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## Introduction

The psychology of personality proceeds from the point of view of the person himself. It asks what *he* is like in his essential nature. If he is like many things, If he changes from environment to environment, very well and good. It is always *he* who changes; and the range and forms of his variations can be determined. He himself is the datum; he *is* something and *does* something (or if one prefers, he is *many* things and does *many* things); but we can still find out what they are viewed from *within*, from the person's *own* point of view.

—(ALLPORT, 1937, p. 558; emphasis in original)

If you have picked up this book and are reading this first sentence, then it is likely we share a common interest and concern, namely, that in our sweeping embrace of biological advances and cognitive-behavioral models, psychology and psychotherapy may be losing sight of the person. What happens to our efforts to understand an individual's life as we turn our emphasis more and more to problems of diminished neural firing or dysfunctional patterns of thoughts? Is there still a *scientific* and *therapeutic* justification for seeing individuals as whole people, multileveled, complex, and nonreducible to their "working parts"?

This book provides an optimistic and affirmative answer to this question. Whether you are a therapist or therapist-in-training, the following chapters demonstrate that there is indeed an emerging science of the person that is relevant to psychotherapy. Even more, this volume illustrates how this person-based science can be directly applied in psychotherapy practice. For personality researchers and graduate students, this book integrates diverse methods of personality assessment to pro-

vide a comprehensive picture of an individual person. For both researchers and therapists, I also review recent advances in relational psychoanalysis that make a strong case for locating individual persons in a “relational matrix” that takes into account gender, sociocultural influence, and what psychoanalysts would call “shared subjectivities” (if this last phrase sounds obscure, I promise that I will explain its meaning in straightforward terms and with concrete examples).

My goal, then, is to build bridges between therapists and scientists who share a concern for the integrity of the individual person. One might think that the goal of bringing a person-based psychology to the attention of clinical psychologists and psychotherapists is a good example of “preaching to the choir.” After all, the licensing guidelines for clinical psychology require training programs to offer graduate courses in personality psychology as one of the core disciplines to be mastered. However, in my dual career as a professor of psychology and a clinical psychologist in private practice, I have too often encountered students or fellow practitioners who think that the field of personality is still encompassed by the original figures of Freud, Jung, and Adler, with a little bit of Skinner, Rogers, and Maslow thrown in to fill out the picture. Those with better memories for their course material might mention the social learning work of Bandura and Mischel, while those inclined toward measurement remember Cattell’s Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) and factor analysis. Ironically, in light of the increasing medicalization of psychotherapy, with its emphasis on symptom relief and disorder, I am actually pleased when a colleague or student expresses some knowledge, however incomplete, about personality psychology. Yet what most therapists out in the field or the vast majority of students in the typical introductory personality course are not likely to know is that personality psychology is in the midst of a renaissance. It has a thriving new international organization, the Association for Research in Personality, that is less than 10 years old, refined instruments that are being adopted around the world (McCrae, Costa, del Pilar, Rolland, & Parker, 1998), and theoretical perspectives that have the potential to make integrative connections across the social sciences, health fields, and humanities (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Conway, Singer, & Tagini, 2004; Lau, 2002; McAdams, 1999, 2001; Pennebaker, 1995).

As an associate editor for the *Journal of Personality*, one of the major outlets for the publishing of scientific research in personality, I can attest to our difficulty in keeping up with the volume of submissions of high-quality research being conducted in personality. This research is seldom concerned with “psychosexual stages,” “archetypes,” or “inferiority complexes” (the kinds of terms still encountered in many introduc-

tory personality courses). Instead, contemporary personality researchers ask questions about topics such as the “Big Five,” “personal strivings,” “social-cognitive strategies,” “self-regulation,” and “narrative identity,” and look at their relationship to “well-being,” “optimal adjustment,” “agency and communion,” and “meaning making.” These terms (all of which are covered in this book) are slowly working their way into textbooks on personality, but they are still too new for many therapists or therapists-in-training to have a handle on their meaning or potential application to practice.

The need to address this gap between contemporary personality research and psychotherapy practice became most apparent to me during my tenure in another associate editor position related to clinical psychology. For nearly 5 years, from 1998 to 2003, I served as the associate editor in charge of assigning new clinical psychology books to be reviewed for *Contemporary Psychology: The American Psychological Association's Journal of Book Reviews*. In other words, in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, virtually every book published with any relationship to psychotherapy would arrive on a weekly basis in cartons at my office door, and each year I evaluated 300–400 books for potential review. Of the more than 1,500 books I examined, I would estimate that no more than 10–15 volumes made an explicit link between contemporary personality research and clinical practice. There were many books that drew on contemporary psychoanalytic theory (as well as even more that drew on much older psychoanalytic or psychodynamic theories), but few of these books offered any support other than clinical histories for their assertions. Similarly, there were a smaller number of humanistic and Jungian psychology books that offered complicated discussions of the individual person but were far removed from any link to empirical personality psychology.

A large stock of books, strong in empirical support, applied cognitive-behavioral techniques to specific disorders, ranging from anxiety and depression to eating disorders and addiction. Despite their research base in many aspects of contemporary psychology, these books lacked psychoanalytic and humanistic psychology's sensitivity to a comprehensive vision of the person. To their credit, cognitive-behavioral approaches have traditionally emphasized the reciprocal nature of cognition, behavior, and emotion (Bandura, 1999). Yet the therapies they produce still tend to take a more tinkering or mechanistic perspective that focuses on the malfunctioning components of the person rather than the person as a whole (however, for a more holistic and integrative perspective, see Linehan, 1988; Mahoney, 2003; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2001). In summary, whether looking toward either psychoanalytic and humanistic

theory or cognitive-behavioral therapy, it was hard to find a book that was both research-based and concerned with a holistic understanding of the individual person.

Though some of the just-mentioned humanistically oriented psychologists and psychotherapists might still echo Wordsworth's memorable caution, "We murder to dissect" ("The Tables Turned," line 28; Wordsworth, 1798/1984), I propose that we now have the scientific methods to allow us to build a more complete picture of the person without compromising the integrity or multidimensional facets of each individual. Even if you are not inclined to introduce personality inventories or collection of personal memories into your clinical work, this book provides a conceptual framework for how to understand individuals that is likely to be highly relevant to your practice.

However, for those interested in applying the personality instruments described in this book, I give fairly comprehensive introductory descriptions of their administration, analysis, and interpretation, but more importantly have included in Appendix A how to obtain these measures or contact their authors in order to gain further opportunities to build expertise and competence in these techniques. For those readers who have recently begun the study of personality or have just finished a course of study in this area, this book provides a concrete demonstration of several contemporary personality theories and methods applied to the same individual, providing clear examples of how they compare and contrast with each other.

This book is by no means a comprehensive account of all facets of personality. It does not address the important contemporary advances in longitudinal and developmental personality research (Caspi & Roberts, 1999; Robins, Fraley, Roberts, & Trzesniewski, 2001), the growing field of evolutionary personality psychology (Buss, 1995; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000), or the emerging findings on implicit knowledge and the cognitive unconscious (Banaji, 2001; Bargh, 1997; Kihlstrom, 1987). Although all of these areas are yielding significant contributions to our understanding of the development and dynamics of personality, their application to a person-based therapy is a little more distant than the domains of personality research that I have chosen to highlight in this book. On the one hand, for those readers who want a more complete survey of all of personality research, I refer them to excellent current introductory textbooks by Carver and Scheier (2004) and McAdams (2006), as well as the second edition of Pervin and John's (1999) more advanced *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*. On the other hand, for readers who want less discussion of laboratory research in personality and more focus on the direct clinical assessment of personality

and its connection to psychopathology, I recommend recent books by Beutler and Groth-Marnat (2003), Butcher (2002), and Wiggins (2003), as well as Millon and colleagues' (Millon, Davis, & Millon, 1997) influential and comprehensive body of work.

Because this book seeks to redress gaps in psychotherapists' understanding and application of contemporary personality psychology, I am also acutely aware of personality psychologists' lack of familiarity with developments in contemporary psychodynamic therapy. Due to their objectivist and empirical orientation, not to mention the subjective excesses of classical psychoanalysis, most personality psychologists have tended to give little attention to the theoretical writings and case presentations of contemporary psychoanalysts. I contend in this volume that this dismissal is a case of "throwing out the baby with the bathwater." In fact, the emerging field of relational psychoanalysis offers critical insights into a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of what it means to be (and to study) a person. Once again, one can benefit from these insights without needing to embrace the full conceptual structure and techniques of psychoanalytic therapy (I would certainly not characterize the work I do as a therapist as primarily psychoanalytic).

By synthesizing contributions from laboratory-based personality research and relational psychoanalysis, I recognize that I take the risk of all integrative efforts: I may please neither researchers nor therapists. However, in the true spirit of personality psychology's founding fathers, Gordon Allport (1937) and Henry Murray (1938), and their multidisciplinary "explorations of personality," I can see no other way of depicting in both a scientific and comprehensive manner the complexity of the whole person. Acknowledging the perils of any new endeavor, I now describe the personality-based framework that I use to understand and work with the person in psychotherapy.

### **THE THREE-DOMAIN FRAMEWORK OF PERSONALITY**

In the mid-1990s, Dan McAdams and Robert Emmons, two prominent personality psychologists, surveyed the field of personality and saw a fragmented but resurgent branch of psychology. Though the influence of grand theorists, whether Freud, Jung, Adler, or Skinner, had faded, advances in trait psychology, social cognition, emotion, interpersonal perspectives, and narrative psychology were reinvigorating the study of personality (see McAdams, 1997, for a history of eras and movements in 20th-century personality psychology). These positive developments, which

were making their way piecemeal into revised editions of personality textbooks, led to a call by McAdams and Emmons, in a special issue of the *Journal of Personality* (December 1995, Volume 63), for a new framework of personality research that would help to organize the expanding field. Such a framework would not only allow teachers and students to convey a more relevant and accessible picture of what actually was happening in the personality research laboratories in this country and around the world, but it would also allow researchers to make connections and see opportunities for integration across different subfields of personality.

McAdams himself proposed one such framework, comprising three basic domains (McAdams, 1995, 1996), that has subsequently exerted a great influence on the field. In introducing his three-domain framework of personality research, McAdams (1995) asked his fellow personality researchers, “What Do We Know When We Know a Person?” His goal in addressing this question to the field of personality psychology was to suggest that the various investigations of personality that were mushrooming at the time could be organized around a unified framework. Using the example of an encounter at a causal evening get-together, McAdams imagined attending a party where he meets a complicated and rather strongly opinionated woman. McAdams suggested that to begin to know this person, one starts with an analysis of her traits, then moves on to consideration of her more contextualized behavior, and finally attempts to assemble from the facts of her life a more cohesive story or narrative depiction. In order to illustrate this framework, which I apply throughout this volume, let us proceed through a similar survey of McAdams’s three domains with the purpose of getting to know a psychotherapy patient named Nell. Nell is an amalgam of several actual patients that I have seen over the past 20 years. Her concerns and conflicts express some of the more familiar and central themes raised by patients in my practice, but her profile is not traceable to any specific individual. I introduce Nell briefly here, but return to her in much more depth in Chapter 5, when I examine the role of relational psychotherapy in understanding the whole person.

### MEETING NELL

Nell, a married woman in her early 30s, enters my office for her morning appointment. A few months back, in our first meeting, she had described a frightening mood that would overtake her late at night or in the afternoon when her young daughter was napping and her husband was at work. A gray despair would seep through her body, leaving her momen-

tarily paralyzed, as if to move from her chair to the bedside of her sleeping child would be to climb from the bottom of a cratered beach with nothing but sheer cliffs on all sides. In some minutes, a half-hour at most, this tide of dread and sorrow would withdraw, but its memory would linger, and Nell would feel her mind and heart huddled inside her, waiting in the days to come for the next change in the air, the slight thickening of the atmosphere inside her psyche that signaled another wave ahead.

I have spent these early meetings of therapy getting to know Nell, getting used to her way of settling into my couch, how she lets her shoes fall off and curls up her knees to her chin, leaning against the armrest, as she fills me on her week. Her light scent of tea rose is now familiar, as is the way her voice fades to a near whisper when she speaks of difficult topics—her overbearing father and the strictness of her early upbringing or her ambivalence about beginning work again after time off with her child.

Though Nell has described herself as shy, she is very open with me; she often meets my eyes with directness and warmth. She is diligent about our meetings, never misses an appointment, and arrives with time to spare. In these weeks of listening to her, of asking questions to learn more about her past, her current difficulties, and her hopes for the future, I have slowly accumulated a sense of her life—how she understands and assembles its parts into a more or less cohesive story. This life narrative emphasizes her strong sense of responsibility, but a contrasting desire for self-expression. She studied art in college and has even brought some sketches and watercolors to show me. The idea of calling herself an “artist” feels too grand for her at the moment, but Nell wonders if she might find work in graphic art or book design. She has told me how she loves books, even at their most physical level—the arch of their spines or the feel of the page under her thumb. At such moments, I sense how much emotion there is beneath her reserve. Our work together in therapy thus far has returned increasingly to questions about what step Nell might take in her life to pursue her self-expression, and what such a step might mean for her marriage, her child, and her sense of identity.

Given this brief sketch, how might we begin to assemble a systematic portrait of Nell through the three-domain framework of a person-based personality psychology?

### **Domain 1—Traits**

Traits can be defined as “dimensions of individual differences” in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that show reasonably consistent patterns across situation, time, and role (McCrae & Costa, 2003, p. 25).

When we first meet or describe a person, traits are the most likely tools we possess to make distinctions among individuals. Nell describes herself as shy, and despite her soft-spoken nature, she conveys a sense of warmth and openness in her interactions with me. She seems to strive to please the important figures in her life—her father, her husband, and now perhaps me. The language she uses to talk about her feelings and her interest in art conveys a strong sense of imagination, a sensitivity to her own emotions, and a cultivated aesthetic sense. All of these descriptive phrases locate characteristics of Nell on dimensions of emotion and action that can be compared to other individuals on a continuum.

Trait psychology traditionally starts from these basic, common language efforts to describe people, then looks for the underlying assumptions or dimensions that would allow one to see the most fundamental linkages among the trait words used. Often, trait psychologists have assumed that these most basic trait dimensions have biological and genetic links (Eysenck, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 2003), and recent evidence from twin studies has indicated that 40 to 50% of the variance in trait scores may be linked to genetic determinants (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990; Loehlin, McCrae, Costa, & John, 1998; Riemann, Angleitner, & Strelau, 1997).

The most widely used current trait measure, the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992) measures five fundamental trait dimensions: Neuroticism (management of negative emotion), Extraversion (a blend of positive emotion and activity), Openness to Experience (imagination, introspection, fantasy, flexibility about ideas and values), Agreeableness (a tendency to be compliant, trusting, tender, modest), and Conscientiousness (competence, self-discipline, achievement, orderliness). If I were to administer the NEO PI-R to Nell, I would be likely to find that she shows high levels of Openness, along with high levels of Agreeableness, while her scores on Extraversion and Conscientiousness might be more moderate. Given her proneness to bouts of sadness and anxiety, she would score moderately high on Neuroticism as well.

Individuals can vary widely in each of these five dimensions (e.g., individuals who score very high in Agreeableness are naively trusting, while those who score very low in Agreeableness are manipulative and suspicious of others), and the combination of these variations can yield a complicated and rich profile of their overall pattern of thoughts, feelings, and actions (Piedmont, 1998). Measurement of the five factors and their accompanying facets allows us to predict individuals' behavior, particularly if those predictions are based on multiple observations and not on a single encounter (Epstein, 1984). For example, having observed Nell over several weeks in meetings with her, I might indeed be able to



apply the label of “agreeable” to her and show very respectable success in predicting her behavior in similar, one-on-one encounters that she has. I might also be able to predict that her friends would characterize her as a warm and gentle person in her interactions with them. I have much more to say about these “five factors” in Chapter 2, but for now, it is enough to say that these fundamental dimensions of how Nell responds to the external world, her own emotional life, and her interactions with others constitute a fundamental way of finding out who Nell is.

### Domain 2—Characteristic Adaptations

Yet McAdams (1995, 1996) prompts us to ask, “Is this all we can know about a person?” Are there other features of Nell’s personality that elude this trait analysis but would contribute to our understanding of her? McAdams (1995, p. 376) argued that *the* greatest strengths of traits are also their most powerful limitations: They are “comparative” and “nonconditional.” First, by assigning Nell the trait of Agreeableness, I am locating her on a continuum with other individuals who share greater and lesser amounts of this characteristic. But the more I come to know about Nell, the less concerned I am with how she compares to other people. I want to know the nature of her own personal brand of Agreeableness—how she develops trusting relationships or complies with requests, even at the expense of her own well-being or needs. Increasingly, I am interested in the nature of “Agreeableness” within her and not how my initial observations of her trust or compliance match Nell to others with these characteristics.

Second, it was initially helpful for me to see Nell as agreeable across a variety of situations. She describes herself as never challenging her father and being willing to put her career goals on hold after the birth of her child, while her husband returned to work. She comes dutifully each week, and on time, to her appointments and seldom challenges my comments. In these respects, her agreeableness is “nonconditional,” or consistent across a number of situations. Yet as I learn more about her in early sessions, I find out that she had periods in her high school years when she hung out with a “biker” crowd that seldom attended school and often crossed paths with the law. I also learn that she had narrowly escaped a sexual assault during these years, and that she went through a period of refusing contact with men, as well as engaging in excessive drinking and drug use. Registering Nell’s initial agreeableness tells me perhaps about her primary way of organizing her interpersonal interactions, but it may not tell me about other, more conditional and contextual reactions that she may have in response to authority or to men in general. Similarly, knowing that she displays a strong aesthetic sense

does not tell me anything about what this type of behavior means to her or what she might hope to achieve through expressing her artistic interests. Is she seeking freedom from interpersonal constraints, sublimating her sensuous impulses, connecting to a higher spiritual sense or aesthetic ethos, simply fighting off a sense of boredom, or responding to some combination of all these motives?

In other words, I want to know what Nell is trying to accomplish by her specific behaviors and emotional displays. I want to know what she needs, values, and seeks to avoid in specific *situations* and at certain *times* in her life, as well as in the particular *roles* she occupies in her relationships with others. How was her artistic impulse expressed when she was 10 years younger, and how might she hope to express it 10 years hence? I want to know whether she feels these desires when she is at home with her husband, out with her friends, or on a walk with her child. Each of these moments for Nell may reflect a different “self-with-other” representation or role relationship (Horowitz, 1991; Ogilvie, Fleming, & Pennell, 1998), and all of these combined moments may approach a more accurate picture of Nell’s whole person than a nonconditional trait analysis. Finally, what does she hide from others and from me in order to protect herself against anxieties and fears related to her desires and goals? How does she adopt coping strategies and defensive styles to disguise feelings or thoughts that might make her appear vulnerable to others and to herself?

Asking these questions, according to McAdams, enables us to learn about how Nell generates *characteristic adaptations* that fit her personality to the demands of time, situation, and role. As Henry Murray (1938) pointed out long ago, human beings experience needs that are energized into motives by interactions with *presses* or cues from the environment. Characteristic adaptations are the reasonably stable confluences of needs and contexts in our lives.

### Domain 3—Narrative Identity and Meaning Making

The third domain of McAdams’s framework concerns how Nell finds meaning in her needs and their role in her life. Contemporary society requires that individuals respond in a unique and personal way to the questions “Who are you?” and “What does your life mean?” For much of history, such questions could be answered by recourse to one’s membership in a particular family, religious community, social class, or vocational role (Baumeister, 1986). Since the advent of sweeping economic, cultural, spiritual, and technological changes that gained momentum in the 19th century and accelerated in the 20th century to reach the dizzying pace of our 21st-century society, to answer these two questions

individuals have increasingly needed to rely on their own efforts at self-definition and meaning-making rather than drawing on external structures of family, class, or faith. As contemporary society divides and fragments our lives into disparate spheres and functions that may change multiple times in our own lifetimes due to technological advances, the need for a sense of unity and purpose in our own lives is greater than ever.

McAdams (1995) proposed that the construction of *identity* (Erikson, 1963) is the task of bringing unity and purpose to the self across the life course. Identity is the psychosocial construct that meaningfully locates us in a sociocultural niche and unifies our lives temporally by finding continuity among our previous experiences, present concerns, and future aspirations. For contemporary individuals, identity construction is accomplished through the crafting of an ongoing *life story*. In other words, beginning in adolescence, individuals start to assemble the events of their lives into a narrative that connects past, present, and anticipated future. The ongoing work on a coherent life story provides direction and purpose in their lives, while simultaneously linking them to the dominant stories of their society and culture.

This third domain of understanding or describing Nell, then, concerns how Nell herself constructs a narrative of her life—how she tells the story of who she is, and what meanings she assigns to this story. In my meetings with Nell thus far, I have taken in many elements of this story. Part of my work as a therapist is to collect an extensive history, and my history taking usually extends over several sessions. From these initial efforts (and there are always more elements to the life story that are added or modified over time), I know Nell sees herself engaged in a struggle to assert her autonomy in the face of authoritarian men and traditional society. I know she also loves the gentleness that has characterized many of her relationships and that has been expressed with a depth that even Nell had not expected in her care for her daughter. I know she sees the episodes of rebellion in high school and college not only as periods of desperate acting out but also as reminders of a defiant streak in herself that she cannot suppress. I know she sees her recent bouts of depression as a warning to herself that she feels trapped again in a role that does not allow her more expressive and exuberant aspects to emerge. Nell has woven all of this information into the life-history account that she has given of herself.

These themes and insights are also linked to specific memories of incidents in Nell's life that underlie these ideas and reinforce their importance to her. As I explore in great depth in Chapter 5, Nell at one point provides a memory from her teenage years of going for a hike, standing on a mountainside, and then becoming lost temporarily. We will see in

fact how this self-defining memory captures the perfect blending of past experience and the themes and conflicts that shape Nell's ongoing self-concept. The connections she makes between the past events of her life and her current conflicts and desires are most definitely the stuff of McAdams's Domain 3—Identity and Meaning Making.

### MISSING ELEMENTS

McAdams (1995) finished his discussion by asking what is missing? First, the framework neither explains why a person shows the characteristics of each of the domains nor how the domains might account for each other. In McAdams's language, it is a descriptive, not an explanatory model—a framework and not a theory of personality.

Second, and highly relevant to psychotherapy, is the issue of how conscious or unconscious these elements of the person might be. McAdams (1995) suggested that all three domains exist along a “gradient of consciousness” (p. 389). In other words, individuals can have relative degrees of awareness of any of the constructs located at each of the three domains. Nell is indeed highly aware of her tendency to be agreeable and sometimes takes action about this trait. She is also aware of her striving to gain more opportunity for artistic expression. However, she may be much less aware of a conflicting striving to avoid failure or embarrassment if her efforts at autonomy were not to succeed. She may see others as preventing her expressing herself but be less aware of her own contribution to holding back her self-expression. Clearly, Nell shows much awareness about major themes that organize her life story at Domain 3, but does she know fully where her child fits into this life story? For example, is it possible that her bouts of paralysis when her child sleeps might reflect unconscious wishes not to come to her child's aid or to check on her well-being? Would Nell, who perceives herself as a gentle and loving person (quite accurately, in my opinion), allow into her life story the fantasy of abandoning or removing her child from the world? These questions suggest that to know Nell fully as a person, I need to draw on theory and research that helps me understand the role of conscious and *unconscious* processes in her personality—how awareness and a lack of awareness combine to influence her affect, behavior, goals, and meaning making.

With these additions then, do we have a working framework that will allow us to find the person, the individual who enters either the research laboratory or the therapy office? McAdams's framework, in its elegance and comprehensiveness, has brought us a long way. It is a powerful way to organize my understanding of the people with whom I work

in psychotherapy and, as we have already seen, it allows for a systematic description of many critical aspects of Nell. In subsequent chapters, I rely on it extensively to build my picture of the whole-person perspective. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, it forms the basis of my exposition of personality psychology's efforts to describe the person. Yet, to return to McAdams's persistent question, "What else is missing?"

### THE FOURTH DOMAIN OF RELATIONAL DYNAMICS

Thorne and Latzke (1996), in responding to McAdams's framework, cautioned that it does not fully take into account the relational context of its three domains.

Life stories, as well as traits and [characteristic adaptations], are co-constructed implicitly or explicitly with other people. We learn about our abilities and our identities by being pestered with questions about who we are from other people, by presenting ourselves to other people, by negotiating our identity with that of others. . . . Hunkering down with persons as they tell their life stories and being sensitive to the ways in which we reciprocally influence the telling of life stories is a highly productive way to understand the process of [constructing the self]. To whom and for whom does the I construct the Me? Are the I and the Me enough? Must not we also include the You? (p. 375)

These words seem to me particularly apt in the context of memories and life stories expressed in the course of psychotherapy. As psychoanalysts interested in narrative have claimed (Schafer, 1983; Spence, 1982), a "narrative truth" may emerge from the co-constructive work of patient and therapist that cannot be mapped perfectly into the veridical past experiences of the patient. The story that emerges, which provides a meaningful and healing structure to the reconstructive efforts of the patient, invariably bears the stamp of the values, feelings, and past experiences of the therapist. Even more though, there is something called "intersubjectivity"—a world or space created that belongs to neither the patient's nor the therapist's past (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992). This transactional reality, which is different from Nell's or the therapist's internal self-with-other representation, is what Ogden (1994) calls "the analytic third."

To know about Nell, I need to recognize how my knowledge includes what happens when my knowing her fuses with her knowing me. The coming together of our traits, characteristic adaptations, memories, and life stories creates a third self-with-other entity that exists neither

within Nell nor within me. What might this intersubjective awareness mean for my understanding of Nell?

Two points are relevant to this question. First, I am learning about how Nell forms relationships—how she is experienced by another person and how she experiences me. I am learning this not simply through her self-report, but through a real-time transaction that engages my entire personality—feelings, thoughts, bodily sensations. I am also learning about what Nell may not be able to put into words and to experience consciously within herself.

Melanie Klein (1975) originated the term “projective identification,” and Ogden (1991) has written extensively about this process, particularly with regard to more disturbed patients. In brief, projective identification is the process whereby the patient unconsciously creates a feeling in the therapist that is unacceptable or intolerable to hold within the patient’s own self. The therapist then experiences this feeling as his or her own feeling. Through reflection, and often with the aid of a colleague or supervisor, the therapist may be lucky enough to identify this feeling (usually rage, shame, or fear) as a projection from the patient. Whether or not the therapist is able to recognize what is happening, the patient’s psyche is carefully monitoring and “identifying” with what the therapist does with this feeling. Ideally, the therapist is able to model an acceptable response and tolerance of this split-off part of the patient. By demonstrating to the patient that the incorporation of such frightening impulses into the self is not toxic or destructive of the self, the therapist provides the patient with an increased capacity for tolerating these feelings and self-acceptance.

To know about Nell most fully, I need to register and make sense of potential projective identifications that take place in our mutual, ongoing self-with-other transactions. In Chapter 5, I explore these processes in much more depth as I pursue what relational psychoanalysis has to teach about the full extent of the person in relationship that might not be revealed by more traditional personality measurement, not even those forms of assessment that examine interpersonal patterns in therapy (e.g., Crits-Christoph, Demorest, Muenz, & Baranackie, 1994; Horowitz, 1991; Kiesler, 2002; Knapp, 1991; Luborsky & Crits-Christoph, 1998).

I should note here though that while relational psychotherapy is a vehicle for identifying this intersubjective world shared by individuals, this dimension of human nature is by no means limited to psychotherapy. In all human interactions, and particularly in our most intimate ones, we inhabit shared subjective worlds that allow for communication in symbolic and often unconscious manners. To know or understand individuals fully means taking into account these shifting relational dy-

namics. Ultimately, a science of the person that seeks to treat the person as an isolated entity, extracted from these relational influences, is likely to be an incomplete enterprise.

When modern psychology evolved as its own discipline in the 19th century, it ultimately accepted a positivist stance toward the study of human beings, adopting as its model the principles and methods of the natural sciences and physics. However, as I argue in this volume, personality psychology, as conceptualized by Allport (1937), has additional roots in a second tradition that also emerged at the end of the 19th century and that questioned the appropriateness of this disengaged position in the study of human beings. The German phenomenologist Wilhelm Dilthey (1894/1977) argued that there are indeed two discrete activities in our efforts to understand the world. He called the familiar positivist approach *erklären* science, or the effort to explain the world in more objective and naturalistic terms. In contemporary personality psychology, this approach translates into the use of questionnaires, experimental studies, and statistical techniques, such as scaling, factor analysis, and analysis of variance.

In contrast, there is *verstehen* psychology, or the effort to understand human beings in their own context and to make sense of the subjective meanings they construct of their life experience. *Verstehen* psychology requires the use of hermeneutic and interpretive methods that focus on a sensitivity to and exploration of symbols, metaphors, and cultural influences in the lives of the people we study and treat. With the advances of feminist and narrative approaches across many disciplines of psychology, there has indeed been a resurgence of interest in and respect for this *verstehen* approach. A personality psychology, which seeks to describe the whole person through an account of his or her traits, characteristic adaptations, and life stories, also needs to depict individuals in the midst of the phenomenological worlds they inhabit. To accomplish this goal, I shall at times, and with caution, draw on interpretive methods that let go of the disengaged stance of *erklären* science. To do so is not to veer away from the science of personality, but to regain the original spirit and intent with which Allport fashioned personality psychology.

In the chapters ahead, I systematically build this framework that leads to the treatment of the whole person. To do so, I need to leave Nell temporarily in order to construct a step-by-step empirical account of another individual (in this case an actual research volunteer with the pseudonym “Jennifer”), based in the methods of personality psychology. I then return to Nell to illustrate the application of more interpretive methods, based in relational psychotherapy. Finally, in the last chapter

of this volume, I bring the techniques of the laboratory and the clinic together by presenting a case study of couples treatment that draws on all four domains of a person-based personality psychology. In the remainder of this chapter, let us take a brief look at each of the subsequent chapters.

### THE CHAPTERS AHEAD

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 present a sample of measures from each domain of McAdams's framework. My assumption in these chapters is that all of the measures employed may be relatively new to the reader. Each chapter presents the results from the laboratory study of Jennifer, the aforementioned volunteer research participant. This analysis from the three-domain perspective grew out of a research seminar on personality that I taught at Connecticut College. I asked the nine students in the seminar to assess a single person over the course of a 16-week semester, meeting with the person five or six times, with each meeting ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Each participant to be studied in this project was a student from an Introductory Psychology course who earned experimental credit toward his or her course requirements. They received the NEO PI-R (Domain 1), a measure of personal strivings (long-term goals), a measure of adjustment and defensiveness (Domain 2), a life-history interview, and a self-defining memory task (Domain 3). The students in my seminar and I then worked together as a group and in independent meetings to develop an integrative whole-person analysis of each individual. In some ways, my goal was to replicate the collaborative study of a person exemplified by Henry Murray's (1938) diagnostic council.

The outcome was a final report that not only captured the person at each of McAdams's three domains but also sought to make connections across the domains (for a parallel example, see McAdams's analysis of Madeleine G. in Wiggins, 2003). I selected "Jennifer's" profile to provide an accessible introduction to how one can conduct an analysis at each domain and then bring the domains together to make an integrative description out of these results. Even for clinicians long removed from courses in personality psychology, my discussion of the measures and analyses involved is at a level that should be user-friendly and straightforward in its application of the personality instruments.

In Chapter 5, I step away from the laboratory and ask what we might learn about a person from applying a subjective, engaged, interpretive approach in contrast to the detached and objective stance taken thus far. My interpretive approach returns to Nell and an examination of



knowledge gained through the therapeutic relationship. The chapter traces the historical emergence of the major themes of relational psychoanalysis and explores their relevance to the person-based personality psychology that I have been developing in the previous three chapters. In particular, I place a special focus on a memory Nell recounts and show how it reflects both her own life struggles and the relationships she forms with others (including her therapeutic relationship).

In summary then, the combination of Chapters 2–4 and Chapter 5 should provide complementary takes on what constitutes a person-based perspective. Chapters 2–4 not only work from a more laboratory-based research approach but also provide clear examples of personality instruments that one might use in psychotherapy practice (once again, see Appendix A for information about websites and how to obtain each instrument). Chapter 5 builds from the clinical setting rather than the laboratory, but still offers a strong sampling of theory and research on personality and interpersonal processes critical to an understanding of the individual.

These chapters combined should move us closer to an answer about how we might understand the person, but they leave two important questions for the final two chapters:

1. Given the growing influence of neuroscience and cognitive science on psychotherapy, is there still a scientific and intellectual justification for this person-based perspective in psychotherapy?
2. Assuming that there is a scientific justification for this person-based perspective, how do we apply this perspective to therapy, and what are its benefits for the people with whom we work?

Chapter 6 addresses the first of these two questions by arguing that all therapies must be accountable for how they conceptualize their understanding of a person. The methods and outcomes that characterize different therapeutic approaches ultimately reflect ethical stances about what is valued and promoted within our society. Identifying dimensions of free will and independence–interdependence as critical factors in one’s vision of a person, I highlight the tendency of cognitive-behavioral and biological treatments to characterize individuals in an overly individualistic and mechanistic fashion. Such characterizations neglect the relational and sociopolitical contexts of individual lives, while simultaneously underplaying individuals’ efforts toward integration and meaning making. In contrast, a person-based psychotherapy blends a humanistic concern for purpose and meaning with an awareness of the social, cultural, and relational circumstances that are unique to each individual. In place of

heavily deterministic views of human nature that tend to see either biology or environmental conditioning as destiny, a person-based perspective is highly sensitive to the possibility of self-initiated change over the course of an individual's life. In Chapter 6, I state each of these premises more formally, offering a clear framework and set of principles to guide personality psychology and psychotherapy.

In Chapter 7, I turn to an actual demonstration of a person-based therapy by presenting the case study of a couple in marital distress. The case study illustrates how couples therapy can draw on the concepts and instruments of personality psychology to help each member of the couple develop greater self-understanding and understanding of his or her partner. Through application of measures of traits, characteristic adaptations, and life narratives presented in the Chapters 2–4, as well as a commitment to the relational framework laid out in Chapter 5, I am able to demonstrate both the depth of insight and the practical utility offered by a person-based psychotherapy. For clinicians interested in incorporating some of the ideas promulgated in this volume in their own practice, Chapter 7 describes exercises and clinical interventions within the couples work that help convey the essence of the person-based perspective.

After presenting the person-based case study, I conclude Chapter 7 by describing related research and clinical work that promote a similar concern with narrative and meaning making in order to understand and aid the person. Both personality and clinical literatures, not to mention developments in cognitive neuroscience as well (Baars, 2002; LeDoux, 1996), are converging on the position that the integration of different systems within the personality is a signal of optimal adjustment for the individual. Individuals who are able to combine narratives of emotional experiences with reflection and meaning making show improved physical and psychological health, as well as higher levels of maturity, wisdom, and ego development. I review evidence for this claim from diverse researchers, including James Pennbaker, Laura King, Leslie Greenberg and Lynne Angus, and Lester Luborsky, as well as the clinical case studies of Michael White and his narrative therapy approach. I offer these examples as both evidence of and encouragement for positive alternatives to economic, bureaucratic, and ostensibly “scientific” forces that depersonalize psychotherapy.

Ultimately, and most critically, psychotherapy linked to personality psychology attends to the full complexity of the individual person and that individual's efforts to find meaning and purpose in life. When Nell moves from discussion of her depression to fundamental questions about the meaning of an event in her life that took place 17 years before, she is asking for more than a short-term palliative response to her current sadness. She wants to understand why a brief episode nearly two

decades earlier that ostensibly altered nothing in that day's routine or her life at that time persists in her memory and feels like one of the most self-defining moments of her life. Whatever else I do in my work as a personality psychologist and psychotherapist, it is my effort to help her answer this fascinating question that expresses the particular kind of contribution that is at the heart of treating the whole person. It is not the only form of therapy, and it is by no means the appropriate approach in all cases or with all people, but it is what a psychotherapy informed by personality psychology has to offer Nell—insight into the themes and conflicts that encompass the fullest possible picture of her humanity.