

AN INTRODUCTION TO PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

Personality, it is said, is an individual's unique way of perceiving his environment, including himself.

Gordon W. Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (1961/1963, p. 274)

One of the most important lessons that one learns from the history of social psychology (which is covered in *Social Psychology: The Basics*; Frings, in preparation) is that interpersonal situations can exert considerable influence on individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviour (e.g., G. W. Allport, 1968/1985). By the same token, the history of social psychology acknowledges that not all individuals necessarily think, feel, or behave the same way in a particular interpersonal situation, at a particular point in time (e.g., E. E. Jones, 1985/1998). Indeed, throughout the history of social psychology, individual differences in *attitudes* (i.e., individuals' positive versus negative thoughts and feelings toward various persons, places, things, and other entities; Blair, Dasgupta, & Glaser, 2015) have been examined empirically as predictors of interpersonal behaviour (Ross, Lepper, & Ward, 2010).

Gordon W. Allport was a pioneer in the field of social psychology, especially regarding the conceptualisation and measurement

of individuals' stereotyped thoughts and prejudiced feelings as potential influences on individuals' behaviour toward members of psychological outgroups (e.g., G. W. Allport, 1954/1979). In addition, G. W. Allport was a pioneer in the field of *personality psychology* (i.e., the study of the entire, functioning individual; McAdams, 1997), especially concerning the conceptualisation and measurement of *traits* (i.e., individuals' descriptions of their own psychological characteristics; Paunonen & Hong, 2015) and *values* (i.e., individuals' priorities in life as reflected in particular organised sets of beliefs; McAdams & Manczak, 2015) as predictors of individuals' behaviour toward members of psychological ingroups and outgroups alike (e.g., G. W. Allport, 1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963). Thus, whether viewed from the vantage point of interpersonal relations (e.g., Gaines, 2016/2018) or intergroup relations (e.g., Gaines, 2017), G. W. Allport's *psychology of the individual* (C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970) – including, but not limited to, G. W. Allport's trait theory (Ewen, 1998) – offers a broad, expansive foundation for integrating various theories and results of empirical studies on individual differences in thoughts, feelings, and behaviour within particular social situations (see Funder & Fast, 2010).

In the present book, G. W. Allport's (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) *psychology of the individual* serves as the primary theoretical framework for our review of the literature in personality psychology. We are aware that, by emphasising G. W. Allport's perspective on personality psychology, we run the risk of ignoring the conceptual road less travelled – most notably, Ross Stagner's *Psychology of Personality*, which presents a comparatively behaviouristic and experimental view of personality psychology across several editions (1937, 1948, 1961, 1974; see McAdams, 1997). However, G. W. Allport's and Stagner's respective orientations share certain basic assumptions about the proper subject matter of personality psychology. For example, the opening quote from G. W. Allport (1961/1963, p. 274) concerning the definition of personality in terms of individual uniqueness – notwithstanding G. W. Allport's pre-Women's Rights Era use of masculine pronouns to refer to all of humanity – directly cites Stagner's (1961) third edition of *Psychology of Personality* as a source of inspiration. In any event, with G. W. Allport as our conceptual guide, we shall strive to present a concise (yet comprehensive) review of personality psychology.

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT BOOK

One of the most fascinating aspects of personality psychology is the co-existence of several well-defined schools of thought, each of which includes two or more wide-ranging theories that – according to their respective creators – go a long way toward explaining why individuals behave as they do (Ewen, 1998). Certain schools of thought (i.e., psychodynamic, behaviourist, and humanistic/existential) are regarded as “classic” (Wiggins & Pincus, 1992); whereas other schools of thought (i.e., trait, cognitive, and biological) are regarded as “contemporary” or “emerging” (see Digman, 1990). In Chapters 2 through to 7 of the present book, we will learn more about the major schools of thought within personality psychology.

Readers of the present book will notice that we have “stacked the deck” in terms of the amount of space that we devote to *psychodynamic theories* that – following the lead of Sigmund Freud’s (e.g., S. Freud, 1908/1925, 1931/1950) psychoanalytic theory – assume that unconscious motives exert considerable influence on individuals’ behaviour (see Millon, 1996). Our expansive coverage of psychodynamic theories does not reflect a particular conceptual bias or predisposition toward those theories. Rather, our interest in psychodynamic theories can be understood in terms of the sheer impact that those theories have made within personality psychology (see also Ewen, 1998). Even Stagner – whose *Psychology of Personality* (e.g., Stagner, 1937), as we have already mentioned, serves as a behaviouristic alternative to G. W. Allport’s *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (1937/1951) – placed special emphasis upon the psychodynamic school (e.g., Stagner, 1961).

EXAMPLES OF CORE CONSTRUCTS IN PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

In order to understand core constructs in personality psychology from the standpoint of G. W. Allport’s (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) psychology of the individual, one must begin by examining William James’s (1890/2010) seminal version of *self-theory* (see C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970). According to James, the *self* is an individuals’ ongoing awareness that they are distinct from – yet interconnected with – various aspects of the physical and social

worlds that they inhabit (see Swann & Bosson, 2010). Having been influenced by Charles Darwin's (1859) *theory of natural selection*, James (1890/2010) emphasised the biological origins of the self (e.g., the self is a product of the mind – which, in turn, is a product of the brain). However, James (1902) subsequently encouraged readers to decide for themselves whether they believe that the self ultimately is a product of biology or a product of divinity. (Within philosophy and theology, the older term of *soul* historically was used to describe the self as a divinely ordained entity; see Calkins, 1917, for a critique of the pre-psychology literature on the soul.)

In turn, according to James (1890/2010), two major components of the self can be identified – namely, (1) the *pure Ego*, or self-as-knower; and (2) the *empirical Me*, or self-as-known (G. W. Allport, 1955). G. W. Allport contended that the empirical Me – which G. W. Allport preferred to label as the *proprium* – is the aspect of the self that is directly accessible to individuals' consciousness. Having sidestepped the problems that plague James's conceptualisation of the pure Ego (e.g., if the pure Ego reflects upon the self, then what is the entity that presumably reflects upon the pure Ego, and so on; C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970), in *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (1937/1951), G. W. Allport promoted the empirical Me or proprium in *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (1961/1963) as the component of the self that encompasses and gives order to the wide array of traits, values, and other constructs that are part and parcel of individuals' personalities (Ewen, 1998).

Within the empirical Me or proprium, G. W. Allport (1955) accepted James's (1890/2010) further division into the *material self* (i.e., individuals' physical possessions, including their own bodies), *social self* (i.e., the roles and relationships within which individuals are embedded), and *spiritual self* (i.e., individuals' intelligence and personality characteristics). (The term "spiritual self", which James chose over potentially less soul-evoking terms such as "psychic self", does not appear to have been problematic for G. W. Allport, who shared James's (1902) interest in religion and spirituality; e.g., G. W. Allport, 1950.) G. W. Allport believed that, in everyday life, individuals do not experience components of the proprium as distinct from each other (C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Nevertheless,

G. W. Allport's own programme of research – which included the development of surveys to measure traits (e.g., G. W. Allport, 1928) and values (G. W. Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1960; see also Vernon & G. W. Allport, 1931) – tended to prioritise aspects of the spiritual self (see Ewen, 1998).

With regard to James's (1890/2010) spiritual self, G. W. Allport (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) drew a distinction between individual differences in *intelligence* (i.e., presumed cognitive ability) and individual differences in *personality* (i.e., a variety of psychological attributes that lie outside the domain of presumed cognitive ability; see C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970). As it turns out, G. W. Allport's psychology of the individual largely predates the emergence of cognitive psychology, which currently addresses theories and research on intelligence (see Gobet, in preparation). In any event, G. W. Allport viewed intelligence as a construct that should be considered separate from the subject matter of personality psychology (a view that is shared by many, but not all, of G. W. Allport's followers; see Ewen, 1998).

Unlike James (1890/2010), G. W. Allport (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) wrote systematically about the relevance of several modern-day personality constructs to the spiritual self (see C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970). For example, G. W. Allport's psychology of the individual includes traits, values, attitudes, and *motives* (the latter of which can be defined as internal forces that direct individuals' behaviour; Sheldon & Schuler, 2015). In principle, one could add *affect* (i.e., individual differences in feelings at a particular point in time; Augustine & Larsen, 2015) – including *emotions* (i.e., feelings that tend to be directed toward particular entities) and *moods* (i.e., feelings that are not necessarily directed toward any particular entity; R. Brown, 1965) – to the list of major personality constructs. Nevertheless, G. W. Allport devoted the bulk of his scholarly efforts toward understanding traits in all of their complexity (Ewen, 1998).

Regarding traits, G. W. Allport (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) made a distinction between *common traits* (which can be found in varying degrees among large numbers of individuals and are especially amenable to quantitative research methods) and *personal traits* (which, in principle, might be found only among one individual and are especially amenable to qualitative

research methods; C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970). G. W. Allport acknowledged that the field of personality psychology in general might gravitate toward studies of common traits (as ultimately proved to be the case during the second half of the twentieth century; McAdams, 1997). However, G. W. Allport's psychology of the individual emphasised personal traits, as the psychological equivalent of fingerprints (i.e., no two individuals possess exactly the same combination of personal traits; Ewen, 1998).

Finally, with respect to personal traits, G. W. Allport (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) distinguished among *cardinal traits* (i.e., single traits that essentially define the entire personalities of some individuals); *central traits* (i.e., five to ten traits that go a long way toward defining the personalities of most individuals); and *secondary traits* (i.e., an unspecified number of traits whose expression in the behaviour of some, if not most, individuals is heavily dependent upon the presence versus absence of situational influences; Ewen, 1998). G. W. Allport's best-known empirical work on traits (i.e., G. W. Allport, 1965) focused on several central traits (e.g., aggressive, autonomous, sentimental, self-centred) – or, alternatively, one cardinal trait (i.e., neurotic) – of an older woman (“Jenny”) with whom a primary correspondent (“Glenn”) was acquainted for more than twenty years, via more than 300 letters that the older woman had sent to the correspondent and his wife (“Isabel”), during an interval that spanned more than a decade after the correspondent's stint as a university roommate of the woman's son (“Ross”; see Hall & Lindzey, 1970; for further details on *Letters from Jenny*, see Box 1.1). Compared to cardinal traits and central traits, G. W. Allport de-emphasised secondary traits in practice (Zuroff, 1986).

BOX 1.1 INSIGHT INTO ONE WOMAN'S PERSONALITY: GORDON ALLPORT'S *LETTERS FROM JENNY* (1965)

One of the most exhaustive, empirically orientated studies of a particular individual's personality was Gordon Allport's *Letters from Jenny* (1965; for a review, see Wrightsman, 1981). Although authoritative reviews of *Letters from Jenny* (e.g., Ewen, 1998; C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970) have tended to follow G. W. Allport's practice of referring to “Jenny's” main letter-writing correspondent

as “Glenn” (and referring to the correspondent’s wife as “Isabel”), Winter (1997) revealed that the name “Glenn” was a pseudonym for Gordon Allport himself; and the name “Isabel” was a pseudonym for Gordon Allport’s wife, Ada(!). In any event, the letters in question served collectively as a treasure trove of insight into “Jenny’s” personality – not just for Gordon Allport, but also for successive generations of personality researchers (O’Dell, 1978).

In the hands of a less-capable researcher, *Letters from Jenny* (G. W. Allport, 1965) might have functioned as a mundane, unenlightening account of the final twelve years of “Jenny’s” life, from middle to elderly adulthood. However, G. W. Allport’s mastery of entire schools of thought within personality psychology is evident in the ease with which G. W. Allport shifts from an existential perspective to a psychodynamic and, subsequently, trait perspective in fleshing out the unique combination of psychological attributes that comprise “Jenny’s” personality (see R. Brown, 1965, for a discussion of laypersons’ and scientists’ progression from describing individuals’ behaviour to drawing conclusions with regard to individuals’ personalities). Moreover, despite the increasingly paranoid content of “Jenny’s” letters over time (especially in the years following the death of her son, “Ross”), G. W. Allport stopped short of labelling “Jenny” as psychotic. Instead, G. W. Allport opted to emphasise “Jenny’s” basic dignity. Although we will not usually refer to G. W. Allport as a humanist (at least in terms of allegiance to a given school of thought), G. W. Allport’s overarching optimism concerning human nature is obvious in the ultimately sympathetic portrait of “Jenny” that one finds in G. W. Allport’s book (see also J. F. Brennan, 2003, for a description of G. W. Allport as a humanistic psychologist).

We hasten to add that G. W. Allport (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) did *not* portray traits as the only constructs that were worth studying within personality psychology (C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Nonetheless, G. W. Allport’s psychology of the individual does promote traits as the most relevant constructs for the development of personality psychology as a distinct branch of psychology (Ewen, 1998). By the latter half of the twentieth century, an overwhelming consensus among personality psychologists indicated that traits had emerged as the core constructs within their field (A. R. Buss, 1989).

EXAMPLES OF IMPORTANT (BUT NOT-YET-CORE) CONSTRUCTS IN PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

So far, we have identified various core constructs within personality psychology, from the perspective of G. W. Allport's (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) psychology of the individual. However, we have not said much about important, but not-yet-core, constructs in personality psychology (notwithstanding their core status in developmental psychology; e.g., C. R. Cooper & Denner, 1998). As a theoretical point of departure, we turn to Erik Erikson's (1959/1980, 1963/1995, 1968/1994) *ego psychology*, which serves as a conceptual bridge between James's (1890/2010) self-theory and G. W. Allport's psychology of the individual (see C. S. Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Erikson is best-known for his writings on *identity*, which Baumeister (1997) – drawing upon Erikson (e.g., Erikson, 1968/1994) – defined as “the [combination or aggregate of] definitions that are created for and superimposed on the self” (p. 682). Identity may be distinguished from the *self-concept* (i.e., individuals' conscious reflection upon themselves; Baumeister, 1998), in that identity is jointly constructed by self and society; whereas the self-concept ultimately is constructed by one's self (Baumeister, 1997).

In spite of G. W. Allport's (1954/1979) panoramic view regarding intergroup relations (Brewer & R. J. Brown, 1998), G. W. Allport's (1937/1951, 1955, 1961/1963) psychology of the individual focused on *personal identity* (i.e., the aggregate of definitions that are created for the self), rather than *social identities* (i.e., aggregates of definitions that are superimposed upon the self; see Baumeister, 1997). However, Henri Tajfel's (1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) *social identity theory* incorporated elements of G. W. Allport's (1954/1979) psychology of the individual (and, to a lesser extent, elements of Erikson's [1968/1994] ego psychology), in the process of arguing that *self-esteem* (i.e., individuals' positive versus negative attitude toward themselves; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991) reflects the joint influence of individuals' personal and social identities (R. Brown, 1986). Thanks largely to Tajfel's efforts, social identity constructs have become increasingly prominent within the literature on the self (for a review, see Swann & Bosson, 2010).

Returning to Erikson's (1959/1980, 1963/1995, 1968/1994) ego psychology, Erikson's progressively sharp focus on *gender identity* and (especially) *ethnic identity* during the 1960s dovetails with the rise of the post-1950s Women's Rights and Civil Rights movements in the United States (see R. Brown, 1986, for a synthesis of the respective literatures on social identities and social movements). On the one hand, research on gender identity – exemplified by Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich's studies of individual differences in *gender-related traits* (e.g., Spence, Helmreich, & Holahan, 1979; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974), *gender-role attitudes* (e.g., Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973), and *gender-role compliance* (e.g., Spence, Helmreich, & Sawin, 1980), among other gender-related constructs – has not always acknowledged the influence of Erikson's ego psychology (see Frable, 1997). On the other hand, research on ethnic identity – exemplified by Jean Phinney's studies of individual differences in *exploration* (i.e., individuals' thoughts about their ethnic groups) and *commitment* (i.e., individuals' feelings about their ethnic groups; e.g., Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007; R. Roberts et al., 1999) – clearly was influenced by Erikson's ego psychology, as interpreted by James Marcia (1966, 1967).

With respect to aspects of individuals' ethnic identity, Erving Goffman's (1963) *interactionist role theory* (see also Goffman, 1959) drew upon Erikson's ego psychology (without citing any specific writings by Erikson) in distinguishing among *racial*, *religious*, and *national identities* (referring to race-based, faith-based, and state-based social identities, respectively; see Verkuyten, 2005). In turn, Stanley Gaines and colleagues (Gaines, Marelich, Bunce, Robertson, & Wright, 2013) acknowledged the influence of Erikson's (1959/1980, 1963/1995, 1968/1994) ego psychology, as well as Goffman's interactionist role theory, on their research concerning individual differences in racial, religious, and national identities. Conceptually speaking, Gaines (2012) has devoted special attention to minority group members' racial identity, which might be influenced by inter-group processes, such as social perceivers' expressions of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (see also Fiske, 1998).

Finally, among aspects of individuals' racial identity, Gaines and Reed (1994, 1995; Reed & Gaines, 1997) emphasised *Black identity* (i.e., African-descent persons' psychological attachment toward their racial group; Gaines, 2012) as an especially

important type of racial identity within the United States (and, arguably, throughout various Western nations). Drawing upon Gaines and Reed's writings, Roberts Sellers and colleagues (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) proposed a *multidimensional model of African American identity* (including *racial centrality, racial ideology, racial regard, and racial salience* as components). Furthermore, Sellers and colleagues (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) conducted research on individual differences in three of the four components of African American identity (i.e., racial centrality, racial ideology, and racial regard).

Before leaving the topic of important, but not-yet-core, constructs in personality psychology, we note that – in and of themselves – gender and ethnic group memberships are *not* personality constructs. If one were to focus exclusively on individuals' birth sex and race (as was common in “differential psychology” during the early twentieth century; for reviews, see Markus, 2008; Unger, 1979), then one might argue that certain elements of gender and ethnicity comprise part of individuals' material selves (which, in turn, comprise part of the empirical Me or proprium; G. W. Allport, 1955; James, 1890/2010). However, if one were to broaden one's conception of gender and ethnicity beyond individuals' birth, sex and race (e.g., Frable, 1997; Howard, 2000), then one might contend that some elements of gender and ethnicity comprise part of individuals' social selves (which likewise comprise part of the empirical Me/proprium). In any event, gender and ethnic group memberships *per se* are best regarded as influences on (but not equivalent to) individuals' gender and ethnic identities, respectively (Swann & Bosson, 2010). In addition, gender and ethnic group memberships are linked to achievement-related motives (e.g., Helmreich & Spence, 1978) and cultural values (e.g., Gaines et al., 1997a), in that order.

PRELUDE TO CHAPTER 2

Perhaps no other school of thought has stimulated as much popular curiosity outside personality psychology, or generated as much scholarly controversy within personality psychology, as has the psychodynamic school (which we defined earlier in the present chapter).

Representative theories include (in order of appearance) the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud (1900/1965), which evolved from S. Freud's earlier work with Josef Breuer (e.g., Breuer & S. Freud, [1895/1995]; the analytical psychology of Carl Jung [1912/1916]; the individual psychology of Alfred Adler [1927/1957]); the "social-psychological" personality theories of Karen Horney (1922–37/1966), Harry Stack Sullivan (1953), Erich Fromm (1941), and Wilhelm Reich (1933/1980); the ego psychology theories of Anna Freud (1936/1966), Heinz Hartmann (1939), David Rapaport (1960), and Erik Erikson (1950); the object relations theories of Melanie Klein (1927), Donald Winnicott (1931), Ronald Fairbairn (1952), and Harry Guntrip (1969), as well as the attachment theory of John Bowlby (1969/1997); the "return-to-Freud" psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan (1966/1977); the self-psychology theories of Heinz Kohut (1971) and Otto Kernberg (1967), neither of which should be confused with the aforementioned self-theory of James (1890/2010); and the personology of Henry Murray (1938). In Chapter 2, we shall examine psychodynamic theories, as well as research that addresses those theories.



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