Prspectives ON sonality

FOURTH EDITION

CHARLES S. CARVER

MICHAEL F. SCHEIER

fourth edition

Perspectives on Personality

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Boston London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

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Manufacturing Buyer: Megan Cochran
Cover Administrator: Linda Knowles
Text Designer: Carol Somberg/Omegatype Typography, Inc.

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A Pearson Education Company
160 Gould Street
Needham Heights, MA 02494

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Internet: www.abacon.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Carver, Charles S.
Perspectives on personality / Charles S. Carver, Michael F. Scheier.—4th ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
ISBN 0–205–29394–8 (alk. paper)
1. Personality. I. Scheier, Michael. II. Title.
BF698.C22 2000
155.2—dc21 99–26281
CIP

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 VHP 04 03 02 01 00 99

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Perspectives on Personality

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For my favorite young ladies in all the world:
Alexandra Carver and Julia Carver
CSC

For my brother, Stephen P. Scheier
MFS

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preface

Perspectives on Personality, Fourth Edition, examines one of life's most fascinating and mysterious topics: human personality. As the title implies, there are many perspectives a person might take on personality, many ways to think about how people function in life. In this book, we present a range of viewpoints that are used by personality psychologists today.

What's the Same in This Edition?

As in the three earlier editions of *Perspectives on Personality,* the book's content reflects two of our firm beliefs. The first is that theoretical concepts are the most important part of a first course on personality. For this reason, we stress concepts throughout the book. Our first priority has been to present as clearly as we can the ideas that form each theoretical viewpoint.

A second belief reflected in the book is that research is important in personality psychology. Ideas and intuitions are valuable, but an idea shouldn't lie around too long before someone checks to see whether it actually works. For this reason, along with each theory we discuss research that bears on the theory. This emphasis on the role of research stresses that personality psychology is a living, dynamic process of ongoing scientific exploration.

As in previous editions, we present the theories in groups, which we've labeled *perspectives.* Each group of theories depends on a particular sort of orienting viewpoint, an angle from which the theorists proceeded. Within a given perspective there often are several theories, which differ from one another. In each case, however, the theories of a given perspective share fundamental assumptions about human nature.

Each perspective on personality is presented in a pair of chapters, introduced by a prologue. The prologue provides an overview of that perspective's orienting assumptions and major themes. By starting with these orienting assumptions, you'll be right inside the thought processes of the theorists, as you go on to read the chapters themselves. Each chapter concludes with a discussion of current problems within that theoretical viewpoint and our own best guess about its future prospects.

The perspectives are discussed in an order that makes sense to us, but they can easily be read in other orders. Each theoretical section of the book is intended to stand on its own, with no assumptions about previous exposure to other parts of the book. Thus, instructors can move through the perspectives in whatever order they prefer.

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

This edition also continues our use of the box feature "The Theorist and the Theory." These boxes focus on how the personal experiences of some of the theorists have influenced the form of their theories. In more than one case, theorists almost literally took events from their own lives as models of human affairs more generally, deriving an entire theory from those personal experiences. Not all cases are quite this striking, but personal experience does appear to have played a role in the development of several views on personality.

In this revision we've tried hard to make the content accessible to readers. We've continued to use a conversational style, to try to draw you into the ideas. We've also included examples of how the ideas under discussion can apply to your own life. We hope these qualities will make the book enjoyable as well as informative.

What's Different in This Edition?

This edition retains the third edition's structure (the same chapters, in the same perspectives). However, the content of the fourth edition differs in several important ways from that of the third edition. Most of these changes in content reflect four years of change in the continually evolving research literature of personality psychology. We've made updates to every substantive chapter. Two of them are important enough that we should note them explicitly.

First, work has continued apace on the trait structure of personality. Much of it is taking place within the framework of the five-factor model of personality. Indeed, there have also been efforts to link that model to several other views of personality. This evolution has resulted in considerable change in Chapter 4 (Types, Trait, and Interactionism). It's also resulted in the inclusion of material bearing on the five-factor model in several other chapters.

Second, there continues to be rapid evolution in work concerning biological processes and their influence on personality. Theorists have approached this question from new directions, and there have been shifts in how certain biological processes are viewed. As a result, Chapter 7 (Biological Processes and Personality) has undergone a major reorganization. We've made a special effort in that chapter to pull the ideas of several theorists together into a coherent story.

A minor structural change in this edition is the relocation of the "Problems and Prospects" sections. In previous editions, they were epilogues. Each epilogue addressed criticisms raised about the perspective as a whole and evaluated its future prospects. In this edition, problems and prospects have been considered in individual chapters, with specific criticisms now presented closer to the theory to which they pertain. This, we hope, will create a greater sense of immediacy, making it easier for readers to keep the theory in mind while considering its remaining problems.

A final change that's worth noting, although more prosaic, concerns chapter length. In preparing this edition, we've shortened several of the previous edition's longer chapters. We did this partly by trimming the writing and partly by thinning the detail. We hope the result is more readable, but without loss of clarity.

For more on *Perspectives on Personality*, Fourth Edition, consult its web page: www.abacon.com/carver.

Acknowledgments

We'd both like to express our thanks to some of the people who were important in the creation of this edition, starting with Carolyn Merrill, our editor at Allyn and Bacon and her assistant, Lara Zeises. We also thank Peter Miene, Winona State University; Barbara Rybski Beaver, University of Wisconsin at Whitewater; Andrea A. Zevenbergen, University of North Dakota; Scott Dickman, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth; and Lynn Friedman, for comments and suggestions on the previous edition.

We also have some more personal acknowledgments:
From Coral Gables, my thanks to those who've been part of my life during this period, particularly Linda Cahan, Janine Shelby, Allison Wilcox and Adrian Voorhies, Linda Nilsson, Rod Gillis, André Perwin, Jessica Lehman, Stacie Spencer, Barbara Wolfsdorf, Jennifer Strauss, Susan Alferi, Bonnie McGregor, Björn Meyer, Mike Antoni, Adele Hayes, and Caroline Willi. Thanks also to my family—Jeff, Allysen, Alexandra, and Julia; Carol; Nancy Lorey; all the Sherricks; and Mike, Karen, Meredith, and Jeremy. Finally, a very special note of appreciation goes to my shag terrier Calvin, who continues to amaze me with his deep insights and his ability to sleep upside down.

From Pittsburgh, thanks go first to the other members of the Matthews/Scheier clan: Karen, Meredith, and Jeremy (the last two, in part, for making the morning school bus at least some of the time). Thanks also to the following group of friends and colleagues: Andy Baum, Mike Bridges, Chuck Carver, Peggy Clark, Ed Gerrard, Vicki Helgeson, David Klahr, Ken Kotovsky, Ginger Placone, Rich Schulz, and Jim Staszewski. Finally, a special "thank you" to my brother, Steve, for helping me adjust to the changes that have occurred over the past few years to our original family group.

Chuck Carver
Michael Scheier

About the Authors

The authors met in graduate school at the University of Texas at Austin, where they both earned Ph.D. degrees in personality psychology. After graduation, they took jobs at the University of Miami and Carnegie Mellon University, where they've remained throughout their careers. They have collaborated for two and a half decades in work that spans personality, social, motivational, clinical, and health psychology—with a particular emphasis on personality and coping as influences on well-being under stress. In 1998, they received awards for Outstanding Scientific Contribution (Senior Level) from the Division of Health Psychology of the American Psychological Association. Along with the four editions of *Perspectives on Personality,* they have published two books on self-regulation (the most recent being *On the Self-Regulation of Behavior,* in 1998) and over 170 articles and chapters. Mike is an avid outdoorsman, hunter, and fisherman. Chuck keeps intending to take up painting but gets distracted by other things.

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