PERSONALITY

Analysis and Interpretation of Lives

DAVID G. WINTER

Personality

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF LIVES

David G. Winter
University of Michigan

The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá Caracas
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi
San Juan Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto

McGraw-Hill

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies

PERSONALITY
Analysis and Interpretation of Lives

Acknowledgments appear on pages A1–A4.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 FGRFGR 9 9 8 7 6

ISBN 0-07-071129-1

This book was set in Palatino by The Clarinda Company.
The editors were Brian L. McKean, David Dunham, and
Ty McConnell, who supervised the final revision and production;
Anne Manning efficiently supervised the photographs and artwork;
the production supervisor was Annette Mayeski.
The cover was designed by Amy Becker.
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

Cover: Self Portrait, Judith Leyster. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, © 1995 by the Board of Trustees.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Winter, David G., (date).
Personality: analysis and interpretation of lives / David G. Winter.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-07-071129-1
1. Personality. I. Title.
BF698.W523 1996
155.2—dc20

95-15697

Personality

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF LIVES

About the Author

David G. Winter was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He graduated from Harvard University, majoring in Social Relations. As a Rhodes Scholar, he studied philosophy, politics, and economics at Oxford. He received a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1967, in Social Psychology.

He taught for twenty years at Wesleyan University, in Middletown, Connecticut. He is currently a Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan. He has been a visiting faculty member at Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Amsterdam, and the College of the Holy Cross.

Besides the psychology of personality, his principal academic interest is political psychology, especially the study of personalities of public officials at a distance and by indirect means, and the psychological aspects of war and peace. His research interests include the study of power motivation and how it can be controlled, the nature of authoritarian ideology, and the relationships between personality and culture.

He is married, with two children, and lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. His hobbies include travel, cooking, classical music, and reading historical novels.

To Abby, Nick, and Tim

Preface

In this introduction to the psychology of personality, I try to give a comprehensive account of the main lines of personality theory and research. Most psychological research on personality has been carried out in the last fifty years, since World War II, by Americans; much of it is based on studies of college students (whose participation is often part of a psychology course requirement), typically white and middle-class, disproportionately male (see Carlson, 1984; Schultz, 1969). Let me state my conviction at the outset, therefore, that the topic of personality is much broader than such studies, so that the study of personality should go beyond a review of recent American psychological research. In this book, I try to set the study of personality psychology in a much broader context. I believe that we can best understand the psychology of personality by drawing on as many different kinds of information and wisdom as we can, and the approach I take in this book reflects that belief.

Accordingly, I have not limited myself to the traditional personality research literature. You will also find citations of the plays of Shakespeare and other great literary works, as well as brief excursions into history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and even philosophy. For example: How did personality assessments help President Jimmy Carter to negotiate peace between Israel and Egypt at Camp David (Chapter 1)? What does the hostility of boys in the Trobriand Islands toward their *uncles* (rather than their fathers) teach us about the Oedipus complex (Chapter 4)? What do authoritarians in contemporary Russia believe (Chapter 7)? What dimensions of trait usage are shared by collegiate slang, two poems by John Milton, and Henry Kissinger's descriptions of world leaders (Chapter 11)? What does Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* demonstrate about Virginia Woolf's family and childhood (Chapter 17)?

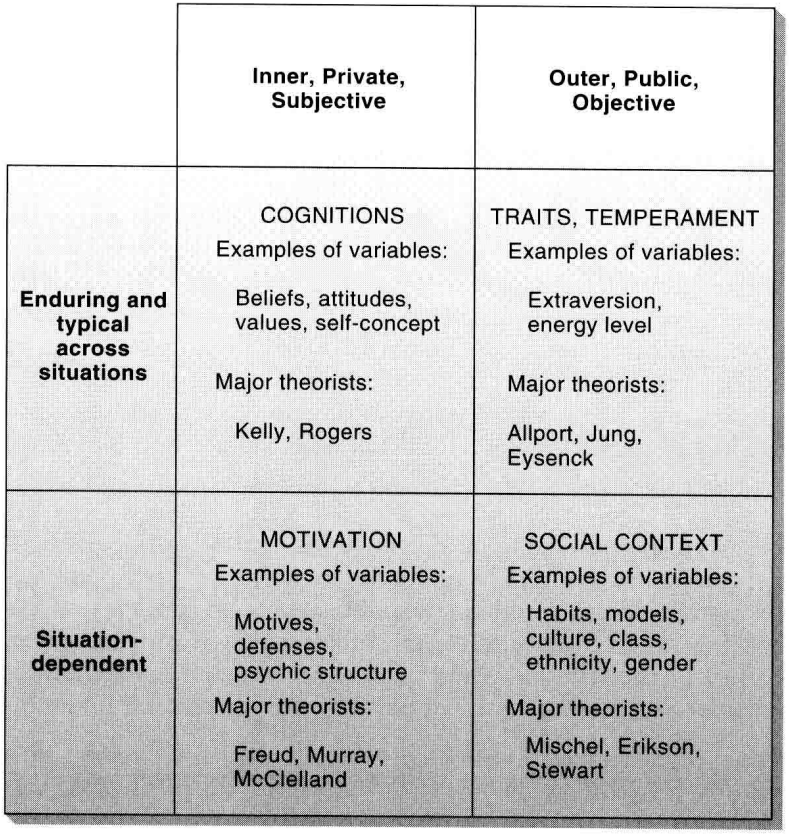
Many of these topics and examples reflect my liberal arts college background and my professional interest in political psychology (a field that surveys the effects of psychological factors on the political process, and vice versa). For example, because of my own interest in studying American presidents, I emphasize indirect methods of assessing personality—methods that can be applied from a distance to study prominent persons and historical figures.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This book is organized around four major elements of personality: (1) motivation, (2) cognition (including the "self"), (3) traits and temperament, and

(4) the social context. These four elements, in turn, may be organized along two underlying dimensions, as shown in the accompanying figure. In the left column of the figure are the personality elements that are *subjective or private* (inner thoughts and emotions), versus the *objective or public* (external, observable behavior) elements in the right column. The rows distinguish elements that *endure across situations* (top row) from elements that are *situation-dependent* (bottom row). The resulting four-fold classification is the main conceptual framework for this book. It is used to group personality theories and research concepts.

Many theorists and theories are easily classified as concerned with one element (e.g., Freud, neo-Freudians, and Murray as motivational; Kelly as cognitive; Jung and Eysenck as trait-oriented; and Mischel, Bandura, Skinner, and Erikson as contextual). Some theorists use elements from more than one domain. For example, Allport focuses on values (cognition) and traits, Rogers on actualization (motive) and self (cognition).



The major elements of personality.

The central argument of *Personality: Analysis and Interpretation of Lives* is that while theories and variables from each element can contribute to our understanding, a complete account of human personality requires all four domains. That is, any adequate account of personality must include elements of motivation and emotion, cognition, temperament, and social-cultural context. Stretching a single theory to cover all four domains of behavior (e.g., trying to explain everything with *only* motives, habits, beliefs, or temperament) is inadequate, and only provokes familiar criticisms about the limited explanatory power of personality theories and variables.

Most personality textbooks try to integrate theory and research. Because it provides a common analytical framework, the four-element conceptual organization makes possible a deep and comprehensive integration of personality theory, research, and assessment. Thus for each element of personality, I trace the origins of the principal concepts and issues back to the classical theories and forward to the most recent research questions and controversies.

HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES

Like the authors of many textbooks, I illustrate concepts and theories with examples drawn from college life. I have learned, however, that students can easily grow tired of such examples. Sometimes they are so obvious that they trivialize important concepts of personality rather than illustrating them. And college students are not all alike: they live many different kinds of lives. Therefore, I have concentrated on developing case studies of historical figures to illustrate the concepts and processes of the four elements of personality. Each case is chosen to be particularly appropriate for one of the elements of personality: former U.S. President Richard Nixon for motives, blind and deaf writer and activist Helen Keller for cognitions, physicist Albert Einstein for temperament, and African-American writer Maya Angelou and English novelist Virginia Woolf for social context. For each case study, I use extensive quotations from published autobiographies to illustrate and also to raise questions about the concepts, theories, and problems of the corresponding personality element.

SPECIAL TOPICS AND EMPHASES

I have tried to give up-to-date coverage of important recent controversies in personality psychology. Examples include: feminist thinking and the critique of psychoanalytic theory, including a new interpretation of the Oedipus complex; moral reasoning, including the debate between Kohlberg and Gilligan about "principles" versus "caring" morality; a discussion of the uses *and* limitations of the five-factor model of traits (the "Big Five"); and a critical analysis of genetics of personality and recent attempts to link personal-

ity to modern evolutionary theory. In recounting the situationist critique of personality by Mischel and others, I include a detailed discussion of the many improvements in personality research that resulted from this debate (Chapter 16).

I include many topics ignored or treated only briefly in personality textbooks. Examples include: authoritarianism and social attitudes (Chapter 7), research on possible selves and narcissism (Chapter 9), and moral reasoning and concerns for justice (Chapter 10). Most texts make only a brief reference to the idiographic method of personality description. Since this method is important for the interpretation of individual persons, I feel that a more extensive description and examples are in order (Chapter 12). And since Jung's typology of persons is the basis of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, one of the most widely used personality tests in the world, I present a detailed description in this book (also in Chapter 12).

PERSONALITY IN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT

One of the most novel topics of this book is the extensive converage of the social context of personality in Part Four (especially Chapter 17). This includes the relationships between personality and social structure, institutions, and culture. With this coverage, I hope to place the book on the cutting edge of recent efforts to bring psychology back into contact with the other social sciences. The discussion of gender relations incorporates some perspectives of feminist theory, bringing together the effects of gender, social class, and racial oppression on personality under the unifying concept of *hegemonic relations*. An extensive analysis of what it means to say "it's culture," instead of (or in addition to) "it's personality," introduces the study of cultural variation in the meaning and structure of personality variables. With case study examples and many kinds of research data, I also illustrate the personality implications of history and a person's generation.

PLAN OF THIS BOOK

After an introductory chapter, this book is organized into four parts, one for each element of personality. Starting with motives in Part One, it proceeds clockwise around the figure to cognitions (Part Two), traits (Part Three), and social context (Part Four). Within each part, the first chapter defines the element, gives examples from everyday life, presents a few classic and modern research studies, and introduces the historical figure to be used as a case study for that element. Next, major theories are presented, in this or the next chapter. Finally, the remaining chapters of each part explore research, issues, and applications of that personality element.

AN INVITATION

I invite you to join in the fascinating exploration of human personality. We begin with the topic of motives and motivation, which leads to Freud and psychoanalytic theory in Chapter 3. Freud's work is an appropriate starting point for our understanding of the psychology of personality, since so many writers after Freud were trying to agree with, support, revise, disprove, or reconsider his ideas. From there, we move on to the study of cognition (Chapters 6–10), traits and temperament (Chapters 11–14), and social context (Chapters 15–17). In the final Chapter 18, I suggest three ways in which the four elements can be put together to form an integrated, unified conception of personality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing this book, I want to acknowledge an enormous debt of gratitude to many other people—colleagues, mentors, students, and others. First and foremost is my debt to Abby Stewart, with whom the basic structure of this book was first conceived in a dinner-table discussion long ago. In the years since, her ideas, suggestions, encouragement, and arguments have been a major force in giving life to this conception.

My many debts to those who taught me personality are obvious. David McClelland has been my earliest and most enduring mentor. His breadth of theoretical vision, and his capacity for asking unusual questions and then answering them in unorthodox ways, has been an inspiration to me for over three decades. This book also reflects the influence of many other college and graduate school teachers—by no means all of them psychologists. I also thank members of the Society for Personology, who in our annual meetings have stressed that personality psychology is, in the end, about persons. I am grateful for the comradeship of many colleagues, past and present, at the University of Michigan: Joseph Veroff, Nancy Cantor, David Buss, Randy Larsen, Donald Brown, Andrea Hunter, Janet Landman, Christopher Peterson, George Rosenwald, and John Atkinson. And during an exciting year in Berkeley, I enjoyed the stimulating perspectives of Jack Block, Oliver John, Ravenna Helson, Kenneth Craik, Philip Tetlock, and William McKinley Runyan. My students and teaching assistants at Wesleyan and Michigan have through their responses guided me in developing and elaborating the text. Todd Schackelford played a major role in creating the Instructor's Manual, to which Cheryl Rusting also added helpful advice and criticism.

Any successful textbook owes a lot to editors and publishers. Here I record my debt to Mary Falcon, who originally encouraged me to develop this framework; to Christopher Rogers, who helped the project along; and finally to Brian McKean and David Dunham, who supervised the final revision and production. Many other people at McGraw-Hill worked on various aspects of

the editorial and production process. I am indebted to a large number of reviewers who made helpful comments on early drafts of several chapters:

Hal Arkowitz, University of Arizona
Joel Aronoff, Michigan State University
Robert T. Croyle, University of Utah
Adrienne Gans, New York University
Leon Gorlou, Pennsylvania State University
Sharon Rae Jenkins, University of North Texas
Nadia Webb, LaSalle University

The comments of Cele Gardner, of McGraw-Hill, were especially helpful. Since I didn't always follow all of their advice, the responsibility for what follows naturally remains mine.

Finally, a special word of gratitude to Nick and Tim, who provided their own special kind of encouragement.

David G. Winter

Personality

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF LIVES

Contents

1

Introducing Personality

You are about to begin the systematic study of personality. As a field of psychology, personality is new to you. As a word, however, "personality" is quite familiar. What is personality? Sometimes the word is used as if it means something that varies in quantity or amount ("She has lots of personality"; "He has no personality"). Often we use the word "personality" as an evaluation ("She has a great personality"), particularly in making a contrast to physical appearance ("He may not

be good-looking, but he has a great personality"). People with "good" personalities are typically described as happy, outgoing, energetic, fun to be with, interesting, honest, genuine, agreeable, easy-going, and polite. In contrast, people with "bad" personalities are seen as abrasive, annoying, rude, crude, boring, having nothing to say, and not fun to be with. For many college students, the ultimate put-down is to compare someone's personality to an inanimate object ("He has all the personality of a doorknob"—or a brick wall, rock, wet noodle, tree stump, etc.).

In any case, the word "personality" is familiar to most Americans. According to ABC news anchor Peter Jennings, "No country in the world is so driven by personality as this one," and Americans' appetite for news reflects their "hunger to identify with larger-than-life personalities" ("Only spectacular crimes," 1994).

BUT WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

Personality as a Mask

The word "personality" is derived from the ancient Greek word *persona,* a mask worn by an actor in a play. (*Per sona* means "sound through": characters spoke or "sounded through" their masks.) The masks served to conceal the actors as they presented their characters. In psychology, this concealment perspective can be seen in book titles such as *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959) and *Beneath the Mask* (Monte, 1991), and in dramaturgical conceptions of personality as a series of roles enacted on a stage for a real or imagined audience (Snyder, 1987; see Buss & Briggs, 1984, for a thoughtful discussion and critique of the dramaturgical perspective on personality).

In a sense, however, among the ancient Greeks masks were intended to enhance and intensify rather than to conceal, to convey to the audience a clear conception of the character being portrayed. In wearing the mask, the actor *became* the character, just as in some religions the person wearing the mask of a deity is believed to become that deity. In the ancient Greek sense, then, your personality is a mask that displays, rather than hides, the essential you.

Psychological Conception of Personality

To a psychologist, personality means the ways in which general "laws" of physiology, perception, memory, learning, motivation, and social influence—which are assumed to apply universally, to all people—are integrated and expressed in individual persons, each of whom is unique. Thus, for example, our eyes and ears all follow the same laws of sensation, and our nervous systems and brains all operate by the same principles of information processing; yet we are unique individuals, each of us different from all the others. We each have our own unique perceptions, memories, goals, and social background. To adapt a famous formulation by Kluckhohn and Murray (1953, p. 53), every person is in certain respects (1) like all other people, (2) like some other peo-