Handbook of Personality Disorders
Theory and Practice

Edited by
Jeffrey J. Magnavita

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Handbook of
Personality Disorders
This volume is dedicated to my wife, Anne Gardner Magnavita, and children, Elizabeth, Emily, and Caroline.
Foreword

It is critical that mental health professionals have a detailed, working knowledge of the personality of the individual patient, whether the patient is presenting with symptoms, problems in relating to others, or difficulties coping with stressors and life events. The clinical community has a growing awareness of personality, its deviations, and the impact on psychotherapy (see chapter 3).

Over the years, there have been developments in the understanding and specification of the relationship between therapist and patient that fosters or hinders treatment and its outcome. The impact of patient characteristics on psychotherapy process and outcome is considerable. Long-standing patient characteristics related to personality such as attachment style, repetitive interpersonal behavior, reactance, and coping styles all significantly influence the therapeutic endeavor. Every clinician must develop a therapeutic alliance with the patient, and the nature of this alliance depends on the personality of the patient in interaction with the personality of the therapist. Relating to patients with personality difficulties is not a specialty of a few, but a clinical skill needed by all.

In academic psychology, there is a rich history of the study of personality. Enduring issues in that academic tradition that are relevant to the pursuit of such issues in clinical psychology and psychiatry are the conceptualization and definition of personality, the relative influence on personality of nature and nurture, persistence and change in personality features, and emphasis on conscious versus unconscious processes. The mutual contact and fertilization between this academic tradition and clinical work has been variable and sporadic. There is an obvious parallel between the major theories of personality and the dominant theories of personality disorder. These theories need further development as the research unfolds.

With the introduction of DSM-III in 1980, it has become commonplace in clinical work and psychotherapy research to distinguish between patients with and without personality disorders. This “official” recognition of the difference between symptom conditions and abnormality in the personality itself has given legitimacy to the investigation of personality disorders in their own right, and has alerted clinicians to the need to assess both symptom conditions and personality dysfunction. Armed with this helpful but somewhat arbitrary and oversimplified distinction, clinicians have been aware that they are treating symptomatic patients with and without co-existing personality disorders, and researchers have gathered empirical outcome data on these treatments. It has become evident in the empirical literature that the treatment of symptoms in the context of personality disorders is more complicated, slower, and less effective than the treatment of symptomatic patients without personality disorders (see chapter 23).
Our current diagnostic system—DSM-IV—is better at describing the indicators of the presence of a personality disorder than it is in describing the different constellations of personality disorder or dysfunction. In the diagnostic system, the overall description of a personality disorder is the presence of serious and chronic interference in cognition and emotion regulation that affects functioning in the domains of work and interpersonal relationships. Thus, chronic dysfunction in relationships and work is the hallmark and final common pathway of the personality disorders. These deficits must be clear before the clinician considers the specific type or constellation of personality disorder category.

Clinicians are attuned to deficits and dysfunction in work and relationships, but often find the specific types of personality disorder as described currently in DSM-IV as a mixture of feelings, attitudes, behaviors and symptoms, insufficient for describing the patients’ personalities and for treatment planning. This dissatisfaction and alternative ways of describing personality difficulties for intervention are grappled with in this volume, especially in chapters 2 and 5 in section 1.

The identification of individuals with personality difficulties begins with the assessment of work functioning and the nuances of interpersonal relations. However, that is a somewhat gross indication, and the task for the therapist is to arrive at a conceptualization of the current functional characteristics of the patient that, if changed, would lead to improvement in the individual’s life. The conceptualization of mechanisms of personality dysfunction orient the clinician directly to the target of treatment. This is the leading edge of clinical work. How does the therapist assess and conceptualize the active and repetitive functions of the individual that are directly related to dysfunctional personality and personality organization? Does the clinician assess personality traits (chapter 4), the social cultural context (chapters 6 and 7), and/or how the personality itself is organized (chapter 5)? Indeed, without theory we are in a sea of observations and facts that do not adequately guide the clinician (chapter 3), either in assessment or in the choice of focus of treatment. The much touted atheoretical orientation of DSM-IV has lead to some of the serious difficulties with DSM-IV Axis II.

This volume rightfully assumes that targeted and thorough assessment logically leads to planned interventions (section 2). The treatment of personality disorders specifically is difficult and fraught with problems. Progress on the treatment of symptom conditions depends upon the personality and personality traits of the patient; cooperativeness with the therapist, and focus and persistence on the work of the therapy are major considerations. This therapeutic work becomes even more complex and difficult when the patient has the characteristics of those designated as having a personality disorder. What are the mechanisms of change, and, related to that, what are the foci of the therapists’ interventions when treating patients with personality difficulties/disorders?

Should the primary focus be on working models of relationships (chapter 8), automatic thoughts and cognitive distortions (chapter 9), developing skills (chapter 11), and/or problematic relationship patterns (chapter 12)? Of course, these foci of therapeutic intervention are not mutually exclusive, and some of them seem to be touching on the same reality but with different metaphors and terminology. There is a growing consensus toward a focus on the patients’ characteristic ways of attending to and processing information on the interaction between self and others. Thus, this volume is informative on the foci of interventions in general (section 2) and with special populations and settings (section 3).
Related to the focus of therapist intervention, is the question of treatment goals. Is the goal of treatment the amelioration of symptoms (e.g., reduction of situational depression in an individual with narcissistic personality disorder) or change in behaviors (e.g., reduction of parasuicidal behavior in borderlines) of those with personality disorders, or is it more directly to change the organization of the personality itself? This is an unresolved issue, and each author in this volume addresses the goal of treatment. The way in which each theoretician and clinician answers this question relates to a whole complex of issues, involving managed care and the clinician’s conception of the existence and nature of personality, and whether or not personality can be changed. In a very practical way, the answer to this question relates to the duration of treatment.

There is much written today about evidence based treatment planning, and matching patient diagnosis with treatment packages that have been empirically investigated as compared to treatment as usual. Evidence based approaches to treatment planning are presented as definitive, but leave many details unaccounted for: the uniqueness of the patients who are more than their diagnosis, the aspects of the patients unrelated to diagnosis that affect the therapeutic relationship, the unique relationship qualities of the therapist, the social milieu of the patient, to name a few. The data on the treatment of personality disorders is too meager to approach evidence based treatment planning, which makes the value of this volume of even greater value to the practicing clinician.

The practitioner needs an expert guide through the winding paths and thickets of a new and developing field such as personality disorders. Jeffrey Magnavita is both a theoretician and clinician with many years of experience with this patient population. He has skillfully constructed and edited this volume, bringing together a number of thoughtful experts who highlight the unique aspects of treatment planning with patients with personality disorders. Each of the authors expands our horizon in thinking about personality and personality dysfunction, combining clinical experience with empirical data. These authors are pioneers, as the development of assessment and treatment of personality disorders is in its infancy compared to comparable efforts in the treatment of symptom conditions.

JOHN F. CLARKIN, PhD
THE INSPIRATION FOR this volume emerged from my work over the past 20 years conducting psychodiagnostic assessments and practicing psychotherapy with children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly, first in an inpatient and then outpatient settings. What struck me was that across the spectrum of individuals and families that I encountered presenting with complex clinical syndromes was how many struggled with self-defeating and self-destructive personality patterns that were so difficult to impact with standard methods and techniques. With most clinicians, as it is with me, the compelling force that drives us is to reduce human suffering, and we often gain an understanding of our own suffering and developmental challenges. During a crisis or a major life transition, many have experienced personality “dysfunction,” but for most, this is short lived. Yet, for many others, as addressed in this volume, these patterns or systems are often entrenched, enduring, and chronically dysfunctioning. These dysfunctioning systems cause much disruption to the individual, family, and society. Attempting to understand this complex phenomenon that clinicians are faced with daily is challenging, fascinating, and often daunting. It is my hope that this volume clarifies some of these challenges and adds to our hope. It seems clear that the phenomenon we are dealing with, whether symptoms of clinical syndromes or relational disturbance, rests on the integrity of the personality system. If the personality system is not functioning especially well, trouble looms, symptom complexes emerge, and relationships falter. Clinical syndromes and symptom complexes are expressed sometimes somatically or psychologically but always in the relational matrix. In my diverse clinical work with individuals, couples, families, and groups, it has been clear to me that there is one central system that informs the way in which we conceptualize psychopathology; understand intrapsychic, interpersonal, and family functioning; and formulate our psychotherapeutic strategies. This central organizing system is personality. Although personality has been primarily conceptualized as housed in the individual or self-system, theoretical advances over the past century have underscored the necessity of expanding our conceptual field to other domains such as the interpersonal (dyadic), triadic (threesomes), and larger family and social systems that form the entire ecological system or biosphere.

When the personality system is vulnerable or not operating effectively at any of the biopsychosocial domains, the system becomes dysfunctional. When the level of adaptive functioning meets appropriate diagnostic criteria, a personality disorder is diagnosed. The diagnostic category and label personality disorder is not necessarily the best way to classify what we experience in relationships and observe clinically, as it is necessarily reductionistic. It is, however, what we have at this phase in the development of the field and some consider the state of the art. I
prefer the term personality dysfunction, but many others represented in this volume may not agree. For some individuals, personality dysfunction is something that affects their lives but that they suffer in silence and may go undetected, except by those in immediate proximity such as spouses, partners, children, and coworkers. These individuals have been termed neurotic characters in the past. Yet others show more dramatic signs and may be stuck in chronic maladaptive patterns that cause severe suffering as well as having major impact on the family and society. These patterns are often referred to as the severe personality disorders. Couples and families may have faltering personality systems that can result in what I have termed dysfunctional personologic systems that can transmit this dysfunction from one generation to another, often downward spiraling, unless intervention takes place.

Personality has been an interest to humankind since we became conscious and able to “observe” ourselves. Over the past century of modern behavioral science, personality and its disorders has been a subject of interest to many disciplines including anthropologists, primatologists, academic psychologists, psychopathologists, clinical psychiatrists, and psychologists, and, more recently, neuroscientists. We are entering a new phase of the field where interdisciplinary collaboration and advances in fields such as neuroscience may help us map human consciousness and develop efficient, effective, and accelerated treatments for even the most refractory of these dysfunctional systems.

Theories, methods, and techniques have been developed to address these faltering or dysfunctioning personality systems. Many of these models presented in this volume offer a rich array of conceptual systems, approaches, and therapeutic stances. In spite of all these remarkable developments, we should not forget about the importance of the therapeutic relationship, which tends to be given a back seat as we head toward an era of empirically validated treatments (EVTs) and the concomitant pressure to produce treatment manuals. Although they can be useful, we should not forget that our endeavor is complex and human to human, requiring clinical intuition and a genuine desire to alleviate human suffering.

PURPOSE OF THIS VOLUME

This volume provides the latest information to clinicians who are treating personality dysfunction or disorders of personality, students who are interested in the topic, and others such as theorists and researchers. A goal was for each contributor to provide as much in the way of clinical utility as possible. Therefore, the book focuses primarily on theory, which is essential, and methods and techniques of practice. The approaches, methods, and techniques presented in this volume are for professional purposes and should be used only by qualified mental health clinicians and, in some cases, require additional training and supervision. For those primarily interested in research, other excellent volumes are available on the topic and may be used in conjunction with this one. In rapidly advancing fields such as personality, personality disorders, psychotherapy, and psychopathology, it is impossible to present a comprehensive overview of these interrelated areas in a single volume. However, the reader will appreciate the selective and in-depth treatment of the topic with special emphasis on theory and practice. Another goal of this volume is to present the spectrum of approaches that remain contemporaneous in that they continue to evolve and have clinical utility as well as many newer ones that hold promise. There are
many similarities in the approaches presented in this volume, yet there are some approaches that remain highly divergent and offer the reader contrasting viewpoints with which to consider the clinical phenomenon. Another goal is to provide a sample of some of the cutting edge applications of treatment approaches using various methods, techniques, and modalities creatively and apply these to other populations not previously considered as a focus of intervention.

OUTLINE OF VOLUME

This volume is divided into five sections. The first section, Etiology, Theory, Psychopathology, and Assessment, begins with some of the fundamental conceptual theoretical bulwark for the topic and exposes the reader to some of the challenges and controversies around conceptualizing, diagnosing-labeling, and assessing personality.

The next section, Contemporary Psychotherapeutic Treatment Models, presents a number of current approaches to treating personality dysfunction. It is interesting that the majority of these models are primarily used individually. The modality of individual psychotherapy has been the mainstay for treatment delivery, but newer models delivered in couples, family, and group treatment modalities are beginning to emerge.

The third section, Broadening the Scope of Treatment: Special Populations and Settings, offers readers a sample of some of the groundbreaking work being done by contemporary workers who are applying technological and theoretical innovations to those populations with co-occurring personality dysfunction who are underserved and difficult to treat, such as substance abusers, medical patients, and the severely disturbed, who often require day treatment and inpatient hospitalization. This cutting edge work represents a growing interest in modifying and discovering methods that can assist clinicians as well as ways of conceptualizing the role of memory and trauma in the development and maintenance of these dysfunctioning personality systems.

The fourth section, Expanding the Range of Treatment: Child, Adolescent, and Elderly Models, presents the extension of treatment paradigms to children and adolescents as well as the elderly. In this section, leading figures explore the edges of diagnostic knowledge and add substantially to our understanding of these often difficult-to-reach developmental phases that have been virtually overlooked in the past. Often because of the controversy surrounding labeling, these phases have not received the consideration of theorists, practitioners, and researchers, although this is beginning to slowly change as these topics are opened for discussion.

The final section, Research Findings and Future Challenges, presents a cogent summary of the extant, albeit limited, research findings on personality disorders and then explores an emerging theoretical movement toward unified treatment. The model for this treatment, which I consider the next wave of development in personality and psychotherapy—beyond integration—should stir some polemics.

FINAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to collaborate on this volume with some of the leading figures in the fields of personality disorders, psychotherapy, research, and pharmacotherapy. The contributors to this volume represent some of
the most forward, innovative thinkers and courageous pioneers of approaches developed from their interest in alleviating human suffering and their commitment and passion for clinical work. All contributors toiled on their chapters to bring the material to the readers in a clinically relevant way. I thank them for their devotion to this task.

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. John Clarkin, one of the leading figures in the field, whose work I have absorbed even though it has become a part of my procedural memory and thus is not adequately cited. Dr. Clarkin graciously agreed to read this volume and write the Foreword. This is a task that no one looks forward to after a tiring day of clinical practice, research, writing, and supervision. For his generosity, I am indebted and very grateful.

I also want to express my appreciation to all those at John Wiley & Sons who have supported this endeavor and for their belief in the value of a volume of this nature. Special thanks are due to Peggy Alexander and Isabel Pratt for shepherding this volume through the stages of development necessary to bring the final product to the reader.

Last, but most important to me, is my tremendous appreciation to my wife, Anne Gardner Magnavita, who edited the final drafts of my chapters and who always seems to understand and support the demands of my work and professional life and seemingly endless writing projects.

JEFFREY J. MAGNAVITA
Contents

About the Editor xvii
Contributors xix

SECTION ONE  ETIOLOGY, THEORY, PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, AND ASSESSMENT

1. Classification, Prevalence, and Etiology of Personality Disorders: Related Issues and Controversy
   Jeffrey J. Magnavita 3

2. Psychopathologic Assessment Can Usefully Inform Therapy: A View from the Study of Personality
   Theodore Millon and Seth D. Grossman 24

3. The Relevance of Theory in Treating Personality Dysfunction
   Jeffrey J. Magnavita 56

4. Assessing the Dimensions of Personality Disorder
   Philip Erdberg 78

5. Borderline Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Organization: Psychopathology and Psychotherapy
   Otto F. Kernberg 92

6. Personality Disorder or Relational Disconnection?
   Judith V. Jordan 120

7. Sociocultural Factors in the Treatment of Personality Disorders
   Joel Paris 135

SECTION TWO  CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC TREATMENT MODELS

8. Interpersonal Reconstructive Therapy (IRT) for Individuals with Personality Disorder
   Lorna Smith Benjamin 151

9. Cognitive Therapy of Personality Disorders
   James Pretzer 169

10. The Treatment of Personality Adaptations Using Redecision Therapy
    Vann S. Joines 194

11. Dialectical Behavior Therapy of Severe Personality Disorders
    Clive J. Robins and Cedar R. Koons 221
CONTENTS

12. Time-Limited Dynamic Psychotherapy
   Hanna Levenson 254

13. Close Process Attention in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy
   Frank Knoblauch 280

14. Application of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) to Personality Disorders
   Philip Manfield and Francine Shapiro 304

SECTION THREE  BROADENING THE SCOPE OF TREATMENT: SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND SETTINGS

15. Pharmacotherapy of Personality Disorders
   Robert Grossman 331

16. Day Treatment of Personality Disorders
   John S. Ogrodniczuk and William E. Piper 356

17. Residential Treatment of Personality Disorders: The Containing Function
   Barri Belnap, Cuneyt Iscan, and Eric M. Plakun 379

18. Treatment of Personality Disorders with Co-occurring Substance Dependence: Dual Focus Schema Therapy
   Samuel A. Ball 398

19. Personality-Guided Therapy for Treating Medical Patients
   Ellen A. Dornelas 426

20. The Role of Trauma, Memory, Neurobiology, and the Self in the Formation of Personality Disorders
   Mark R. Elin 443

SECTION FOUR  EXPANDING THE RANGE OF TREATMENT: CHILD, ADOLESCENT, AND ELDERLY MODELS

21. Treatment of Dramatic Personality Disorders in Children and Adolescents
   Efrain Bleiberg 467

22. Treatment of Personality Disorders in Older Adults: A Community Mental Health Model
   Rosemary Snapp Kean, Kathleen M. Hoey, and Stephen L. Pinals 498

SECTION FIVE  RESEARCH FINDINGS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

23. Empirical Research on the Treatment of Personality Disorders
   Paul Crits-Christoph and Jacques P. Barber 513

24. Toward a Unified Model of Treatment for Personality Dysfunction
   Jeffrey J. Magnavita 528

Author Index 555

Subject Index 567
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SECTION ONE

ETIOLOGY, THEORY, PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, AND ASSESSMENT
CHAPTER 1

Classification, Prevalence, and Etiology of Personality Disorders: Related Issues and Controversy

Jeffrey J. Magnavita

We stand poised at the edge of a remarkable new era in contemporary clinical psychology. Multiple related scientific disciplines intersect at a point of important mutual interest—the effective treatment of personality systems—especially for those systems that are poorly functioning and/or inefficiently adapting to the requirements of contemporary society. Such systems comprise what clinical scientists call personality disorders. Personality and its disordered or dysfunctional states have been of interest to humankind since the early stages of civilization probably coinciding with the birth of consciousness or the point at which we could reflect upon our "self." As soon as we became conscious of the existence of the "self" and aware of the "other," we wanted to know what made us tick and what was happening with those around us; adaptation and survival would have depended, in part, on this kind of insight. Evolutionary processes have certainly shaped our wide array of personality adaptations, styles, and disorders, and will continue to do so.

Evidence of an interest in personality and psychopathology can be seen in earliest documented history. The early Egyptians were fascinated by a possible link between the uterus and emotional disorders, which the Greeks later called hysteria (Alexander & Selesnick, 1966; Stone, 1997). This clinical syndrome became a major impetus in the development of Freud’s system of psychoanalysis, which is considered by many to be one of the main intellectual milestones of the twentieth century (Magnavita, 2002a; Wepman & Heine, 1963). Earlier efforts in the late nineteenth century were made to understand the etiology of and treatment for hysteria, which posed a scientific and clinical challenge to the major pioneers in medicine, psychology, and psychiatry. Jean Charcot (1889) devoted much of his scientific career to documenting this disorder. Using the newly discovered art of photography, he captured haunting images of this often grotesque disturbance.
Charcot also experimented with various forms of treatment, most notable of which was hypnosis. His interest in psychopathology, along with that of others such as Emil Kraepelin (1904), the great classifier of mental disorders, initiated modern nosology, much of which is still in use in current day diagnostic systems.

The study of personality is fueled by our relentless interest in knowing ourselves and has resulted in various theoretical systems. The most familiar of these is the four humors of the Greeks (Magnavita, 2002b), elements of which are still seen in some contemporary biological and psychological theories (Davis & Millon, 1999). Our interest in self-understanding and the theories associated with it converged with a fascination in the pathological states of adaptation that have plagued humankind from the time of documented history. Humans have always shown a desire to alleviate the suffering of those who experience mental disorders. The early Egyptians developed a system of treatment based on soul-searching on the part of ill patients (Alexander & Selesnick, 1966). The use of the word *psychotherapy* was first seen in the writings of Hippolyte Bernheim (1891) in his work entitled, *Hypnotisme, Suggestion, Psychotherapie* (Jackson, 1999). There has been great progress in developing personality theory, in understanding and classifying psychopathology, and in pioneering new methods of treatment for those suffering with disorders of personality, but developing cost-efficient and effective forms of treatment remains a challenge. This chapter presents some of the basic background information on classification, etiology, and prevalence of personality disorders and reviews some constructs and useful theoretical developments to guide you through the remainder of this volume. We begin with the classification of personality. How we categorize and label the clinical phenomenon has major implications for researchers and clinicians; there are multiple perspectives and approaches to consider.

**CLASSIFICATION OF PERSONALITY**

The classification of personality is a problematic area that has not been sufficiently resolved at this stage in development of the science of personality. Classification is a topic that can result in heated debates about what is, and what is not, a personality disorder and what the optimal treatment should be and how it should be delivered. Once a diagnosis is established, decisions must be made concerning “differential therapeutics” (Frances, Clarkin, & Perry, 1984): (1) *treatment format*—long-term, intermittent, intensive short-term, supportive; (2) *type/model*—cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, psychodynamic, integrative, pharmacological; (3) *modalities*—group, individual, family, couples, mixed, sequential and; (4) *setting*—hospital, outpatient, partial, residential. The permutations seem overwhelming!

During one recent seminar, a participant raised his hand and announced that the cases being presented were not “truly personality disordered.” A heated disagreement ensued regarding the diagnosis that the patient had been given. Even well-trained and experienced clinicians often disagree about what constitutes a “genuine” personality disorder. We all long for clear, meaningful diagnostic guidelines, potent treatment alternatives, and positive and preferably rapid outcomes. What we have to contend with in clinical reality is not nearly so clear, is often confusing, and lacks simple algorithms to help us neatly plot our course. Thus, what we do remains more a clinical art than a science. The models that clinicians adopt to depict patient systems and communicate via metaphorical language are often
novel and flexible. Our models offer a way to organize the data, understand the phenomenology, and indicate the possibility of a “cure.” Our primary concern is a way out for the patient who is suffering and the suffering of those others in his or her lives. Many of the dominant contemporary models are presented in this volume for you to study and possibly to incorporate into your clinical practice.

*Personality disorder* is first and foremost a *construct* that social and clinical scientists use in an attempt to deal with the complex phenomenon that results when the personality system is not functioning optimally. Some believe the construct should be jettisoned altogether and does more harm than good (Jordan, this volume, chapter 6). Is there any such thing as a personality disorder in reality? Those practitioners who have been in clinical practice can attest that there are certain individuals who demonstrate a capacity to engage in behavior that is clearly self-destructive, self-defeating, and self-sabotaging. Even when we can identify an inadequately functioning personality system, the challenges of measuring its severity and choosing a treatment approach must be tackled. We must account for the clinical reality that patients cut and mutilate themselves, use excessive amounts of substances to numb them, create chaos in their communities and families, and so forth. Personality remains a useful coherent construct to understand these and other disturbing phenomenon.

We find that, even with the best intentions on all sides, certain types of personality “dysfunction” are very difficult to modify or transform. So the term *personality disorder*, in spite of the stigma associated with conferring this label on another, does have clinical utility. This construct has remained a focus of attention for modern psychology for over a century, even though it had fallen in and out of vogue in some circles. It does seem to account for a clinical phenomenon that has not been replaced by a more useful construct. As this volume attests, most of the leading clinicians and theorists in the field choose to use the construct, with all its limitations. There are exceptions, such as Jean Baker Miller and Judith Jordan (Frager & Fadiman, 1998) from the Stone Center, who eschew pathological labeling as pejorative and demeaning. We return to this important issue later in this chapter.

*What is a personality disorder?* Before we try to answer this important question, we should first explore a related question, *What is personality?* As clinicians, theorists, and researchers, we are treating and studying people with unique personalities, although possibly poorly functioning, or functioning at any of the various levels of adaptive capacity. One definition of personality is “an individual’s habitual way of thinking, feeling, perceiving, and reacting to the world” (Magnavita, 2002b, p. 16). There are problems with this classic textbook perspective drawn from academic psychology of the last century: with the focus on personology, which primarily investigates individual differences (Murray, 1938), it leaves the rest of the ecological matrix in the hands of sociologists, anthropologists, and social psychologists. This *individualistic* definition of personality is one whose primary focus is clearly on the individual personality system. As such, this definition is limiting and antiquated, especially if we, as we must, acknowledge that human personality is expressed within a context, an intrapsychic, dyadic, triadic, familial, sociopolitical, cultural, and ecological matrix. The components of this matrix are in an ongoing interaction, shaping and influencing the various subsystems, in multiple and complex feedback loops. To prepare ourselves for the challenges we are facing at the beginning of the new millennium, such as developing effective treatment...
for underserved minority groups, the elderly, substance abusers, severe personality dysfunction, and many others, we need to expand our perspective of personality from the individual system to the subsystems that operate within the total ecological system (Magnavita, in press). This requires an interdisciplinary collaboration among related scientific disciplines concerned with the study of human nature, relational science, neuroscience, affective science, the study of consciousness and personality (Magnavita, 2002b).

Does a personality disorder exist? The answer to this question depends on whom you ask. If you ask a clinical researcher who is trained to use empirical measures, a personality disorder represents a score on an objective measure that exceeds a statistically significant cut-off point or a designated score on a structured interview. With a score above the point, the clinician would say a personality disorder exists, and below it a disorder is not present. A psychopathologist might define the presence or absence of a personality disorder based on whether there exists a "harmful dysfunction" (Wakefield, 1999) or, in their terms, is the patient demonstrating signs of an evolutionary maladaptive behavioral repertoire? A clinician might look for whether there are long-standing, self-defeating aspects to the individual’s interpersonal patterns, and whether there is an over-reliance on primitive defenses (Magnavita, 1997; McWilliams, 1994). A family clinician might be more interested in deciding how the individual or family’s organization and function influences maladaptive or dysfunctional processes. A psychopharmacologist might investigate the response to various psychotropic medications. A forensic psychologist or psychiatrist would be interested in the results of a battery of objective and standardized tests, in-depth clinical interviews, and history that would support a diagnosis likely to be held to legal standards of evidence. The answer depends on the orientation of the professional answering the question, as well as the system or systems of classification that he or she employs, and has the most utility for the task on which they embark, such as producing academic papers, conducting epidemiological research or a forensic evaluation, planning clinical treatment, engaging in psychopathological research, and so forth.

There are various systems of classification that include (1) categorical, (2) dimensional, (3) structural, (4) prototypical, and (5) relational. They each have strengths and certain limitations. Each has a perspective and offers one view of reality.

1. Categorical Classification

The categorical classification is used predominantly by psychotherapists in research. For many clinicians, it is required to complete insurance forms for reimbursement of clinical services. The predominant categorical system for classification of personality disorders and other clinical syndromes is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 1994). The *DSM* defines personality disorder as: “an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual’s culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and lead to distress or impairment” (APA, 1994, p. 629). The multiaxial *DSM* has been a major development in the classification of personality disorders, particularly in its emphasis on placing personality disorders on their own axis—the second axis. The categorical system relies on establishing the presence of behaviorally observable
Classification of Personality

and atheoretical criteria that indicate the presence of a diagnosable personality disorder. DSM categorizes personality disorders into three clusters, A, B, and C, as follows:

1. **Cluster A** is characterized by odd or eccentric behavior and includes paranoid, schizoid, and schizotypal personalities. This cluster tends to be the most treatment refractory and is probably the most likely to have underlying biogenetic factors.

2. **Cluster B** is characterized by erratic, emotional, and dramatic presentations and includes antisocial, borderline, histrionic, and narcissistic personalities. This cluster includes personality disorders often considered to be severe and that have mixed treatment results.

3. **Cluster C** is characterized by anxiety and fearfulness and includes avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive personalities. These are generally viewed as the most treatment responsive and have shown the best results with shorter duration treatment protocols (Beck, Freeman, et al., 1990; Winston et al., 1994).

There are several problems with DSM. One is the degree of overlap among the categories—many patients are diagnosed with more than one. In addition, many clinicians find DSM to be a very rough diagnostic schema that does not take into consideration the finer distinctions among those who are given the same diagnosis. For example, two patients diagnosed with an obsessive-compulsive personality disorder may be functioning at very different levels of adaptive functioning and thus treatment and prognosis might be very different. The usefulness for treatment planning is questionable and rightly so; how could the presence of six or seven criteria truly inform the complex treatment intervention that is most often required for the personality disordered patient?

2. **Dimensional Classification**

The dimensional classification of personality takes a different approach from the categorical. This system is based on the premise that personality does not exist in categories but rather along dimensions. Dimensional classification grew out of the study of normal personality using the trait approach developed by Gordon Allport (Allport & Odbert, 1936) that used factor analysis to reduce the over 17,000 words they identified in the dictionary to describe personality. Personality disorders are an example of normal traits amplified to an extreme, to the point of being maladaptive, and so they are well suited to the dimensional system. This system has been primarily used to investigate the construct of personality in both normal and disordered populations. The most dominant of the dimensional models is the five-factor model which has identified five empirically derived dimensions of personality that include: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

3. **Structural-Dynamic Classification**

The structural-dynamic classification of personality is based on a psychodynamic understanding of personality structure and organization (McWilliams, 1994).
This system evolved from the character types developed by psychoanalytic pioneers of the last century and to a certain extent they are still present in many of the current DSM categories. In this system, personality organization is placed on a continuum from psychotic, borderline, neurotic to normal with each point representing a varying degree of structural integrity—how well the system can handle anxiety, conflict, and emotional experience before becoming overloaded and symptomatic—called *ego-adaptive capacity*. Thus, someone functioning at the right of the borderline position would be able to handle more anxiety and conflict than someone on the left side, toward the psychotic range whose tolerance is much lower. Each type or mixture of personality types can be organized at any position along the continuum. If you could overlay DSM on top of the structural continuum, you would see that the Cluster C disorders are equivalent to those at the neurotic level, Cluster B at the borderline level, and Cluster A at the psychotic level. A crucial part of personality in the structural-dynamic classification is the organization and use of defense mechanisms. Those at higher levels of organization and adaptation generally use more mature and neurotic defenses, those in the borderline range use more primitive defenses and those in the psychotic spectrum tend to use more primitive and psychotic mixes. O. Kernberg (1984) has advanced the structural-dynamic system in his work focusing primarily on the severe personality disorders.

4. Prototypal Classification

The prototypal classification of personality combines the categorical with the dimensional and lends itself to finer distinctions among various personality types and disorders. The most notable of the prototypal systems is Millon’s (Millon & Davis, 1996) that retains categories of personality disorder but assesses them on three primary dimensions: self/other, active/passive, and pleasure/pain. Millon has developed highly valid and reliable instruments that can be used to assess the personality with standardized objective tests.

5. Relational Classification

The relational classification of personality has two main branches, the interpersonal model of Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) who dealt with *dyadic configurations* and the systemic model of Murray Bowen (1976) who dealt with *triadic configurations*. The interpersonal model has evolved in various forms from Leary’s (1957) circumplex model to Benjamin’s (1993) Structural Analysis of Social Behavior (SASB), and a systemically based relational model (Magnavita, 2000) of dysfunctional personologic systems. Most recently, there has been a movement to develop and codify a comprehensive relational model (Kaslow, 1996) and another to expand the use of relational diagnoses in DSM (Beach, 2002). Relational diagnosis looks at patterns of communication, themes, multigenerational processes, feedback loops, and interpersonal processes such as complimentarity.

Pathological Labels—Useful or Pejorative?

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the label “personality disorder” can be pejorative and some clinicians eschew its use. In the worst case, labeling can be used to marginalize and control those who society finds unacceptable. We have seen