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978-0-521-58748-8 - Personality: Determinants, Dynamics, and Potentials

Gian Vittorio Caprara and Daniel Cervone

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PERSONALITY

Determinants, Dynamics, and Potentials

Personality: Determinants, Dynamics, and Potentials is a comprehensive survey of contemporary research and theory in personality psychology. The book provides balanced coverage of biological, cognitive, affective, social, and interpersonal determinants of personality functioning and individual differences. The authors organize these factors within an overarching theoretical framework that highlights the dynamic transactions between individuals and the sociocultural environment and the human capacities for self-reflection and self-regulation. The book's broad, integrative approach to the study of personality reveals how advances throughout the psychological sciences illuminate the classic questions of personality psychology. The volume is designed as a textbook for advanced-level courses and as a reference for professionals in psychology and related disciplines. The book meets personality psychology's need for an integrative analysis of the field that reviews recent advances, places them in their historical context, and identifies particularly promising avenues for the discipline's future development.

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To Laura and Jenny

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Preface

The goal of this volume is to provide a comprehensive review of the psychological study of personality. We explore personality psychology's recent theoretical and empirical advances and place them in their historical context. We critically evaluate the current state of the field with the aim of promoting its further development.

The book is intended for a range of audiences. A primary audience consists of students in graduate or advanced undergraduate courses in personality psychology. We have endeavored to meet their need for a volume that presents the contemporary field in depth. Another prospective audience consists of professionals in business, education, or health care who require an up-to-date overview of work on personality processes and individual differences. Finally, we address the volume to our colleagues in psychology. We present empirical reviews, conceptual discussions, and a theoretical framework which, we hope, will be stimulating even to the personality psychologist who already is fully familiar with the field.

Personality psychology must function as a cumulative science that contributes to individual and social welfare. This idea guides our coverage in a number of respects. Sciences seek to identify causal mechanisms that explain their phenomena of interest. We thus focus on the biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors that causally contribute to personality functioning; in other words, we focus on *determinants* of personality function-

ing. These determinants are not static forces that exert fixed effects on a simple, linear psychological system. Instead, they operate on, and within, a complex, dynamic system of psychological elements. We thus explore the cognitive and affective *dynamics* of personality. Finally, promoting personal welfare requires that one not be content merely with plotting what individuals tend to be like. One must also explore what individuals can become, that is, their *potentials*. We devote much attention to the psychological systems that enable people to regulate their experiences and actions and thus to contribute, as causal agents, to the development of their potentials.

Our work also was guided by the belief that the field of personality must develop as an integrative discipline. Personality psychology is defined by a unique set of phenomena. No other discipline so directly addresses the coherence of individual functioning and the differences among individuals. Many other disciplines do, however, provide ideas and scientific findings that illuminate these phenomena. Advances throughout the biological, cognitive, and social sciences, as well as philosophy, speak to personality psychology's core concerns. Throughout the text, we seek to draw on the insights of these other fields. Further, we note the potential value of personality psychology for the psychological and social sciences at large. Personality psychology can serve as a forum for integrating diverse and sometimes disconnected strands of knowledge about psychological function-

ing. It can be a setting in which to address the difficult task of relating relatively molecular physiological, affective, and cognitive processes to the more molar psychological events that make up the individual's life.

Personality psychology has changed rapidly in recent decades. It is likely to change even faster in the future. New findings and ideas are disseminated faster than in the past. New forms of research are possible. The internet, for example, facilitates cross-cultural research by enabling rapid communication across different parts of the globe. The results of such research often challenge the universality of Western conceptions of personality and thereby speed change in the field. This rapid pace of change has important implications for how one crafts a textbook. There is little point in merely compiling a list of current empirical findings. Such a volume would soon be out of date. Furthermore, it would fail to meet critical needs. Investigators need to place current efforts in historical context, if only to avoid recycling old ideas. They also must be able to locate research programs within an overall conception of individual personality functioning, so as to enable the discipline to advance in an organized manner and in meaningful directions. We strive to meet these needs by reviewing not only recent empirical findings, but also contemporary and classic conceptions of the person. We present the diversity of current work within an overall conception of personality that stresses the dynamic transactions between the individual and the sociocultural environment, as well as the human capacities for self-reflection and self-regulation.

On a more personal note, the authors of this text came to this project with different backgrounds. One difference is in nationality. Thanks to our respective European and American backgrounds, the text balances work from investigators on both sides of the Atlantic to a greater degree than is typical. Internationalism was not an explicit mission for the volume. Rather, it was a natural outgrowth of the fact that investigators in differ-

ent areas of the world share common research agendas. Another difference is in scholarly background. GVC's research has included work on personality development, social adjustment, and assessment, and his training includes a background in political science. DC's work has focused on self-regulatory processes and personality coherence, and his training leads him to draw on cognitive and social psychological contributions to the field. We hope that these differences have proved to be complementary. Our joint interests in the role of social-cognitive and affective mechanisms in personality functioning provided a common ground that is evident throughout the volume.

The preparation of this book benefitted enormously from our experiences at two "sister" institutions: the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (GVC) and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (DC). Both authors are deeply grateful to the staffs of these two remarkable institutions for their invaluable assistance during our time in residence. Pilar Burgueno Van Breda, of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, was of particular help in reconciling our linguistic idiosyncrasies and in serving as our "first referee."

We thank Nicole Schnopp-Wyatt for using a preliminary draft of this volume as a classroom text and providing us with valuable feedback, and Nilly Rafaeli-Mor for her many incisive and constructive comments on the manuscript. We are grateful to the many colleagues who sent us reprints of their work, clarified issues in discussion with us, and commented on various sections of the text.

Writing a book intrudes on one's personal life. We thank our students, friends, and family for putting up with these intrusions. GVC thanks Laura and Lorenzo for having shared all the enthusiasm and the turmoil of many days of writing. DC wishes to thank his wife, Jenny, for her support from the very outset of this enterprise, and his son, Nicholas, for joining in a short time later.