and intuitions are valuable, but someone needs to check to see whether they actually work. For this reason, each theory is accompanied by discussion of research that bears on the theory. This emphasis on the role of research stresses the fact that personality psychology is a living, dynamic process of ongoing scientific exploration.

As before, we focus on the idea that each viewpoint discussed in the book represents a perspective on personality. By that, we mean a particular orienting viewpoint, an angle from which the theorists proceeded. Each perspective reflects assumptions about human nature. As in previous editions, each perspective chapter includes discussion of assessment from that perspective and some discussion of how behavior problems can arise and be treated from that perspective. Each chapter concludes with a discussion of current problems and strengths within that theoretical viewpoint and our own guess about its future.

The perspectives are presented in an order that makes sense to us, but the chapters can easily be read in other orders. Each theoretical section of the book is intended to stand more or less on its own. When one chapter is linked to a previous chapter, it is generally easy to see the point without having read the prior chapter. There are a few exceptions to this, however. We refer back to the trait perspective relatively often, so it’s probably best to read that chapter (Chapter 4) early on. It also makes historical sense to read the psychoanalytic perspective before the psychosocial perspective, because the latter grew partly from the former.

As in the previous editions, the final chapter takes up the question of how the different viewpoints relate to each other. The main goal of this chapter is to tie together ideas from theories discussed separately in earlier chapters. A secondary goal is to consider the usefulness of blending theoretical viewpoints, treating theories as complementary, rather than competing.

In revising, we’ve tried very hard to make the content accessible. We use an informal, conversational style, and we’ve used examples of how the ideas can apply to one’s own life. We hope these qualities make the book engaging and enjoyable, as well as informative.

New to This Edition

- Incorporates important developments in the field of personality psychology over the past 5 years or so.
- Cutting edge material has been added on topics in molecular genetics and genomics (Chapter 6) without loss of continuity with earlier versions.
- New material has been added on the biological underpinnings of impulsiveness (Chapter 7) expanding on the previous edition’s coverage.
- Expanded coverage of “mindsets” as a facet of the cognitive perspective (Chapter 12).
- More detailed coverage of the role of mental contrasting in the self-regulation perspective (Chapter 13).
- Over 200 new citations have been included.

Available Instructor Resources

The following resources are available for instructors. These can be downloaded at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc. Login required.

- Instructor’s Manual: Prepared by Steve Graham, the instructor’s manual is a wonderful tool for classroom preparation and management. It includes a summary, essay questions and exercises for each chapter.
- PowerPoint: The PowerPoint Presentation is an exciting interactive tool for use in the classroom. Each chapter pairs key concepts with images from the textbook to reinforce student learning.
- Test Bank: Also prepared by Steve Graham, the Test Bank includes additional questions in multiple-choice and open-ended—short and essay response—formats.
Preface

Acknowledgments

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Charles S. Carver and Michael F. Scheier met in graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin, where they both earned doctoral degrees in personality psychology. After graduation, they took positions at the University of Miami and Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), respectively, where they have remained throughout their careers. They’ve collaborated for four decades in work that spans personality, social, motivational, clinical, and health psychology. In 1998, they received awards for Outstanding Scientific Contribution (Senior Level) from the Division of Health Psychology of the American Psychological Association (APA). In 2007, they received the Donald T. Campbell Award for Distinguished Contributions to Social Psychology from APA’s Division of Personality and Social Psychology. In 2011, the first author received the Jack Block Award for Distinguished Contributions to Personality Psychology from APA’s Division of Personality and Social Psychology. In 2012, the authors received the Distinguished Lifetime Career Award from the International Society for Self and Identity. Mike was the 2003–2004 President of APA’s Division of Health Psychology and served for over 10 years as Department Head at CMU. Along with eight editions of Perspectives on Personality, the authors have published two books on self-regulation (the more recent titled On the Self-Regulation of Behavior, in 1998) and more than 400 articles and chapters. Mike is an avid outdoorsman, hunter, and fisherman. Chuck keeps intending to take up painting but getting distracted by things that need fixing and shrubbery that needs cutting.

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