

READINGS IN
PERSONALITY
PSYCHOLOGY

JOHN D. MAYER

Readings in Personality Psychology

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University of New Hampshire



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To my family . . .

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Instructor's Preface

This is a book of—and about—readings in personality psychology. The book, *Readings in Personality Psychology* contains both reprinted primary sources for students to read, and also original commentary on how to read the selections. The book is intended for both undergraduate lecture and seminar courses on personality psychology. It is equally appropriate for theory-by-theory (or perspective-by-perspective) approaches to the personality course, research topics approaches, or systems approaches. It also may be suitable for some graduate seminars in personality.

Readings in Personality Psychology is designed to strengthen the abilities of students in personality psychology by, first, exposing students to a wide variety of primary source material that is relevant to personality psychology, and second, by providing pedagogical support that can help students better understand and more fully appreciate the readings that are included.

Students often find reading primary sources quite challenging. The book addresses such challenges by providing students with carefully planned support in relation to reading primary source material in general, and in relation to each individual reading.

The book also is smaller and more focused in scope, and as a consequence, it places a relatively modest time demand on students, and also is relatively economical when compared to other books of readings.

A Wide Variety of Primary Source Materials

Readings in Personality Psychology exposes students to 16 chapters of key readings. The readings represent a diversity of sources in the field. Included among them are contemporary theoretical articles, contemporary empirical studies, historical theoretical articles, reviews of important books and tests, opinion pieces from *Dialogue* (the newsletter of the *Society of Personality and Social Psychology*) and humorous writings. Most readings involve just one selection, but a few readings are made up of one or two short selections.

Providing Support for the Student

At the time they take their first course in personality psychology, most undergraduates will be unfamiliar with the primary source materials of the discipline, and lack experience in reading them. *Readings in Personality Psychology* provides those students with both global and reading-specific support for their studies.

The book's first chapter, written by the editor, provides global support for beginning readers of personality psychology by explaining to students why it is useful to read the psychological literature. The chapter explains what primary sources are and provides general pointers about how to read the literature and the challenges involved in doing so.

Further global support is provided in the opening essay of each subsequent chapter, which often speaks to general issues of reading psychology as well as to the specific material being introduced. This supporting material consists of the following:

An Introduction to the Type of Reading. Each chapter introduces students to the type of reading that is to be encountered. From this, students are prepared ahead of time for whether the reading is historical or contemporary, theoretical or empirical, and whether it appeared in a journal, book, or other medium. The chapter introductions serve to educate students as to what the available sources in the field are like.

The Significance of the Reading. The next section of each readings chapter examines the reasons the specific selection was chosen for the book and why it is of importance for psychology students to read. In the case of historical articles, for example, the context of the article will be discussed, sometimes with a brief discussion of the field's response to a given article, with documenting scholarship.

The Watch List. The watch list provides students with specific, section-by-section preparation for reading the article. The list explains special technical vocabulary the student might encounter, provides background on any psychological tests mentioned in the article, discusses any historical context useful to understanding what is going on, and comments on statistical techniques where useful.

Concluding Comments. At the end of the selection, brief comments are provided to help students reflect on the material they have just encountered.

Study Questions. Finally, each article concludes with a review section that contains four or more review questions that students can use to further integrate and synthesize what they have read.

Fewer, Often Better, Readings, with More Support

Providing more support across a smaller number of readings than is typical creates several advantages: It allows for a few key readings that are a bit longer than those found in a typical readings book, and allows students to spend more time with each reading so as to develop a greater appreciation for what it can teach them.

Books of readings sometimes compromise their selections by including shorter but less accessible articles in place of genuine classics. Thus, Erikson's "Eight stages of man" which is very readable and accessible—is sometimes replaced by far shorter and less accessible articles such as "Identity and the life cycle," or "The life-cycle: Epigenesis of identity." Here, the longer pieces are used when that makes sense (cf. Frick, 1995). Shorter readings are also included, of course, and help to balance the longer ones.

The smaller number of readings also keeps costs down, a benefit passed along to students in the form of a less-expensive, but high-quality, book.

Flexible Organization for Use with a Variety of Course Approaches

The book is designed to be used with a number of approaches to the personality course. The main table of contents organizes the readings according to whether they pertain to (a) defining personality and the discipline, (b) personality's parts, (c) personality's organization, or (d) personality development. This is a systems approach (Mayer, 2005) employed by several textbooks (e.g., Cloninger, 1996; Mayer, 2007; Pervin, 2002).

Another widely-used organization for the course is to introduce the major theoretical perspectives on the field, including (a) Biological, Trait and Dispositional, (b) Humanistic/Developmental, and (c) Social/Cognitive. The book can be used with this organization as well, by shifting the order of chapters in the book, as shown in the second alternate table of contents. A reordering of these readings also can accommodate still other organizations, such as those based on major research topics.

Editorial Treatment of the Selections

For the most part, articles are reproduced exactly as they were in the original. The following exceptions and qualifications apply, however.

First, to create a uniform look for this book of readings, many of the selections were reformatted slightly. For example, the headings of all articles were made parallel such that their first- and second-level headings were parallel across readings. Headings always were capitalized in these reprints, although this practice varied across the original selections. Similarly, the titles of tables always were capitalized in these reprints, although there was some variability in that practice in the original sources as well. References are reproduced here in APA style, although the original selections contained small deviations from that practice (for example, volume numbers were sometimes in bold type in the originals; these were revised in italics here). In the selection from Freud's *Introductory Lectures*, the footnotes were renumbered consecutively.

Regarding the text of the selections, article abstracts and most author notes were omitted. Longer reprinted selections occasionally were abridged somewhat to focus the argument and in order to allow students to skip over material of narrower interest. In such instances, the first deletion point is marked with a shaded box, and later deletions are marked by ellipses (...), or by additional shaded boxes explaining what was omitted.

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Reading Personality Psychology: Frequently Asked Questions

What Does It Mean to Read Personality Psychology?

People sometimes encounter a description or claim about personality psychology and want to know more about it. Perhaps the description raises a matter of personal concern—something that might help a person understand his or her own psychology, for example. Or, perhaps it supports (or violates) their beliefs and they want to know more about it for that reason. Or, perhaps, it simply piques their curiosity. If you have ever wanted to know more about personality psychology, it probably has occurred to you to read some of the theoretical and research reports in the area.

The collected knowledge of a discipline—the sum of its intellectual accomplishments—is recorded in large part in its written literature. Being able to read personality psychology means being able to find the articles and books you are interested in, understand the literature when you read it, and benefit from that information. This book introduces some articles, chapters, and other works in personality psychology, and provides some context and support to help make the experience of reading these works—and others you may encounter later—an easier, richer experience.

The literature of personality psychology is a broad, constantly expanding network of articles, book chapters, books, and other written sources, including book and test reviews, newsletter articles, and more. Whereas in 1957 there were about half a million accumulated scientific articles in psychology journals alone, the number had risen to nearly 4 million by 1997. According to one estimate, psychologists publish articles at the rate of about 100 per day, or one article every 15 minutes (Thorngate, 1990).

An interested individual can learn a great deal from looking at those articles, chapters, and other sources. As the variety of publications and their number suggest, however, it is easy to become overwhelmed. Searching out the exact article one needs can be a challenging task—and then, many articles can be slow going, even for those experienced in the field. Other articles can be just right, and even fun to read. Whatever the case, reading this material is critical to independent learning in this and other fields—as well as a critical objective of many courses (Steuer, 1996). But where should one start?

How Can This Book Help Me Read the Scientific Literature?

Often, students are asked to read material and are given little support for the reading—that is, a student is asked to read some material without being told where it comes from, why it is written as it is, or what to pay attention to within it. This book of readings is designed to support you as you read. The book will provide you with useful information to help you understand what you are reading before and after you encounter challenging material. Before the article, you will find an introductory essay that sets the stage for the reading. It concludes with a “Watch List” which explains some of the vocabulary and other specifically challenging content you may encounter. After the article, there are study questions. That doesn’t mean you will understand everything in these readings, but it will provide you with some support so that you can get more out of them than is often the case for students.

In this book, I’ll often define a term in a reading, or explain that ‘*N*’ in an empirical report stands for the number of participants in a study, even though some readers will assume it is fairly clear from the context. I expect most readers to exclaim (to themselves) “Everyone knows that!” from time to time, in response to my comments. But not everyone does know, and not everyone remembers, and that is why some comments are there. If they seem obvious, please remember that someone, somewhere, didn’t learn it, or has forgotten it since. I’m not trying to insult your intelligence. Far from it, I am trying to marshal your intelligence and challenge you to learn through reading. This is particularly crucial as you approach primary sources.

What Are Primary Sources?

In personality psychology, *primary source* material can be considered any piece of the literature that is a direct record of an experiment, or an original explanation of a theory, or an original opinion piece of some other sort. Primary sources also include most editorials in journals, or letters or e-mails from one scientist to another. These can be contrasted with *secondary sources*.

What Are Secondary Sources?

Secondary sources are materials that organize, present portions of, and/or comment on, primary sources. A standard textbook in personality psychology is a secondary source. Such textbooks cover the primary sources in the psychological literature, such as basic research reports and original theoretical writing, and then summarize their ideas and findings in a narrative designed to be used in the classroom.

“Gray areas” exist, however, between primary sources, represented by a single research report or journal article that describes a theory, and secondary sources, represented by textbooks. For example, some journal articles are themselves scientific reviews that summarize a series of original research reports published in other scien-

tific journals. These reviews, which are mostly written by researchers, could be considered primary sources, as they are found in scientific journals. Alternatively, they could be considered secondary sources, as they summarize and integrate earlier-published research reports.

Perhaps it is stretching matters too far to suggest that another example of this gray area would be book reviews. For example, there are book reviews published by scientists in *Contemporary Psychology: The APA Review of Books*. These book reviews are probably best considered secondary sources discussing a primary source (i.e., the book the author is reviewing). Still, it might be possible to consider the reviews as primary source material under some circumstances, as they are themselves primary sources of book reviews.

Don't worry too much about the gray area sources for now. Rather, concentrate on what is clear: experiments and theories in journal articles are primary; textbooks, secondary.

Why Read Primary and Secondary Source Material?

A textbook, no matter how good, filters the material you learn about through the eyes of its author. When you read a textbook, you are dependent upon the viewpoint and interpretation of the author. There may come a time, however, when you truly want to understand a research report in greater detail than what is reported in the textbook. For example, you might happen to encounter a study that makes a controversial claim as you are reading a textbook. (Or, you might read an article on the web or in a newspaper that makes a controversial claim). You might want to understand the logic of the original article itself and the evidence on which it is based. That can best be done by reading the original article itself.

Another reason to read primary source material is to obtain first-hand knowledge of a historical or contemporary figure in which you are interested. For example, most people alive today have heard of Sigmund Freud and his theories, but fewer people have actually read something written by Freud or have experienced his written style directly. Reading Freud directly provides a sense of his work that reading an account of it simply cannot approach.

Will Reading Primary Sources in Personality Psychology Help Me Read Primary Sources in Other Fields?

Whether you are reading to better understand a controversy or to acquaint yourself with the thoughts and style of a historical or contemporary figure who interests you, learning to read primary source material will improve your reading skills in personality psychology—and in other fields as well. Reading primary source material in personality psychology should help you read primary source material, not only in other

areas of psychology, but also in other natural and social sciences, particularly in allied fields such as biology, medicine, nursing, education, anthropology, sociology, and economics. That is because many of the same conventions—how an empirical study is reported, and even some of the mathematics—are the same across fields.

What Kinds of Readings Will I Encounter in This Book?

Depending upon which readings your professor assigns, you will find in this book at least one reading, and often more, representing each of the following types: (a) contemporary theories, (b) original experiments, (c) discussions in professional newsletters, (d) editorials, (e) reviews of books, (f) reviews of tests, (g) reviews of research literature, (h) historically classic theories, and (i) others. Each of these has its own styles, pleasures, and challenges to read.

Are There Some General Pointers for Reading the Selections in This Book?

Yes. Literature inside a scientific field is often a specialized form of literature you are already familiar with. So, editorials in a journal are like editorials in the newspaper, except, of course, that they are editorializing about the field of personality psychology rather than other matters. Similarly, book reviews are like book reviews in a magazine, except the book reviews here deal with books on psychology.

Journal articles reporting empirical studies are a bit different than anything else you may have read. Still, they all follow a fairly consistent pattern: Each begins with (a) an introduction that explains the significance of the research, and proceeds to (b) a background section which ideally fills you in on some prior scientific research. After that, the (c) study or studies themselves are reported. Those are followed by the (d) results of the study, (e) a discussion of the results, and sometimes (f) a conclusion. Almost all empirical reports follow this pattern precisely, so each one you read will familiarize you with the pattern.

Theoretical papers are a bit more creative in their design than research reports. The theoretical paper's form is governed by the author's decision of how to best get across the ideas of the theory. Therefore, each such work is a bit different. Still, like research articles, most theory papers have an introduction that presents a problem, a middle section that develops the ideas, and a conclusion.

Beyond these general characterizations, it is probably best to refer to the introduction of a particular article for its form. In this book, each introduction to an article explains the significance of the article, and then helps prepare you for what you will encounter when you read the article. That introduction will also explain to you the reading's context—that is, the type of source material it is (e.g., original experiment, book review, etc.). Be sure to read the introduction as a way of preparing your-