

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *The Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology*

REFERENCE: Korr P, Matthews G, editors. **The Cambridge handbook of personality psychology.** New York, NY: Cambridge Press, 2009, 904 pp.

The recently released *Cambridge Handbook of Personality Psychology* is a book that will be welcomed by personality researchers, psychologists, and psychiatrists as an excellent, up-to-date, authoritative review of the field of personality research. Editors Philip Corr and Gerald Matthews have assembled an impressive array of authors, each summarizing a key dimension of this important area of study. The practitioner of personality assessment may also find the book useful as a review of the science underlying current assessment methods, but the typical forensic scientist or clinician will probably find little of practical value in the day-to-day practice of personality assessment.

The study of human personality is a rich and complex field, raising many questions of a fundamental nature that the researcher must attempt to address at the outset and throughout a program of study. For instance, are a given human's characteristics to some degree recognized and identifiable to him or herself (yielding validity to self-report methods of assessment), or are a person's motivations largely unconscious and hidden, driven by forces outside of one's awareness or control? Are behaviors and emotions largely mediated by internal thought processes, or are emotion and motivation primary? To what degree does culture define an individual's personality? Is personality best studied by analysis of an individual person, groups of people, or of people interacting in given situational contexts? Do individuals rate themselves on personality traits by estimating their characteristics vis-a-vis their perspectives of others' personality characteristics, or by their own inner judgments of the degree to which they manifest given traits? These and more foundational issues are addressed throughout the book, but particularly in the first set of chapters.

The perspectives of the authors reflect the fact that modern personality assessment theory is firmly anchored in the five-factor model (FFM). That is, given a representative set of human characteristics, one's ratings of his or her characteristics tend to reliably group along the dimensions of the "Big Five": extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses reliably yield solutions consistent with this idea. The reader will note the contribution of Robert McCrae to this theoretical orientation as well as to the chapter authored by him in this volume. Most of the topics addressed by each chapter are anchored by this perspective, assimilating the research on each topic, whether biological substrates of behavior, social support, personal political perspectives, psychopathology, or human criminality, by the FFM.

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The immense contributions of neuroscience to personality psychology are reviewed in detail, including an adequate review of recent findings from genetics and neuroimaging studies that support the roles of inherited predispositions, the presence of gene x environment (G x E) interactions, and neurological substrates in the manifestation of complex human behaviors, such as aggression and mood disorders.

The application of personality research to forensic and clinical questions is also addressed. For example, Robert Hare authors a chapter on the construct of psychopathy and its utility in predicting aggressive behavior, while David Canter and Donna Youngs provide an excellent summary of current research on the relationship between personality and crime. There are chapters on the relevance of personality research for ADHD, findings about workplace performance and personality, and the application of personality psychology to the study of given disorders, such as ADHD. The forensic expert will find helpful information here to provide background for preparing to defend expert opinions regarding fitness-for-duty evaluations, independent educational assessments, and general forensic assessments.

Somewhat disappointing to the clinician is the absence of information describing the practical application of the FFM to the assessment of psychopathology, or any review of clinical personality inventories. While chapters are devoted to the "integration" of the *DSM* system, both Axis I and Axis II, to modern personality research, in essence these review the correlations between personality traits and given mental disorders or their symptoms. There is no comprehensive system presented for a true clinical integration of these disparately grounded systems of thought (nor indeed does any yet exist). Neither is there any review of clinical personality inventories, such as the MMPI – 2, Personality Assessment Inventory, Millon Clinical Multiaxial Clinical Inventory – 3, or even any discussion of the psychometric properties of these instruments and their relationship to modern personality assessment theory. For instance, the psychologist is unlikely to find here which is the best measure of antisocial personality traits, the MMPI – 2 4 Scale or the RC4 Scale. The issue of response styles in personality testing is given minimal attention. There is very little discussion about the relevance of personality research for the field of substance dependence. Particularly disappointing is the lack of inclusion of any comprehensive discussion of the relatively recently developed concept of emotional intelligence and its impact upon modern personality research and theory.

However, given the size and purpose of this volume, the editors and authors have performed an admirable job in reviewing and summarizing the current state of the field. As noted previously, this book is a comprehensive, concise overview of key research in the field of personality psychology. It is an excellent reference for anyone who needs the latest findings and currents of thought in this field at their fingertips, including the forensic mental health expert.