1 WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this chapter, the reader should be able to:

1.1 Explain how the person and the situation influence behavior.

1.2 Describe the subject matter of personality psychology.

1.3 Identify the focus of each of the six approaches to personality.

1.4 Discuss the role culture plays in personality psychology.

1.5 State how theory, application, assessment, and research combine to form the study of personality.

In November 2018, the residents of Paradise, California, found their mountain community suddenly engulfed by flames. Wind gusts up to 50 mph spread burning embers and created an inferno of fire and smoke that overwhelmed the town. The blaze raced through neighborhoods, stores, and schools, sometimes moving faster than escaping residents could run or drive. With almost no warning, people had no choice but to leave their homes and possessions behind. Some drove their cars through walls of flames; others abandoned their vehicles in the congested traffic and escaped on foot. But there was no escape for the 85 individuals in Paradise and other nearby towns who lost their lives. When the fires were finally contained, 18,804 structures had been destroyed, and the town of Paradise, population 27,000, had all but disappeared. Ninety-five percent of its buildings were reduced to metal and ash.

Powerful events have a way of bringing out similar reactions in people. The fleeing residents of Paradise experienced panic, fear, confusion, emotional exhaustion and grief. Someone might point to this tragedy to illustrate how alike we are, how all people are basically the same. Yet if we look a little more closely, even in this situation we can see that not everyone reacted in the same way. As residents discovered the extent of the devastation, some grieved for lost friends and consoled fellow survivors. Others were filled with outrage at the utility company whose faulty power lines were identified as the cause of the fire and a failed alert system that had given them no warning. Some gathered for
Thanksgiving dinners hosted by volunteers and expressed gratitude for the kindness of the donors and for their own survival. Others kept to themselves, wrestling with survivor guilt and a growing sense of helplessness as the impact of all they had lost hit them. Some children found comfort in familiar routines in makeshift schools created only a few weeks after the fire. But many children had difficulty coping with the emotional aftereffects of the trauma. Some survivors turned to religion to find solace and meaning, whereas others struggled to locate the hand of God in so much suffering. Some residents who had lost everything vowed to rebuild. Others decided it was time to leave.

In many ways, the reactions to the Paradise fire are typical of people who are suddenly thrown into a unique situation. At first, the demands of the situation overwhelm individual differences, but soon each person’s characteristic way of dealing with the event and the emotional aftermath begins to surface. The more we look, the more we see that people are not all alike. The closer we look, the more we begin to see differences among individuals. These characteristic differences are the focus of this book. They are part of what we call personality. Moreover, personality psychologists have already studied many of the topics and issues that surfaced in the Paradise tragedy. Emotions, coping with stress, religion, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and many other relevant topics are covered in various places in this book.

THE PERSON AND THE SITUATION

LO 1.1 Explain how the person and the situation influence behavior.

Is our behavior shaped by the situation we encounter or by the type of person we are? Did the residents of Paradise act the way they did because of the events surrounding them, or were their reactions more the result of who they were before the incident? This is one of the enduring questions in psychology. The generally agreed-upon answer today is that both the situation and the person contribute to behavior. Certainly, how we act is influenced by the events we encounter. Depending on where we are and what is happening, each of us can be outgoing, shy, aggressive, friendly, depressed, frightened, or excited. But it is equally apparent that not everyone at the same party, the same ball game, or the same shopping center behaves identically. The debate among psychologists has now shifted to the question of how situations affect behavior as well as how behavior reflects the individual.

We can divide fields of study within psychology along the lines identified in this question. Many psychologists concern themselves with how people typically respond to environmental demands. These researchers recognize that not everyone in a situation reacts the same. Their goal is to identify patterns that generally describe what most people will do. Thus, a social psychologist might create different situations in which participants encounter someone in need of help. The purpose of this research is to identify the kinds of situations that increase or decrease helping behavior. But personality psychologists turn this way of thinking completely around. We know there are typical response patterns to situations, but what we find more interesting is why Peter tends to help more than Paul, even when both are presented with the same request.
You may have heard the axiom, “There are few differences between people, but what differences there are, really matter.” That tends to sum up the personality psychologists’ viewpoint. They want to know what makes you different from the person sitting next to you. Why do some people make friends easily, whereas others are lonely? Why are some people prone to bouts of depression? Can we predict who will do well in the business world and who will fall short? Why are some people introverted, whereas others are so outgoing? Each of these questions is explored in this book. Other topics include how well you do in school, how you react to stress, how responsive you are to a hypnotist’s suggestions, and even your chances of having a heart attack.
This is not to say that situations are unimportant or of no interest to personality psychologists. Indeed, many of the questions posed by personality researchers concern how a certain kind of person behaves in a particular situation. However, the emphasis of this book is on what makes you different from the next person—that is, your personality. Before addressing that question, let’s start by defining personality.

**DEFINING PERSONALITY**

**L0 1.2 Describe the subject matter of personality psychology.**

Anyone who has been in college a while can probably anticipate the topic of the first lecture of the term. The philosophy professor asks, “What is philosophy?” The first meeting in a communication course centers on the question, “What is communication?” Those who teach geography, history, and calculus have similar lectures. And so, for traditional and practical reasons, psychology professors too begin with the basic question, “What is personality?”

Although a definition follows, bear in mind that psychologists do not agree on a single answer to this question. In fact, personality psychologists are engaged in an ongoing and perhaps never-ending discussion of how to describe human personality and what topics belong within this subfield of the discipline (Dweck, 2017; Fajkowska & DeYoung, 2015; McAbee & Connelly, 2016; Yang et al., 2014). As you will see, each personality theorist covered in this book has a different idea about what personality psychologists ought to study. Whereas one theorist points to unconscious processes, another might look at learning histories, and still another at the way people organize their thoughts. Although some students might find this lack of agreement frustrating, let us suggest from the outset that these different viewpoints provide a rich and exciting framework within which to explore the complexities of the individual.

We define personality as consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes originating within the individual. Several aspects of this simple definition need elaboration. Notice that there are two parts to it. The first part is concerned with consistent patterns of behavior. Personality researchers often refer to these as individual differences. The important point here is that personality is consistent. We can identify these consistent behavior patterns over time and across situations. That is, we expect someone who is outgoing today to be outgoing tomorrow and that someone who is competitive at work is also quite likely competitive in sports. We acknowledge this consistency in character when we say, “It was just like her to do that” or “He was just being himself.” Of course, this does not mean an extraverted person is boisterous and jolly all the time. Nor does it mean people cannot change. But if personality exists and behavior is not just a reflection of whatever situation we find ourselves in, then we must expect some consistency in the way people act.

The second part of the definition concerns intrapersonal processes. In contrast to interpersonal processes, which take place between people, intrapersonal processes include all the emotional, motivational, and cognitive processes that go on inside of us that affect how we act and
feel. Thus, many personality psychologists are interested in topics like depression, information processing, happiness, and denial.

It also is important to note that, according to the definition, these consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes originate within the individual. This is not to say that external sources do not influence personality. Certainly, the way parents raise their children affects the kind of adults the children become. And, of course, the emotions we experience are often a reaction to the events we encounter. The point is that behavior is not solely a function of the situation. The fear we experience while watching a frightening movie is the result of the film, but the different ways we each express or deal with that fear come from within.

**SIX APPROACHES TO PERSONALITY**

**LO 1.3 Identify the focus of each of the six approaches to personality.**

What are the sources of consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes? One reason for the length of this book is that personality psychologists have answered this question in many different ways. To help make sense of the wide range of personality theories, we'll look at six general approaches to explaining personality. These are the psychoanalytic approach, the trait approach, the biological approach, the humanistic approach, the behavioral/social learning approach, and the cognitive approach (Table 1.1). Although the fit is not always perfect, each of the major theories of personality can be placed into one of these six general approaches.

Why so many theories of personality? We'll answer this question by way of analogy. Nearly everyone has heard the story about the five blind men who encounter an elephant. Each feels a different part of the animal and then tries to explain to the others what an elephant is like. The blind man feeling the leg describes the elephant as tall and round. Another feels the ear and claims an elephant is thin and flat, whereas another, holding onto the trunk, describes the animal as long and slender. The man feeling the tail and the one touching the elephant’s side have still different images. The point to this story, of course, is that each man knows only a part of the whole animal. Because there is more to the elephant than what he has experienced, each man’s description is correct but incomplete.

In one sense, the six approaches to personality are analogous to the blind men. That is, each approach does seem to correctly identify and examine an important aspect of human personality. Psychologists who subscribe to the psychoanalytic approach argue that people’s unconscious minds are largely responsible for important differences in their behavior styles. Other psychologists, who favor the trait approach, look at differences between people by identifying where an individual lies along a continuum of various personality characteristics. Psychologists advocating the biological approach point to inherited predispositions and physiological processes to explain individual differences. In contrast, those promoting the humanistic approach identify personal responsibility and feelings of self-acceptance as the key causes of differences in personality. Behavioral/social learning theorists explain consistent behavior patterns in terms of conditioning and expectations. And those promoting the cognitive approach look at differences in the way people process information.
It’s tempting to suggest that by simply combining all six approaches we can obtain an accurate picture of why people act the way they do. Unfortunately, the blind men analogy can only be stretched so far. Although different approaches to a given question in personality often vary only in emphasis—with each providing a legitimate, compatible explanation—in many instances the explanations from two or more approaches may be entirely incompatible. Thus, people who work in the field often align themselves with one or another of the six approaches as they decide which of the competing explanations makes the most sense to them.

Returning to the blind men and the elephant, suppose someone were to ask how an elephant moves. The man feeling the trunk might argue the elephant slithers along the ground like a snake. The one holding the elephant’s ear might say the elephant flies like a bird with its big, floppy wings. The man touching the leg would certainly have a different explanation. Although in some instances more than one explanation might be accurate (for example, a bird can both walk and fly), it should be obvious that at times not every personality theory can be right. It also is possible that one theory may be correct in describing one part of human personality, whereas another theory may be correct in describing other aspects.

No doubt some of the theories covered in this book will resonate with you more than others. But it is worth keeping in mind that each approach has been developed and promoted by a large number of respected psychologists. Although not all these psychologists are correct about every issue, each approach has something of value to offer in our quest to understand what makes each of us who we are.

**Two Examples: Aggression and Depression**

To get a better idea of how the six approaches to understanding personality provide six different, yet legitimate, explanations for consistent patterns of behavior, let’s look at two common examples. Aggressive behavior and the suffering that comes from depression are widespread problems in our society, and psychologists from many different perspectives have looked into their causes.

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**TABLE 1.1 Six Approaches to Personality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychoanalytic</td>
<td>Unconscious processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>Where an individual lies along a continuum of various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personality characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td>Inherited predispositions and physiological processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic</td>
<td>Personal responsibility and feelings of self-acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral/Social</td>
<td>Conditioning and expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>How individuals process information</td>
</tr>
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Example 1: Aggression

Teachers, community service workers and law enforcement personnel can attest to the common observation that some people are more prone to act aggressively than are others. But why is this the case? Each of the six approaches to personality provides at least one answer. As you read these answers, it might be helpful to think about an aggressive person you have encountered or read about. Which of the six explanations seems to do the best job of explaining that individual’s behavior?

The classic psychoanalytic explanation of aggression points to an unconscious death instinct. That is, we are all said to possess an unconscious desire to self-destruct. However, because people with a healthy personality do not hurt themselves, these self-destructive impulses are often turned outward and expressed against others in the form of aggression. Other psychoanalysts argue that aggression results when we are blocked from reaching our goals. Frustrated individuals who constantly fail to attain what they want in life are likely candidates for persistent aggressive behavior.

Personality theorists who follow the trait approach measure the extent to which people are prone to acting aggressively. They maintain the hostile and belligerent tendencies of individuals high in aggressiveness show up in many ways and in many different situations. They also examine the consistency of this individual difference over time. Investigators find elementary school children who shove and bully their classmates often become adults who abuse their spouses or engage in violent criminal behavior.

Personality psychologists from the biological perspective point to a genetic predisposition to act aggressively. That is, some people may be born with aggressive dispositions that, depending on their upbringing, result in their becoming aggressive adults. Some psychologists from this perspective use the theory of evolution to account for aggression. They describe the tendency for men to be more aggressive than women in terms of the male’s inherited need to exercise control over rivals so he can survive and pass along his genes. Other researchers from the biological approach look at the role hormones and neurotransmitters play in aggressive behavior.

Psychologists who take a humanistic approach to personality explain aggression in yet another way. These theorists deny that some individuals are born to be aggressive. They believe all people can become happy, nonviolent adults if allowed to grow and develop in an enriching and encouraging environment. Aggressive children come from homes in which basic needs are not adequately met. Children who develop a poor self-image may strike out at others in frustration.

The behavioral/social learning approach contrasts in many ways with the humanistic view. According to these psychologists, people learn to be aggressive the same way they learn other behaviors. Playground bullies find aggressive behavior is rewarded. They get to bat first and have first choice of playground equipment because other children fear them. People also become aggressive from watching models. Children may learn from observing aggressive classmates that hurting others is sometimes useful. Many psychologists from this perspective are concerned that the aggressive role models children routinely watch on television and in movies may lead to increases in violence.
Cognitive psychologists approach the question of aggressive behavior from yet another perspective. Their focus is on the way aggressive people process information. Certain cues in the environment, such as images of guns and fighting, often trigger a network of aggressive thoughts and emotions. When aggressive thoughts are highly accessible, people are more likely to interpret situations as threatening and respond to those perceived threats with violence.

Returning to the original question, why do some people show a consistent pattern of aggressive behavior while others do not? Each of the six approaches to personality offers a different explanation. Which is correct? One possibility is that only one is correct and future research will identify that theory. A second possibility is that each approach is partially correct. There may be six (or more) different causes of aggressive behavior. Still a third possibility is the six explanations do not contradict one another but rather differ only in their focus. That is, it’s possible aggressiveness is relatively stable and reflects an aggressive trait (the trait approach). But it might also be the case that these consistently aggressive people tend to interpret ambiguous events as threatening (the cognitive explanation) because of past experiences in which they were assaulted (the behavioral/social learning explanation). These individuals may have been born with a tendency to respond to threats in an aggressive manner (the biological approach). But perhaps if they had been raised in a nonfrustrating environment (the psychoanalytic approach) or in a supportive home in which their basic needs were met (the humanistic approach), they would have overcome their aggressive tendencies. The point is each approach appears to contribute something to our understanding of aggression.

Example 2: Depression

Most of us have had days when we’ve felt at least a little blue or melancholy. Like many college students, you may also have suffered through longer periods of sadness and a general lack of motivation to do anything. Depression is a serious concern on college campuses and elsewhere. However, we also know some people are more prone to depression than others. Once again, each of the six approaches to personality has an explanation for this individual difference.

According to Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic approach, depression is anger turned inward. That is, people suffering from depression hold unconscious feelings of anger and hostility directed at other individuals. But because each of us has internalized the values of society that discourage overt expressions of hostility, these angry feelings are turned inward. That is, people take their anger out on themselves in the form of depression. As with most psychoanalytic explanations, this process takes place at an unconscious level.

Trait researchers find a person’s general emotional level today is a good indicator of that person’s emotions in the future. People who experience an episode of depression during their teen years are more prone than others to have recurring episodes in adulthood.

Biological personality psychologists point to evidence that some people inherit a genetic susceptibility to depression. When faced with stressful life events, these individuals are more likely than others to become depressed. Because of this inherited vulnerability, some people experience repeated bouts of depression throughout their lives.

Humanistic personality theorists explain depression in terms of self-esteem. That is, people who frequently suffer from depression are those who have failed to develop a good sense of their
self-worth. For humanistic psychotherapists, helping clients accept and appreciate themselves, even with all their faults and weaknesses, is an important step in overcoming depression.

Psychologists from the behavioral/social learning approach point to learning histories as a cause of depression. Some behaviorists argue depression results from a lack of positive reinforcers. That is, you may feel down and unmotivated because you see few activities in your life worth the effort. One behavioral model proposes depression develops from exposure to aversive situations over which people have little control. This experience with uncontrollable events creates a perception of helplessness that is generalized to other situations and may develop into clinical depression.

Cognitive personality psychologists argue some people are prone to episodes of depression because of the way they process information. Depressed individuals have negative thoughts about themselves, are pessimistic about the future, and tend to interpret events in a negative manner. Depressed people use a negative filter to interpret and process information, which causes them to attend to depressing features of the situations they encounter and to easily recall unhappy experiences.

Which of these accounts of depression strikes you as the most accurate? If you have been depressed, was it because of your low self-esteem, because you experienced an uncontrollable situation, or because you tend to look at the world through a depressing lens? As with the
aggression example, more than one of these approaches may be correct. You may have found one theory could explain an experience you had with depression last year, whereas another seems to better account for a more recent bout. In addition, the theories can at times complement each other. For example, people might interpret events in a depressing way because of their low self-esteem.

One more lesson can be taken from these two examples: You need not align yourself with the same approach to personality when explaining different experiences. For example, you may have found the cognitive explanation for aggression made the most sense to you, but the humanistic approach provided the best account of depression. This observation demonstrates the main point of this section: Each of the six approaches has something to offer for the student interested in understanding personality.

**PERSONALITY AND CULTURE**

LO 1.4 Discuss the role culture plays in personality psychology.

Over the past few decades, psychologists have increasingly recognized the important role culture plays in understanding personality. To some students, this observation at first seems inconsistent with the notion of personality as distinct from situational influences on behavior. However, psychologists recognize many of the assumptions people in Western developed countries make when studying personality may not apply when describing people from different cultures (Benet-Martinez & Oishi, 2008; Cheung et al., 2011). It is not just that different experiences in different cultures affect how personalities develop. Rather, psychologists have come to see that people and their personalities exist within a cultural context.

Perhaps the most important distinction cross-cultural personality researchers make is between individualistic cultures and collectivist cultures (Triandis, 2001). Individualistic cultures, which include most Northern European countries and the United States and Canada, place great emphasis on individual needs and accomplishments. People in these cultures like to think of themselves as independent and unique. In contrast, people in collectivist cultures are more concerned about belonging to a larger group, such as a family, tribe, or nation. They are more interested in cooperation than competition, and they obtain satisfaction when the group does well rather than from individual accomplishments. Many Asian, African, Central American, and South American countries fit the collectivist culture description.

Concepts commonly studied by personality psychologists in individualistic countries can take on very different meanings when examined in collectivist cultures. For example, research reviewed in Chapter 12 suggests the Western notion of self-esteem is based on assumptions about personal goals and feelings of uniqueness that may not apply to people in many other countries. Similarly, Western psychologists studying achievement motivation sometimes try to predict who will get ahead in academic or business situations. However, this definition of achievement and success is not shared universally. In some collectivist cultures, success means cooperation and group accomplishments. Personal recognition may even be frowned upon.
We also need to consider the culture a person comes from when identifying and treating psychological disorders (Bader et al., 2021; Barbosa-Leiker et al., 2021; Han et al., 2019; Ibaraki & Hall, 2014). For example, behavior that suggests excessive dependency or an exaggerated sense of self in one culture might reflect good adjustment in another. It is also important to recognize that although countries like the United States are generally individualistic, nations often are made up of people from many cultural backgrounds (Markus, 2017). Indeed, researchers find psychotherapy is more effective when it is tailored to the client’s cultural norms and values (Benish et al., 2011; Huey & Tilley, 2018; Smith et al., 2011).

In short, it is worth remembering most of the theories and much of the research covered in this book are based on observations in individualistic cultures. In fact, most of this work was conducted in the United States, the country that was found in one study to be the most individualistic of 41 nations examined (Suh et al., 1998). This does not mean the research should be dismissed. Rather, we should keep in mind that whether a particular description applies to people in other cultures remains an open question. In some cases, such as the research on dream content presented in Chapter 4 and the studies on marriage patterns presented in Chapter 10, investigators find nearly identical results across varied cultural groups. In other cases, such as in the self-esteem and achievement examples, they find important differences among cultures. Identifying the cultural limitations or universality of research findings provides additional insight into the nature of the concepts we study.

THE STUDY OF PERSONALITY: THEORY, APPLICATION, ASSESSMENT, AND RESEARCH

LO 1.5 State how theory, application, assessment, and research combine to promote the study of personality.

If you spend a few minutes looking through the table of contents, you will notice this book is divided into sections. Each section presents one of the different approaches to personality, although the psychoanalytic approach is divided into two sections, Freudian and neo-Freudian. Within each of these seven sections, you will find the four components necessary for a complete understanding of personality. These four components are theory, application, assessment, and research.

The first chapter of each section begins with a presentation of theory. The personality theorists covered in these pages present a comprehensive model for how human personality is structured and how it operates. Next in this chapter comes an example of how psychologists apply the theory and research findings to questions that directly affect people’s lives. These applications include psychotherapy, education, religion, and performance at work. The first chapter of each section ends with a discussion of how psychologists from that approach measure the personality constructs of interest to them. You will also notice as you make your way through this book that examples of personality assessment are scattered throughout. If you take the time to try each of these inventories, not only will you obtain a better understanding of how psychologists from the different approaches measure personality, but you will also gain insight into your own
personality. As you complete each inventory, you can record your scores in the Appendix of this book.

Finally, the second chapter within each of the seven sections is devoted entirely to research relevant to that approach. Personality psychology is, after all, a science. Each research chapter is organized around a few topics that have been studied extensively by personality psychologists, such as social anxiety, gender roles, and loneliness. Sometimes this research tests principles and assumptions central to the theory; other times researchers are interested in exploring some of the concepts introduced by the personality theory. By examining a handful of research topics in depth for each of the approaches, you will see how theories generate research and how the findings from one study typically lead to new questions and more research.

The Changing Face of the Field

This book also features the individuals who played a central role in the history of personality psychology. In 16 short biographies placed alongside the theorists’ ideas and discoveries, you can read about the founders of the field. Students often find it fun to speculate about how the theorists’ personal experiences influenced their ideas about personality. In a few cases, the connection seems quite obvious.

You may also notice, with one exception, all the theorists featured in these biographies are white men. This imbalance reflects the nature of American and European society in general and academia in particular during the time the roots of personality psychology were being formed. Opportunities in higher education for women, people of color, and those from many non-European backgrounds were extremely limited during these years. Fortunately, much has changed since then. The scholars and students who make up the field of personality psychology today reflect much greater gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity, and the professional organizations that promote personality research are committed to the principles of inclusion (Gruber et al., 2021; Lucas, 2020). Personality psychology has never been stronger or more vibrant, and as you will see, it continues to address many interesting and important questions about human behavior.

**SUMMARY**

**LO 1.1 Explain how the person and the situation influence behavior.**

The situation you are in and your personality interact to influence your behavior. Psychologists today ask how the situation influences behavior as well as how behavior reflects the individual.

**LO 1.2 Describe the subject matter of personality psychology.**

Personality psychology is concerned with the differences among people. Although there is no generally agreed-upon definition, personality is defined here as consistent behavior patterns and intrapersonal processes originating within the individual.
LO 1.3  Identify the focus of each of the six approaches to personality.

For convenience, the many theories of personality are divided into six general categories: the psychoanalytic, trait, biological, humanistic, behavioral/social learning, and cognitive approaches. The psychoanalytic approach largely focuses on unconscious processes, whereas the trait approach identifies where people fall along a continuum of relevant personality characteristics. The biological approach looks at inherited predispositions and physiological processes, and the humanistic approach focuses on personal responsibility and feelings of self-acceptance. The behavioral/social learning approach explains personality in terms of learning and expectations, whereas the cognitive approach examines how individuals process information. The six approaches can be thought of as complementary models for understanding human personality, although occasionally they present competing accounts of behavior.

LO 1.4  Discuss the role culture plays in personality psychology.

Personality psychologists recognize that personality exists within a cultural context. Concepts commonly studied by psychologists in one culture may take on different meanings in other cultures. Psychologists also should consider the culture an individual comes from when identifying and treating psychological disorders. Most of the findings reported in this book are based on research in individualistic cultures, such as the United States. However, these results don’t always generalize to people in other cultures.

LO 1.5  State how theory, application, assessment, and research combine to form the study of personality.

A thorough understanding of human personality requires more than the study of theory. Consequently, we’ll also examine how each of the approaches is applied to practical concerns, how each deals with personality assessment, and some of the research relevant to the issues and topics addressed by the theories.

KEY TERMS

- collectivist culture (p. 12)
- personality (p. 6)
- individualistic culture (p. 12)

ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES

Exercise 1.1: Explaining Aggression Using the Six Approaches

Think about someone you know who is often aggressive. Which of the six approaches best explains that person’s aggression? Write a paragraph describing why the approach does a good job of explaining the causes of the aggressive behavior. Which of the six approaches
does a poor job of explaining the person’s aggression? Write a few sentences or paragraph about why that approach does not seem to explain the behavior.

Exercise 1.2: Explaining Depression Using the Six Approaches

Think about someone you know who often experiences depression. Which of the six approaches best explains that person’s depression? Write a paragraph describing why the approach does a good job of explaining the causes of the depression. Which of the six approaches does a poor job of explaining the person’s depression? Write a few sentences or paragraph about why that approach does not seem to explain the depression. Try to use two different approaches than the ones you used for the first exercise.

Exercise 1.3: Culture and Personality

Cultures vary in their degree of collectivism/individualism. To what extent were you raised in a collectivist or individualistic culture? Describe two examples of how your collectivist/individualistic background might lead you to act differently than someone from a different cultural background.