

“The Era of Skepticism”:

Disciplinary Controversy and Crisis as Detour to the Big Five

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### Abstract

Disciplinary histories of the Five-Factor Model of personality suggest the delay in research and consensus was due in large part to an “era of skepticism” or malignant *Zeitgeist* within personality psychology from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. I examined general personality textbooks from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s to understand how these controversies were understood by personality psychologists, and how they were related to the FFM. Findings suggest that the person-situation controversy is a broader narrative in the historiography of personality psychology that was FFM proponents drew on to make sense of the FFM history; that many factor analytic researchers seemed unconcerned, and the progress of their research unaffected, by the ongoing controversy; and that there are many other controversies surrounding the FFM itself, its methodology of factor analysis, and the methodology’s notorious pioneers, that have been minimized or omitted in favour of their selective *Zeitgeist* grand narrative.

*Keywords:* Five Factor Model; Big Five; Walter Mischel; person-situation controversy; factor analysis; trait psychology; psychometrics; pedagogy; textbooks

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## Introduction

Astute Psychology students make frequent use of mnemonics for studying purposes and one acronym that has left an indelible impression on students' long-term memory is OCEAN (or, less popularly, CANOE). The acronym—which stands for Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism—is as ubiquitous in Psychology classrooms as the model of personality it stands for: the Five-Factor Model (FFM). As one journalist noted in her book-length investigation of how personality scales and theories affect everyday life, measuring our personality has become pervasive: from online quizzes at home, to more consequential batteries of tests at the workplace (Murphy Paul, 2004). Indeed, in an age where the completion of pop culture-saturated BuzzFeed personality quizzes is common leisure, measuring our psychological selves (whether in jest or earnest, but often accompanied by the sharing of your results) is currently a part of contemporary life. Of course, there are more genuine online measurements of your personality, often using the FFM as a foundational personality model. For example, the FiveLabs website (<http://labs.five.com/>) was a project that would analyze your Facebook posts to predict your personality, as well the personalities of your friends, in terms of the five factors. Whether it is for yourself, your (potential) employer, marketers, or research psychologists, the FFM is currently one of the most prominent and dominant models.

Personality psychology came to prominence as a well-regarded and credible science of the self with the development of psychometrics to quantify the person, building on the foundation laid by intelligence testing. These technologies were often nested within the personality concept of a trait, a measurable unit formally outlined by Gordon Allport in several papers during the 1920s and the 1930s. In one paper, Allport proposed eight criteria for defining



a trait; he also noted that related habits were part of a common trait, and that “[t]raits may conceivably embrace anywhere from two habits to a legion of habits” (1931, p. 369). When personality measurement grew to an immense enterprise, it lost its link with social practice and adopted grander goals of developing “a short list of basic and universal attributes that would account for the maximum amount of individual variation on the entire universe of traits constituting human personality” (Danziger, 1997, p. 128).

These goals were encompassed by the independent and ambitious research projects of prolific psychologists Hans J. Eysenck and Raymond B. Cattell, who made use of a sophisticated statistical methodology called factor analysis to identify a small number of traits universal to all people. There was once deep disagreement over the structure of personality within these projects, “but in the late twentieth century a degree of consensus emerged that there were just five [universal traits], no more and no less” (Danziger, 2013, p. 79). This is the FFM, a famous and infamous psychological object which is viewed as a descriptive model of language by some, and a universal theory of human nature by others. Regardless of its celebrity and prominence as the truest personality model, both in academia and in day-to-day life, some aspects of its origin and ascendance have deflected a critical historical reading<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the Myers-Briggs Personality Instrument (MBTI) is a typology measure (based on Jungian theory) that although is not taken seriously within academia, has a strong following in industry and in popular culture (e.g. sites and forums devoted to particular “types” of people connecting). It has likely influenced popular self-understanding much more than the FFM and its measurements, though there is no current scholarship to my knowledge that supports this assumption. The MBTI’s history and contemporary influence is explored in Murphy Paul (2004, pp. 197-137).

## **Histories of the Big Five**

Although the FFM, or the Big Five personality traits, has become one of the most recognized and used personality models within and without academic psychology, there is currently a dearth of historical scholarship on the FFM. Histories of the model are almost always written within the discipline by personality psychologists, particularly by those who have helped popularize (or revive, as will be explained) the FFM. The two most authoritative and complete histories are both parts of edited collections. The first history of the FFM was written in 1995 by personality psychologist Lewis R. Goldberg (*b.* 1932), who spent much of his career at the University of Oregon and is now located at the Oregon Research Institute; he was also one of the main FFM researchers during the 1980s and coined the term “Big Five” to describe his taxonomy. His version of the FFM history was included within a festschrift honouring the legacy of personality psychologist and psychometrician Donald W. Fiske, as histories of the FFM cite Fiske as one the earliest (if not the first) discover of the FFM. The second history of the FFM was written in 1996 by the late personality psychologist John M. Digman (1923 – 1998), who spent most of his career at the University of Hawaii and also joined the Oregon Research Institute upon his retirement. His FFM history was the opening essay to an edited collection examining some of the various theoretical perspectives on the FFM.

Both histories outline a similar trajectory of the FFM within personality psychology, and aspects of this story have been carried over into histories of psychology for the general public (e.g. Pickren, 2014) as well as journalistic explorations of personality psychology (e.g. Murphy Paul, 2004). Both Goldberg and Digman recognize Donald Fiske as discovering the true five factors in 1949, although he had no immediate impact on the field’s theories of personality.

They also outline the lineage from Allport and Odbert's (1936) psycho-lexical study<sup>2</sup> of human personality, to Raymond B. Cattell's revision of this work, to his influence on the surge of FFM research that occurred in the early 1960s. Among a few main researchers, this early work included classified U.S. Air Force research, which was made public much later in 1992, conducted by Tupes and Christal (1958; 1961). It also included Warren Norman's factor analytic research that indicated five factors was the best suited model for universal human personality.

Then after that initial surge of research interest and consensus, there was little in the way of progress toward establishing FFM as the most objectively accurate personality model or taxonomy until what both Digman and Goldberg describe as the renaissance that they participated in during the 1980s. Stemming from work on the FFM that was presented at a conference in Digman's home institution in Honolulu, Hawaii, Lewis Goldberg and John Digman played primary roles in popularizing the model. Goldberg would also go on to influence two government health researchers at the Baltimore Gerontology Research Center, Paul Costa and Robert McCrae. The latter duo would go on to develop their own version of the FFM and an immensely popular scale (the NEO-PI) to measure an individual's personality on the five traits. Having a widely used and recognized instrument for measuring the Big Five is undoubtedly

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<sup>2</sup> This approach is part of the fundamental lexical hypothesis: the study the English language and its descriptive words of character or personality to elucidate the fundamental personality characteristics or traits. This approach makes use of a dictionary and researchers will pare down their findings in an attempt to find the fewest words that describe all personality. This approach was continued in many factor analytic research projects, such as R.B Cattell as well as Lewis Goldberg's FFM research. It differs from the approach that Costa and McCrae took when constructing their (eventually) FFM and scale.

central to the prominence of Costa and McCrae when discussing the FFM. Perhaps given the popularity of their scale, or their prolific publishing record, Costa and McCrae are now (within academic psychology) very recognizable names often associated with the “Big Five” trait model (Goldberg’s name for his own version of the FFM).

Goldberg and Digman offer many explanations for the lull of FFM research—and progress toward a consensus on it as the main personality model—between the initial 1960s surge and their 1980s renaissance, but they also emphasize that there was simply something about that particular era within personality that subverted scientific progress. Lewis Goldberg’s (1995) history of the FFM immediately conveyed a sense of frustration toward the model’s history, including the essay’s revealing title “What the Hell Took so Long?” He explained that if a Rip van Winkle slipped from 1949 to 1989, he would be struck by the staggering amount of scientific progress made in various scientific fields, as well as the lack of progress in developing a “scientific consensus about an appropriate taxonomic model” (p. 29) within personality psychology. Goldberg understood the 1970s as a “time out” for personality research, particularly factor analytic research aimed at uncovering the basic structure or taxonomy of personality traits. He explained that though one would assume by the 1970s FFM research would be garnering enough evidence and attention to fulfill its rightful place as the major personality discovery of the century, “[o]ther forces dominated this decade, unleashed by a *Zeitgeist* that eschewed the very concept of traits, if not personality itself” (p. 34) citing Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel (*b.* 1930) as one of the main representations of this *Zeitgeist*. Although Goldberg follows this with a list of possible reasons for the “time out,” largely focusing on methodological limitations and the lack of coordination between factor analytic researchers, he ends by once again highlighting what he understood as a “malignant *Zeitgeist*” as one of the central

impediments to scientific progress.

In Digman's (1996) "curious history" of the FFM of personality, he also casts the 1970s in a harsh light, deeming it an "era of skepticism" and a generally destructive time for traditional personality assessment. In other words, it was an arduous period of crisis for personality psychologists, which was also true for those working within factor analytic approaches to personality. Digman finds the history of the FFM curious due to the delay of its general acceptance as the most accurate model for human personality. Digman also cited the 1968 publication of Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel's book *Personality and Assessment* as one of the main sources of unwarranted and destructive skepticism that caused the detour in FFM research between the 1960s and 1980s. Though Digman, like Goldberg, also highlighted methodological limitations and unwillingness for psychologists to set aside their egos and work together as additional causes for the delay in FFM research, Mischel's 1968 book, its critique of trait psychology (including factor analytic research), and the ensuing "era of skepticism" was the central reason for the delay in accepting the discovery of the FFM. Digman explained that although the history of the FFM is curious, it is not atypical of any truly great discoveries or progress in human history; he compared it the slow acceptance and skepticism of plate tectonic theory in geophysics, or the near the riots that greeted the Parisian premiere of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.

Goldberg and Digman's version of the FFM history has made its way into popular culture, with its inclusion in journalist Annie Murphy Paul's (2004) exploration of personality psychology's (largely negative) impact on everyday life. She included Lewis Goldberg as one of the experts she consulted in writing her book, and much like his and Digman's history of the FFM she also links the publication of Walter Mischel's *Personality and Assessment* (1968) with

the delay in FFM research and its acceptance between the 1960s and 1980s. She described Mischel's work as "a small, unassuming book with an utterly devastating impact" (p. 184), and resulted in many years that "are universally described as dark ones for the field" (p. 185). Murphy Paul understood this ensuing *Zeitgeist* or era of skepticism, best represented by Mischel's critique of personality psychology, as lasting for more than a decade and forcing personality psychologists to shy away from conducting research and proposing models for human personality. According to her history, once the impact of Mischel's critique wore off, personality psychology "hastened back to its longtime question, the search for a single key to human nature. The Big Five looked like it might be it" (p. 186). Exactly what skeptical era or controversies Mischel's 1968 publication represents, and how it is placed in more general histories of personality psychology will be outlined in the next section.

### **The Person-Situation Controversy, Situationism, & Walter Mischel**

The critiques of traditional personality approaches are also a key part in other, broader histories of personality psychology (e.g. Barenbaum & Winter, 2008; McAdams, 1997). What was understood as situationist critiques of personality "led to a major crisis in the field" as a whole—particularly highlighting that Mischel's *Personality and Assessment* (1968) "had the effect of a bombshell" (Barenbaum & Winter, 2008, p.16). In McAdams' (1997) history, 1968 marks the beginning of a ten year period of uncertainty and diffidence on the part of personality psychologists: "The critiques ... ushered in a decade of doubt in the history of personality psychology" (p.21). Still, in other histories of personality psychology, such as Dumont's (2010) recent book-length treatment, this era of skepticism, or decade of doubt, is not mentioned; neither is Mischel's apparently game-changing *Personality and Assessment* (1968). What is often referred to as the most influential and important critique in personality psychology history,

Mischel's 1968 book, was indeed a direct attack on trait theories and psychodynamic theories of personality—it also includes some critique of the early factor analytic studies indicating a FFM of personality (particularly Warren Norman's). Whether Mischel's book, and the climate of doubt and skepticism it apparently engendered, was actually one of the major impediments to progress in FFM research is unclear. In many disciplinary histories found in textbooks, as well as a series devoted to personality psychology's controversies (Pervin 1978; 1984; 2002), the era of skepticism that Mischel's critique wrought is usually understood as the person-situation controversy or debates.

The apparent rise of situationism in personality psychology is preceded by a “Golden Age” of social psychology as well as a preponderance of the use of the word and idea of the situation on Cold War behavioural sciences more generally. This golden age of social psychology that followed WWII demonstrated and exemplified how the promise of the scientific study of persons within controlled and demarcated situations (House, 2008; Sewell 1989). In this period, artificial situations that supposedly mirrored real-world phenomena were found to elicit fascinating, memorable, and even dangerous and extreme behaviours (e.g. Stanley Milgram's obedience to authority experiments or Solomon Asch's conformity research). Though well after the golden age, Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971 also buttressed the powers of the situation over the person. Indeed, whether it was an artificial laboratory standing in for real life, or an external area demarcated as an in-the-field laboratory (e.g. the Micronesian Islands), the idea of the situation was important more generally to behavioural sciences during the Cold War: the situation “emerged as a multifarious and early all-purpose construct among groups of allied and cross-disciplinary social scientists ...[and] would create possibilities to exert control over its constituent units” (Erickson et al, 2013).

Psychologist Gardner Murphy (1947), who perhaps coined the term “situationism” at least within Psychology, noted in a textbook chapter devoted to explicating the term: “The fundamentals are simple, almost of the nature of axioms ... Given a changed situation, there is a changed role and consequently a changed personality” (pp. 867-868). In its most extreme reading, situationists are understood to believe the immediate surroundings of a person to determine her behaviour; rather than any internal determinants, such as traits or psychodynamics. As will be explored, some psychologists (particularly Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey) view situationists as having come in two waves, an earlier one consisting of psychologists such as Kurt Lewin and duo Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May during the inter-war period. In other writings some of the earliest proponents of the “situationism personality model” are understood to be sociological social psychologists, such as C.H. Cooley, George Herbert Mead, and W.I. Thomas (Endler & Rosenstein, 1997). The second wave of situationists usually features Walter Mischel as their lead figure, given his prominent role in criticizing personality psychology and spawning the person-situation debate. This second wave includes other figures associated with the social learning theory movement.

Social learning theory, and what would later be labelled cognitive social learning theory, stems from the work of Julian B. Rotter (1916-2014). He was born in Brooklyn, New York, and attended the City College as an undergraduate where he was influenced by teachers such as Solomon Asch and Alfred Adler; he would also spend some time at the University of Iowa while Kurt Lewin was an instructor. He experienced difficulty gaining academic employment due to anti-Semitism, and was drafted as a psychologist during WWII where he began his clinical work and research. Though Rotter is often now remembered for his research on locus of control, his 1954 book *Social Learning and Clinical Psychology* is a key text in founding social learning



theory. The book was considered a departure from the two forces of psychology, psychoanalysis and behaviorism, and included his formula for personality  $BP = f(E \& RV)$ , where Behavior Potential is a function of Expectancy and Reinforcement Value (Strickland, 2014). This staple of social learning theory was indebted to Kurt Lewin's earlier proposed interactionist formula from his *Principles of Topological Psychology* (1936),  $B = f(P, E)$ , where Behavior is a function of the Person and the Environment.<sup>3</sup> Rotter's social learning theory would greatly influence his student Walter Mischel who would make Stanford University the home of social learning theory, along with his contemporary Albert Bandura (b. 1925) who is known for his construct of self-efficacy and his famous Bobo doll experiments. Philip Zimbardo, social psychologist famous for the Stanford Prison Experiments, was also there at this time but is not usually considered a part of the social learning theorists or situationists within personality psychology.

Given that Walter Mischel and his 1968 book are keys to the histories being examined, some biographical information should be provided (see Mischel, 2007). Mischel was born into a Jewish family in Vienna, Austria in 1930. As the Nazi occupation began in 1938, his family immigrated to the United States where they eventually settled upon Brooklyn, New York City. While doing graduate work at City College, he found inspiration there from the likes of Kenneth Clark and Kurt Goldstein, as well as his master's thesis supervisor Gardner Murphy. While at Ohio State earning his PhD, he recalled being immersed in the tension between two newly

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<sup>3</sup> In this way, Lewin and Rotter were more "interactionists" (i.e. behaviour is determined by both internal and external factors) than pure situationists; though as will be shown this is rarely understood to be the case in the sampled personality textbooks, and interactionism is usually associated with a particular 1970s network of research related to the person-situation controversy.

developed theories by two psychologists teaching there: Julian Rotter's social learning theory and George A. Kelly's personal construct theory. Mischel claimed to have admired both psychologists for their novelty and the challenges they posed to traditional approaches to psychology. Shortly after conducting research for the Peace Corps, Mischel, published his 1968 monograph *Personality and Assessment*, which he understood as a challenge to "classic dispositional assumptions" (p. 248); he also explained that the book spawned what he referred to as "the personality paradox," which "traumatized" the field and "stirred what felt like a paradigm crisis and left many in the field demoralized but some exhilarated" (p. 249).

Today Walter Mischel is best remembered and still celebrated for his research on self-control and delayed gratification, particularly his Stanford Marshmallow Experiment with children (Mischel & Ebbesen, 1970)—a legacy which he still writes about, even within the popular culture (see Mischel, 2014). Nearly two decades later, Mischel (1989) revisited his experiment and claimed that the children's performance in the original marshmallow experiment (i.e. their ability to delay gratification and self-regulate) predicted future scholastic achievement, coping abilities, and various other important factors in achieving a successful life. Though not as dramatic and immediately ethically questionable as Zimbardo's contemporary Stanford Prison Experiment, the popularity and interpretations of the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment has contributed to dubious neoliberal ideals: "the marshmallow test adorably concretizes the willpower demanded by American perestroika, putting a cute toddler's face on a terrifyingly austere interpretation of economic class and social reproduction" (Moreton, 2014, p.30). The importance of learning "marshmallow resistance," whatever the marshmallow might be, has extended to how families are expected to mold their children, how public policy should function, and how entire countries should act within the global economy.

Mischel's famed book *Personality and Assessment* (1968) is a slim volume that contained detailed critiques of the two main approaches to the study of personality: psychodynamic and trait<sup>4</sup>. It is presented as a demonstration that given the large body of evidence, it is now possible to "evaluate basic assumptions and personality concepts not only abstractly but also in light of their specific empirical yield" (p. vii). Echoing Lee Cronbach's (1957) call to integrate the oft-distinct experimental and correlational disciplines of psychology, Mischel saw his book as part of the "routine to urge a genuine integration of the knowledge of behavior that is emerging from basic experimental research and the findings and issues that face psychologists concerned with the measurement and modification of personality" (p. viii). Drawing on experimental work on social learning and cognitive processes, including his own, he took to task the dominant approaches to contemporary personality psychology. Among the many theories and models Mischel critiqued in his book, it included the factor analytic method, Warren Norman's FFM research, and traits in general, remarking that trait ratings "may be more relevant to the rater's categories than to the ratee's behavior" (p. 43).

One of the most impactful critiques within his book is what is often called "the personality coefficient," indicating the average weak relationship between self-report measures and behaviour. This called into question the consistency and prediction of behaviour within trait psychology, as Mischel wrote that the "value of the investigator's construct lies in its

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<sup>4</sup> These two main approaches were critiqued from a feminist perspective (Weisstein, 1971; first presented in 1968) in how they (mis)construct the female. Her critique of psychology's misunderstanding of women stemming from a reliance on theory over evidence echoes Eysenck's (1952) much earlier attack on psychotherapy (including psychoanalytic approaches).

demonstrable utility, established through empirical relations between observables” (p. 101). Although Mischel conceded that the relationships usually obtained were above chance and large enough that they were important, the research evidence that indicated their weakness “suggest that personality organization is much more subtle than broad unitary trait theories of personality would indicate” (p. 101). After presenting a strong series of empirically-supported critiques, Mischel spent the remainder of the book exploring social behavioural applications to personality assessment. Though the critiques are strong, Mischel does not seem to suggest that traits are completely void of value or that personality does not exist, as he would sometimes be interpreted as doing. Confusion and misinterpretation about Mischel’s 1968 book, along with what the entire person-situation controversy was exactly about and what was learned from it, would continue well into the 1980s (Kenrick & Funder, 1988)—indeed, its complexity and ambiguous status or position within disciplinary history is still with us today. The precise contents of the critiques, rebuttals, counter-critiques, so on and so forth, will not be closely examined in this thesis; rather, the ways in which the controversy was generally understood and positioned will be explored.

According to the general histories of personality, improved methodologies resolved (to an extent) the criticisms levied against traits during the person-situation controversy. These included better measurement techniques and empirical support for the reliability and validity of personality in longitudinal studies, while other personality psychologists “demonstrated the effects of moderator variables or *interaction* between personality and situational variables” (Barenbaum & Winter, 2008, p. 17, italics added). Other histories, such as McAdams’ (1997), place much more emphasis on the shift toward such “interactionism,” a compromise position between the person and the situation (or internal-external) as determinants of behaviour (e.g.

Endler & Magnusson, 1976). This view apparently both resulted from and resolved (or at least tempered) the ongoing controversies, and eventually became the standard position many personality psychologists held. Nevertheless, the parade of empirical support for whichever particular viewpoint on the matter was considered by some to be largely wasteful (Rorer & Widiger, 1983).

Indeed, the entire controversy and ensuing response did little to advance popular conceptions of personality or the person within personality psychology. The majority of responses to the critiques were empirical, while many of the critiques were “conceptual in nature and, it is probably fair to say, more challenging” (McAdams, 1997, p. 22). In other words, although there were conceptual critiques, most of the responses were to Mischel’s (1968) critique as it was largely written in the empirical and quantitative vocabulary of trait psychologists. Regardless of the conceptual criticisms not being wholly resolved (or acknowledged), personality psychologists entered the 1980s revitalized (McAdams, 1997, p. 22).

This thesis addresses how psychologists understood this period of apparent crisis (represented by Mischel’s critique) fit in the history of personality psychology, trait psychology, and specifically the history of the FFM. The emphasis is on how personality psychologists self-represented their field in a pedagogical context. The main historical evidence examined will be general personality psychology textbooks. The aim here is to deconstruct and challenge the received history of the FFM to see what aspects of the history may have been ignored or minimized, and ultimately improving our unclear understanding of recent personality psychology and this incredibly influential model.

### **Personality Textbooks: An Untapped Historiographic Source**

The current corpus of serious historical scholarship on the FFM is limited. Though there

is work on personality theory in general—such as Susman’s (1979) work on American culture in general, as well as specific traits such as masculinity-femininity (Morawski, 1985)—the intertwined history of psychometrics has been dominated by the history of intelligence testing (e.g. Fancher, 1987). There has also been more recent work done on personality testing (Gibby & Zickar, 2008) and traits related to the FFM (i.e. openness; Cohen-Cole, 2014). Some of the key works in the history of trait psychology written by historians or psychologist-historians are book-length treatments of famous figures within the field—particularly Gordon Allport (Nicholson, 2003), Hans Eysenck (Buchanan, 2010), and Raymond Cattell (Tucker, 2009). The rest of the historiography has been written by personality psychologists in the form of short historical essays in edited collections and handbooks that focus on personality theories, concepts, and methods from a non-historical viewpoint; but also in general personality textbooks, where the authors tell the stories of their field to the students they seek to recruit. I propose that engaging with the textbook disciplinary historiography would prove fruitful in informing current historical work in light of the dearth of academic FFM historiography.

According to historian of science Marga Vicedo (2012) textbooks have had a low status as a source of historical evidence, but she argues against this status. Textbooks have been viewed as “showcases for accumulated knowledge but do not contribute to scientific development. Their main role is to initiate the student into well-established views and practices of specific scientific communities” (p. 83). While textbooks can be viewed in such a way, and certainly “exploring their role in pedagogical and training practices” (p. 85) is one approach for the historian, historians can also use textbooks to “trace the development of ideas ... study how they help form new disciplines ... reveal the epistemological concerns of a field ... [and] explore how scientists use textbooks in priority disputes” (p. 85). Vicedo enumerates these potential roles of scientific

textbooks, and the ways in which historians can treat them in their projects, in order to highlight what she refers to as the “plasticity of textbooks and their ability to play hybrid roles” (p. 86). She also reminds us that that textbooks can be used to help us understand how beliefs about sciences are acquired by their numerous readers, which include students as well as teachers, reviewers, competitors (i.e. other authors and publishers), and future scientists and authors.

There are many examples of using textbooks in the history of psychology. One such example is Harris’ (1979) examination of the variations of misrepresentation included in textbooks’ retelling of the Watson’s Little Albert experiment. The sundry retellings, disparate in their details, were conducive to the experiment’s status as myth and symbol; as Harris (1979) wrote, “no detail of the original study has escaped misrepresentation in the telling and retelling of this bit of social science folklore” (p. 238). Morawski (1992) asserted that historians should view textbooks not only as a by-product of institutionalization of the discipline, and a product for financial gain, but as significant artifacts: “To take ... textbooks seriously is to invite new ways of understanding our history over the last century” (p. 168). Similarly, Cherry (1994) encourages the critical, historical analysis of social psychology textbooks to be undertaken by students. She argued that appreciating the historical perspective of “psychology as a science within American cultural and intellectual practices and the role that textbooks have played” would entail the understanding that “science itself does not escape time and place” (p. 85). She concludes by reminding us that rather than using these historical artifacts (textbooks) to reveal *the* singular history of psychology, their examination can yield more complex and interesting historical questions (and possibly answers): how is knowledge within the discipline constructed at different times, and who most benefits in constructing this knowledge a certain way at a certain time?

In examining these textbooks, I analyzed the internalist historiography of this era of apparent crisis best represented by Mischel's 1968 book and what is often referred to as the person-situation controversy. I examined textbooks held by the libraries at both York University and the University of Toronto. Both institutions hold a large collection of personality textbooks representative of typical North American collections. These textbooks were often written by the preeminent experts of personality, including psychologists that were directly involved in person-situation controversy (e.g. Walter Mischel); although many were written by psychologists who did not achieve such fame or notoriety. Several authors produced revised editions of their textbooks and whenever possible these editions were included in order to trace potential changes within a single textbook series.

The period for my sample is 1970 to 1999, which was further split into three decades consisting of 20 textbooks each. As I move forward, and as the temporal distance between the author and the person-situation controversy increases, their stories and interpretations will become disciplinary histories rather than summarizations of contemporary events. Given that the person-situation controversy occurred during the first decade under examination, these textbook authors are reporting on contemporary events and can be viewed as primary sources regarding how these events were understood within the discipline. Is the person-situation controversy, and its accompanying idea of general disciplinary crisis, included; and if so how is it described? Do authors that include the controversy also include interactionism as part of the story? How do these authors understand the controversy in relation to the FFM, its methodology (factor analysis), and trait psychology more generally? Finally, how did Walter Mischel and his era of skepticism, apparently one of the main causes of the FFM detour, understand and write about all these issues in his own textbook series?



## Chapter 1

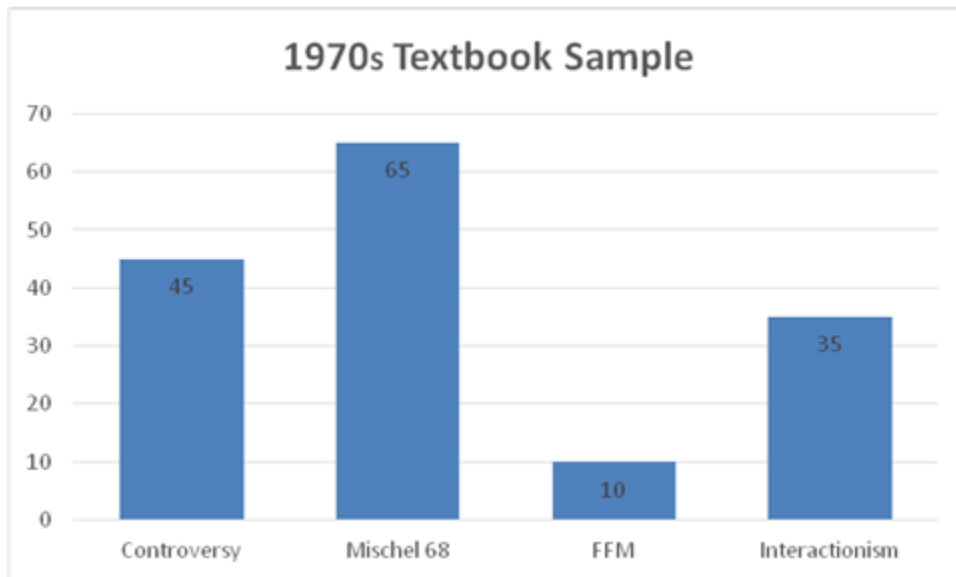
### The Controversy in 1970s Personality Textbooks

In this chapter I analyze the 1970s textbook sample ( $n = 20$ ), particularly focusing on how the “Walter Mischel and person-situation controversy” (or period of crisis) was understood while it was apparently happening. The initial discussion of situationist critiques and controversies pertained to an earlier generation of psychologists, but as the decade progressed discussion around these issues were usually focused strictly on Mischel and his contemporaries. This same finding occurred for interactionism: as the decade progressed, it became less an aspect of a past controversy and more so a novel solution pertaining to the current controversy. Mischel and the controversy was most often placed within sections about trait approaches generally, and connections with the FFM were not made (although it had yet to become a popular model within the discipline, even with factor analytic research). Factor analysis was sometimes discussed, with a mix of admiration and skepticism toward its application to personality. Walter Mischel’s own textbooks, building off his 1968 book, contained extended discussions of trait psychology, factor analysis, and the FFM—indeed, he was the only author to bother including FFM research.

Table 1

*1970s Sample (# of textbooks per year)*

1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
3	2	1	0	3	1	5	1	2	2



*Figure 1:* Inclusion of topics in 1970s personality textbook sample (%).

### **Was There Controversy?**

Surveying the 1970s sample of textbooks, the person-situation controversy is written about in different but similar ways; and sometimes it is not written about at all. Early on, there seems to be talk of the tension between two extreme positions, person-focused versus situation-focused approaches, to personality psychology. Some of these authors, particularly early in the decade, are referring to situationists from an earlier era (citing psychologists such as Gardner Murphy, Kurt Lewin, and Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May as examples), while others blend that with the more contemporary situationists (such as Walter Mischel, Albert Bandura, and Rotter; as well as sometimes B.F Skinner). For example, in two earlier textbooks (Hall & Lindzey, 1970; Pervin, 1970) the earlier wave of situationists (as explained in the Introduction) and their impact was considered the main controversy or crisis that personality once experienced.

When only including textbooks that discussed the person-situation controversy of the 1970s related to Walter Mischel, nearly half (45%) included mention of the controversy or crisis in

some form.

The inclusion of the earlier wave of situationists was often due to those textbooks being revised editions, such as Hall and Lindzey whose first edition was published in 1957. They discussed a “person-society controversy” in relation to criticisms of Allport and the trait approach (Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Calvin Springer Hall (1909-1985) and Gardner Lindzey (1920-2008) were two well-known psychologists who collaborated on their widely used *Theories of Personality* textbook series throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Hall was a graduate of Berkley under Robert C. Tyron (1901 – 1967), though he was closely associated with Edward C. Tolman (1886-1959). In addition to *Theories*, Hall contributed a chapter on psychogenetics in S.S. Steven’s *Handbook of Experimental Psychology* (1951), published primers on psychoanalytic thinkers, and focused on dream research as a form of personality diagnosis (Lindzey, 1987)<sup>5</sup>. In addition to the famous *Theories of Personality* series, Gardner Lindzey served as president of the APA from 1966 to 1967, founding co-editor of the *A History of Psychology in Autobiography* series, and the initially sole editor of *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (1954). Perhaps Lindzey’s interests in both the social and the person are indicative of where he earned his PhD: at Harvard’s Department of Social Relations, where he studied under one of the department’s founding members Gordon Allport.

Most likely due to Harvard’s influence on personality psychology, quite a few of the textbook authors sampled graduated from this department. According to Isaac (2012), Harvard’s institutional context was once that the “new social sciences,” such as psychology and anthropology, were marginalized and ignored when compared with Harvard’s “big three” of

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<sup>5</sup> It is unsurprising that his *American Psychologist* obituary was written by his close colleague Gardner Lindzey.

history, government, and economics (p. 164). Through the increasingly perceived usefulness of the new social sciences during WWII, and a group of “dissatisfied faculty members” (p. 175) led by Gordon Allport, and including Parsons and Henry Murray, in 1943 calling for a reorganization of the social sciences, the Department of Social Relations was eventually founded in 1946. The Department fostered cross-disciplinary research and teaching, though its fragmented nature was exemplified even within the campus geography: “the Department had no single building of its own and consequently its staff was scattered across the Harvard campus” (p. 178). The Department came to an end in the early 1970s, but graduated several influential researchers such as psychologists Jerome S. Bruner and Stanley Milgram.

Lawrence Pervin is another graduate of Harvard’s Department of Social Relations (graduated in 1962) whose education was also expansive, including sociology, anthropology, and particularly clinical and personality psychology. Reflecting his time there, he is a proponent of cross-disciplinary work (which he sees as decreasing dramatically, see Pervin, 2012), and is an important figure in describing the shape of personality through his editorship of numerous textbook editions as well as disciplinary handbooks. In his general personality textbook, Pervin (1970) included older situationists, but he also mentioned Mischel’s influence. In a section on behaviour consistency and variation across situations, he wrote about two extreme views: characterology and situationism (p. 543). He cited trait psychology as an example of the characterology extreme, and social learning theory as an example of the situationist extreme—particularly noting Mischel’s 1968 critique.

Another graduate of Harvard’s Department of Social Relations who was very vocal about the controversy in his textbooks was Salvatore Maddi. He began his studies at Brooklyn College and focused on clinical psychology at Harvard, graduating in 1960. Maddi was a longtime

professor at the University of Chicago, and much of his later research focused on the concept of hardiness (e.g. Maddi & Kobasa, 1984); he even founded a consulting company called the Hardiness Institute (Maddi, 1996). Although initially many of the textbook authors initially dismissed the situationist position as not worthy of serious consideration, Maddi (1972) wrote about social learning theorists as a special case of behaviorism, and thought that even though Mischel criticizes traits that he still depends on them in his theories: “Although his position is intriguing, I am not so sure that, at this early stage in its development, it is really that different from other personological emphases ... It is my impression that when the trait concept is used carefully, it is very difficult to distinguish logically from Mischel’s emphasis” (p. 540).

There were many dismissals of situationism, which was often portrayed as too extreme. One author considered the lack of focus on situational determinants of behaviour to be a well-recognized limitation of current personality psychology, but did not view the grand situationist criticisms as justified (Levy, 1970). Another textbook author insisted that situationists such as Mischel and Bandura “actually do appeal constantly to psychodynamic processes and to traits” (Cartwright, 1974, p. 483); effectively arguing that the extreme situationist argument against internal determinants of behaviour (e.g. traits) is based on work that relies on conceptualizing and measuring internal determinants. Similarly, Wiggins et al. (1971) presented Walter Mischel as an extremist among social learning theorists, and the authors viewed social learning theory as a group of experimentalists attempting to apply learning theory to personality. The “strongly behavioral” social learning theorists, essentially a new form of behaviourists, argued “that the impression that people possess stable, enduring characteristics can be maintained only at the expense of glossing over inconsistencies and ignoring or reinterpreting discrepant actions” (p. 508).

The arguments against situationism that defended personality, and sometimes the very concept of the person or individual, bears a striking resemblance to the arguments against B.F. Skinner's radical behaviourism that defended free will. Intense reactions to radical behaviourism were of course also present in the popular culture given Skinner's status as a "visible scientist"—in some cases he "sparked the ire of popular audiences because his views subverted traditional American values such as the right to self-determination" (Rutherford, 2009, p. 20). Losing self-determination, in the very personal sense that behaviour might be more determined by the situation rather than the person, is certainly at the heart of many personality psychologists' reactions to Mischel's work. Later in life, Mischel (2001) understood Skinner as one of his three main influences (the other two being Julian Rotter and George Kelly), and considered much of his work to be an "attempt to integrate and transform these three influences into a new perspective" (p. 233). Mischel distinguished his challenge to the person as different from Skinner's in an essential way: "whereas Skinner's critique could be rejected within personality psychology as arbitrary and from an outsider ... my 1968 challenge traumatized the established paradigm and its guardians" (p. 235).

Though he thought of himself as an insider, another way of writing about Mischel and the situationist critics was to deny that they were personality psychologists or theorists at all. Arndt (1974), for example, clearly views situationists as inconsequential because their position precludes the very existence of personality and by extension makes their ideas outside the purview of personality psychology: "At one extreme is the *situationist* position, which holds that it is the immediate situation of the person that almost totally determines his behavior. No one who describes himself as a personality theorist could reasonably subscribe to the situationist view, since to do so is to deny the influence of any factors that the person brings to the situation;

that is, the situationist denies personality” (p. 245, his italics). This harsh dismissal of the situationist position continued into the decade for some writers, even though they had to devote more words to such positions given their rising popularity. In the third edition of his textbook, Salvador Maddi (1976) reorganized and expanded his take on social learning theorists into a devoted section. Maddi is evidently perplexed by the social learning theorists’ position, chalking up these extreme situationists as merely exhausted scientists:

Nobody in his private life seriously doubts that personality exists ... But once we try to specify the nature of personality in some precise, objective way, it seems to evaporate before our eyes, leaving us frustrated and uncertain. This has even happened to some psychologists, with the result that they have seriously contended that personality does not exist (e.g. Mischel, 1968) ... Such a contention, it seems to me, is as mad as personality is elusive. (p. 4).

In a very interesting, though not entirely surprising, twist on representing personists and situationists, Arndt (1974) talks about the disciplinary extremes as a bipolar trait dimension which personality psychologists and their theories can be measured on: “The relative number of constructs used by a theorist to describe situational factors can be used as a rough indication of his position on the person-situationism dimension” (p. 263). Thus, for some authors the only way to understand the sheer variety of research approaches and theories within their discipline was to apply their usual framework of trait dimensions. This view of course implies, as with other trait dimensions, that those on the extreme ends of the personist-situationist trait are abnormal and pathological cases.

Into the mid- and late-decade, writing about the controversy became more common, and linking it directly to Mischel's 1968 critique also became the norm. Most did not conflate the

contemporary situationist critiques with those from previous eras of psychology. In fact, Hall and Lindzey (1978) made a distinction between the two waves of situationist critiques (past and present) of traditional, individualist psychology, predicting that “there seems little doubt that this theoretical-empirical issue will continue to be of prime importance in decades to come” (p. 700). Donn Byrne had much to say about the issues in his 1974 textbook, apparently trying to catch up on all that has happened in the eight years since the publication of the previous edition of his textbook. His textbook is exemplary of the view that situationist critiques were threatening personality itself as a legitimate construct.

Drawing on Kuhnian language to aid his understandings of his discipline, Byrne (1974) wrote that “[t]here is something of a nonviolent revolution underway in personality psychology in which the emphasis is swinging away from personality variables and toward situational variables as the determinants of behavior” (p. 310). In agreement with Hall and Lindzey's (1978) later assessment of the field, Byrne went on to explain in a footnote: “As with many revolutions, these current interests can be seen as part of a cycle, a return to a much earlier psychological emphasis on the importance of the environment in determining behavior” (p. 310). Byrne cited Julian Rotter's 1954 book *Social Learning and Clinical Psychology* as a precursor to the current revolution, and explains that in the late 1960s psychologists were critiquing personality at its core: “The tenor of the criticism changed, however, and the question was not one of whether better tests should be built, but whether something was seriously wrong with the whole idea” (p. 313-4).

Some authors made use of Lee Cronbach's famous 1957 article (and earlier presidential address) that explained how psychology was split into two main disciplines: the experimental and the correlational. The experimental discipline had a focus on the manipulation and control



of behaviour, while the correlational disciplines focused on the measurement and prediction of the self. Green (1976) wrote briefly about the personological-situationist split in personality traditions and links them to the experimental-correlational split within the greater discipline. He argued that these approaches have been fused into what most contemporary psychologists do: “this method has been widely applied to the study of personality and has led to the identification of a subarea within personality psychology that is usually called ‘experimental personality’” (Green, p. 1). Much like Cronbach argued that an interactionist approach that fused the distinct disciplines would be useful in certain research contexts, some authors assumed that this had happened in personality psychology—a fusion which is aligned with the experimental-correlational approaches of factor analytic pioneers such as Hans Eysenck and Raymond Cattell.

As early as 1976 some textbook authors were claiming the apparent controversy was over and there were now simply some prickly residual naysayers: “Although the controversy is largely over and the accord is fairly general, there is still a splinter position of situationism that lingers” (Maddi, p. 584). Nevertheless, another group of authors (Wiggins et al., 1976), in their section on the trait-psychometric approach to personality, still considered Mischel's 1968 book “[a] highly influential and controversial attack on the trait concept in personality. This book raises a number of very basic issues that are still unresolved in contemporary personality assessment” (p. 95). Another author also positions Mischel's work, along with that of George Kelly, as important critiques against the trait approach: “Trait theories, indeed the concept of trait itself, have come under heavy criticism in contemporary psychology” (Monte, 1977, p.7).

In 1978, although according to some the controversy was over, this was not the case for other textbook authors. It is clear that for those who considered the controversy alive and well that Mischel's book was a resounding attack launched directly at the concept of traits—although

the book also challenged psychodynamic approaches. A great example of authors who viewed the controversy as alive and important, and particularly about traits, is Lamberth, Rappaport, & Rappaport (1978), as they include a large, two-page box entitled “**Controversy: Do Traits Exist?**”:

There were murmurings against this excessive trait interpretation, and in 1968, Walter Mischel published a well-reasoned, articulate, and scathing denunciation [sic] of the idea that traits were so important ... Ten years ago, Mischel argued that although the trait approach was logically plausible, it broke down when put to the empirical test. A decade later, Mischel is still arguing that too little has been done ... Because so much of personality psychology had been built on the highly plausible idea that traits exist and control behavior, it was almost inevitable that many would reject Mischel’s arguments (they did) and that any change would be slow (it has been). Only history will show which view is correct” (pp. 88-9).

### **Was Interactionism Part of the Story?**

In the previous section we learned that slightly less than half (45%) of the 1970s personality psychology textbooks sampled included mention of the person-situation controversy. A little less than half (40%) of these textbooks included some mention of interactionism, and (almost) always in the context of the controversy. This is to be expected as interactionism is, at least currently, commonly understood as the resolution to the controversy. The inclusion of interactionism as part of the narrative increased as the decade unfolded. During the first half of the decade every textbook that included mention of the controversy does not include interactionism, with the technical exception of one book (Pervin, 1970) which focused on earlier forms of interactionism. From 1975 until 1979, all textbooks that mention the controversy

included interactionism as part of the story; with the exception of one textbook (Monte, 1977).

The earliest mention of interactionism, noted above, is Lawrence Pervin (1970). When he wrote about interactionism, he discussed what could be viewed as the precursors to 1970s interactionism, citing Henry Murray and Kurt Lewin as two examples of interactionists working within psychology. Pervin understood behavior as “a function of the interactions between individuals and environments” (p. 547), and goes on to cite Cronbach (1957). Pervin is most likely alluding to the closing sections of Cronbach’s famous article on “The Two Disciplines of Scientific Psychology,” where Cronbach discussed applied and practical psychology as a realm of research where experimental and correlational, or treatment and individual, can and should interact: “neither the traditional predictive model of the correlator nor the traditional experimental comparison of mean differences is an adequate formulation of the decisions confronting the applied psychologist” (p. 679). Emblematic of the way the same or similar issues and controversies recur in academic psychology, Cronbach (1957) argued that in the context of applied psychology (in this case when studying the interaction of aptitude and learning conditions) that researchers:

should deal with treatments and persons simultaneously. Treatments are characterized by many dimensions; so are persons ... we should *design* treatments, not to fit the average person, but to fit groups of students with particular aptitude patterns.

Conversely, we should seek out the aptitudes which correspond to (or interact with) modifiable aspects of the treatment. (pp. 680-1).

Five years later, Pervin (1975) once again wrote about interactionism but this time directly attributed it to Walter Mischel. Pervin wrote about the person-situation controversy as part of the “internal-external issue that has historically been with us,” (p. 500) and cited

Mischel's 1968 book as the provocation that transformed this old issue into a contemporary controversy. This mirrors Pervin's understanding of the controversy and its allied concepts that he conveys in his separate series of textbooks on *Current Controversies in Personality Psychology*. Pervin pointed out some counter-criticisms to the situationist critique of personality, and then mentioned that Mischel (1973) eventually adopted a compromised (i.e. interactionist) rather than an extreme position. He argued that personality theorists would generally agree with "Mischel's emphasis on both organism and situation variables" (p. 501), and goes on to cite his own work (Pervin, 1968) and once again Cronbach's (1957) famous article to highlight the importance of the interactionist approach. Similarly, Green (1976) cites Mischel (1973) to support the notion that researchers are trying to bridge the situationist-personologist, or the experimental-correlational, split (as he links the two) with studies trying to explain behavior as an interaction between situational and individual differences. As more fitting with the usual historical narrative, Green ended his interactionist section with a discussion of Norman Endler's interactionism research program.

Norman S. Endler (1931-2003) is the most commonly associated researcher with the 1970s interactionist movement often placed as the consequent (and/or resolution) of the 1970s situationist critiques and person-situation controversy. Endler's early graduate education was at McGill University in Montreal under the tutelage of Donald Hebb (1904-1985). He then earned his clinical psychology doctorate with Joseph McVicker Hunt (1906-1991) at the University of Illinois (McCann & Flett, 2004). Endler's early 1960s work on measuring anxiety with the S-R (stimulus-response) Inventory of Anxiousness led to articles coauthored by Hunt which emphasized the importance of the interactions of person and situation in personality description (e.g. Endler & Hunt, 1966, 1969). Even before Mischel's 1968 book brought the person-

situation controversy to forefront of the discipline, Endler viewed it as a futile point of contention between social psychologists and personologists (referencing the earlier wave of situationists) given what his research revealed: “Like many disputes in the history of science, however this one ... over whether the main source of variation in behavior is in situations or in persons turns out to be a pseudoissue” (Endler & Hunt, 1966, p. 337). Endler spent most of his career at York University, and his promotion of an interactionism, or an interactional psychology, gained steam during the peak (or, according to some textbook authors, near the end) of the person-situation controversy (e.g. Endler & Magnusson, 1976).

Salvatore Maddi, the University of Chicago psychologist who minimized and scoffed at what he viewed as an empty critique of personality and its ensuing *faux* controversy, also used Endler’s interactionism as the resolution to the controversy in the third edition of his textbook series (1976). According to Maddi, Walter Mischel had “somewhat reluctantly played a major role in the recent controversy” (p. 581), and the fiery critique contained within his slim *Personality and Assessment* (1968) “ignited heated controversy that raged for several years and now show signs of having abated” (p. 582). After citing the work of Endler and Hunt (1969), as well as Endler (1973), Maddi concluded that the so-called controversy has been swept away by an overwhelming agreement by personality theorists and researchers on an interactionist position, adding that “[m]any now believe that the controversy was a pseudo-issue in the first place” (p. 583). Maddi ends his discussion of this pseudo-issue and the interactionist panacea by providing a final caveat: warning that there is still a minority of psychologists influenced by the situationist critique, citing Donald Fiske (1974) and his consternation with the low reliability of trait measures as an example of this persistent pestering.

Personality psychologists Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindzey, in the third edition of their

celebrated and widely read *Theories of Personality* (1978) textbook series, seemed generally unsurprised by the interactionist position. As noted in this chapter's previous section, Hall and Lindzey connected the dots to the previous generation's trait *versus* situationist theorists during the two decades leading up to WWII, citing Allport (or Cattell) and Hartshorne and May (e.g. Hartshorne, May, and Maller, 1929), respectively. They saw a recurrence of this debate over the past decade, beginning with Mischel's 1968 critique and leading to the work of Endler and Magnusson (1976), Magnusson and Endler (1977), as well as research by Bem and Allen (1974)—the latter working toward a interactionist position to understand cross-situational behaviour. They wrote that interactionism was “[a]n intermediate position [that] assigns a significant role to both situational variables and to traits or dispositions” (p. 700); but unlike Maddi (1976), they do not believe the controversy and debate around these issues have ended. Conversely, they thought that these debates would continue for several more decades—perhaps basing this assumption on the historical recurrence they saw in psychological debates, making their understanding of the issues similar to Pervin's.

Also similar to Pervin (1970; 1975), Lamberth, Rappaport, and Rappaport (1978) held Lee Cronbach as the forefather of the interactionist position. They summarize the dialectic lesson Cronbach provided in his 1957 presidential speech (which was later published as his famous *American Psychologist* article): “Cronbach argued that the two approaches [experimental and correlational; situation and person] have much to learn from each other and should be combined” (p. 203). According to this trio of textbook authors, Cronbach's two distinct approaches *were* combined into the interactionist approach; although, as previously noted, in their section on the controversy they lament that “[a] decade later, Mischel is still arguing that too little has been done ... in taking the interaction of the individual and the environment into account” (p. 89).

Within the 40% of the 1970s textbooks that contained mention of interactionism, it is clear that Norman Endler and his colleagues played a prominent role as expected; particularly in the latter half of the decade after they had published even more books and articles on the issue.

Nevertheless, figures such as Lee Cronbach, Kurt Lewin, and even Walter Mischel himself (especially Mischel, 1973), are included as representatives of the dialectical solution to the person-situation controversy known as interactionism.

**Is this the story of the FFM, of factor analysis, or of traits in general?**

Unsurprisingly, there was close to no mention at all of the FFM within the sample of 1970s textbooks. Gordon Allport was the psychologist most commonly associated with trait psychology, and to a lesser extent factor analytic psychologists such Raymond B. Cattell and his 16PF or Hans Eysenck and his then-two factor-model<sup>6</sup>. Ironically, the only textbook author to cite any of the early FFM research (e.g. that of Warren Norman, and Tupes and Christal) is Walter Mischel—the person who was supposed to be keeping the FFM in the margins. He presents the FFM within his section on traits. As the person-situation controversy is not related to the FFM in most of these textbooks and the FFM had not yet become the dominant model within the trait-psychometric approach, the controversy is usually placed within the general story of trait psychology. Factor analysis, the methodology behind the FFM and most associated today with the psychometric-trait method, does not appear in all discussions of the traits and the person-situation controversy. Indeed, sometimes factor analysis is presented as a peculiar and unusual approach to trait psychology; other times, it is presented as the disjuncture between the

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<sup>6</sup> Eysenck's model became a three-factor model later in the decade (1977) with the inclusion of Psychoticism to Extraversion and Neuroticism; transforming his EN model to the famous PEN model of personality.

earlier Allportian trait psychology and the newer (ostensibly more empirically- and scientifically-oriented) psychometric-trait psychology.

Donn Byrne (1974), as previously noted, saw the controversy as “nonviolent revolution” (p. 310) that was affecting the focus of the entirety of personality psychology. He viewed Walter Mischel as carrying Julian Rotter’s situationist torch to Stanford University, carrying the situationist critique as far as it could be theoretically taken (i.e. there is no personality). Byrne thought that given the various experiments and studies that showed inconsistency of behavior across time and situations that “[t]he implications of these kinds of data have only slowly begun to influence research and thinking in personality psychology” (p. 317). Byrne (1974) saw the situationist critique as offering a way to progress to personality psychology’s next paradigm, using the writings of Thomas Kuhn to guide his epistemological and meta-theoretical speculations about his field (see pp. 325-330).

In contrast, Cartwright (1974) understood Mischel’s (1968) situationist critique of traits and psychoanalysis, and other situationists (such as Albert Bandura, and even Norman Endler), as mendacious enemies that traditional personality psychologists were battling; situationists were personologists in disguise who constantly relied on traits and psychodynamic processes in their research and theories. Cartwright essentially considered the researchers he understood as situationists to be trivial, unimportant, and dishonest enemies of the trait and psychodynamic approaches: “Since [Allport’s] earliest considerations many more guns have been added to the enemy’s battery” (p. 248). Wiggins et al. (1971) did not explicitly write about a person-situation controversy, or even debate, but they understood the social learning theorists as a new twist on experimental behaviorism which was in “conflict with traditional approaches to personality which emphasize traits” (p. 508).



Hall and Lindzey (1970; 1978) wrote about the “person-society controversy” within the context of Allport’s trait approach, and criticisms thereof. In this chapter on traits, they segued into Cattell’s “factor theories” of personality and presented factor analysis as a promising but controversial method. They present Allport, father of traits, as deeply skeptical of this methodological development within the measurement of traits. They wrote that in personality psychology, “an area of psychology that has been characterized by sensitivity and subjectivity,” factor analytic researchers “introduced a welcome aura of toughmindedness and emphasis upon the concrete” (1970, p. 409). Nevertheless, much of their discussion of the methodology focuses on its many controversies; and although they believed advances in the method had resolved many of these issues, there were still lingering controversies such as “how many factors one should extract from a given correlation matrix” (p. 412). Hall and Lindzey (1970) ultimately predicted factor analysis as a methodology, and not the contemporary research projects that were using it, would be an enduring aspect of personality theory: “One might contend that the content of factor theories may or may not make a fruitful contribution to future theories of personality, but the style or mode of approach of these theorists will surely have an impact upon the way in which future theory will develop” (p. 412).

Pervin (1970; 1975) placed the controversy in a position of intellectual disagreement that transcended the subdiscipline. He saw situationism, such as Mischel’s 1968 critique, as an opposing view to characterology. Pervin placed psychodynamic theories as an example of situationism, although this is one of the personist approaches that Mischel argued against in *Personality and Assessment* (1968). Pervin briefly wrote about factor analysis as a robust methodology used in research which casted a shadow of doubt on the situationist critiques: “Finding traits through factor analysis certainly gives support to the view that there are

characteristic ways of behaving across situations,” (p. 543) adding that what is left out of situationist critiques are “many factor-analytic studies that show consistency to behavior across situations” (p. 546).

Levy (1970) also placed the situationist criticisms as a challenge to trait psychology (and more generally what he called “dimensional theorists”), and offered a brief summary of factor analysis along with its many shortcomings and the criticisms lodged against the method. Levy believed that regardless of the current limitations of factor analysis, “there can be no doubt that the future of [trait] theories ... cannot be divorced from that of factor analysis. We may anticipate further refinements in factor-analytic techniques so that many of its ... greatest limitations will be overcome” (p. 216). This cautious and skeptical optimism about factor analysis appears in many of the 1970s textbooks. For example, Maddi (1972) briefly mentioned the newer methodology and thought that factor analysts used “traits” as a label for their factors in a very broad and probably misguided way (see p. 421)—in essence distinguishing true trait theorists from factor theorists.

Although there were criticisms of factor analysis, some saw it as representative of the next step in the psychometric-trait tradition. Cartwright (1974) argued that researchers are obligated to retain the psychometric trait approach, regardless of criticisms enemies had lodged against it; to bolster this stance he discussed what he views as the runaway success and substantial progress made in the measurement and research of the original personality trait (i.e. intelligence). Cartwright championed how empirically-grounded methodology that undergirds the trait approach, such as factor analysis, resulted in testable theoretical claims: “But note how clearly these differences may be stated: ‘There are three factors’ versus ‘There are a dozen or more.’ Not only are they stated, but they are stated in terms that can readily lead to empirical

test” (p. 298). This praise of the ability of factor analysis to offer an empirical, atheoretical, no-nonsense approach to providing psychologists insights into the truth of personality recurs in the 1980s textbook sample. As explained by one trio of textbook authors, “[f]actor analysis is a method of determining traits that is based on a belief that there are natural, unitary structures that are the substance of personality” (Lamberth, Rappaport, & Rappaport, 1978, p. 97).

An interesting anomaly that also fits with this praise of factor analysis is Hogan’s (1976) *Personality Theory: The Personological Tradition*. Very early in the textbook he offered up his praise and unique understanding of factor analysis and the “empirical tradition” (i.e. psychometric trait approach). Hogan mentioned nothing about the person-situation controversy, or Mischel’s famous 1968 book, but took the time to draw parallels between factor analysts and phrenologists—relying on the work of MacKinnon (1944) who originally made this comparison. Hogan argued that factor analysts such as R.B. Cattell, H.J. Eysenck, and J.P. Guilford, though they use more advanced methodology, have conceptually “added little to [Franz Joseph Gall’s] original formulations” (p. 7). Meaning this comparison to phrenology in a positive way, Hogan (1976) saw the empirical and atheoretical (more specifically, any theory is preceded by empirical data, not *vice versa*) tradition of trait psychometrics as admirable tradition but ill-fitted for his textbook on theory: “Because of the strongly atheoretical emphasis of the empirical tradition, it will be discussed only briefly in this book” (p. 7). While Hogan did not mention the controversy or Mischel in the context of the “empirical tradition,” Wiggin’s et al. (1976) at the very least relegated the topic to a “Further Reading” section on the psychometric trait approach. They offered students an exciting tease of Mischel’s 1968 book and the ensuing controversy, but little else in the way of explanation: “A highly influential and controversial attack on the trait concept in personality. This book raises a number of very basic issues that are still unresolved in

contemporary personality assessment” (p. 95).

At the closing of the decade, there were still a number of different ways the person-situation controversy (or debate, or the situationist critiques) was situated. Monte (1977) saw Mischel (1968) and others—citing Kelly (1955) as another example—as part of a wave of heavy criticism against trait theories that had been largely allayed by the rise of interactionism research. Lamberth, Rappaport, and Rappaport (1978) saw the issue explicitly as a controversy that challenged the ontology of traits, and to which personality psychologists have devoted far too little earnest attention. Engler (1979) simply viewed Mischel’s 1968 critique as promoting the “behavioral specificity” (p. 226) found within social learning theory, talking about Mischel’s work in order to distinguish social learning and holistic approaches from psychoanalysis. Perhaps as the popularity of factor analytic approaches to trait research, and the FFM in particular, increases during the 1980s (what Goldberg, in his history of the FFM, referred to as the FFM Renaissance), textbook authors will more clearly portray the person-situation controversy and the disciplinary crisis as a detour to the acceptance of the FFM—mirroring the official FFM histories.

### **Walter Mischel’s Textbooks**

In addition to playing his role in the discipline’s history during the 1970s as heretic and villain of personality psychology to many, as sage and hero to some, and even as reasonable and moderate forerunner of the interactionist movement to others, Walter Mischel also began publishing his own long-running series of personality textbooks. In his modestly and generically entitled *Introduction to Personality* (1971), Mischel runs the gamut of the topics of interest in this current analysis. Indeed, his textbooks often provided the student much more detail about and admiration for the very concepts Mischel is claimed to fiercely oppose within the official

FFM histories. Given Mischel's prominent position in this part of the FFM's "curious history," and his textbook's detail and longevity, it seemed appropriate to devote a separate section to analyzing his writings.

At the very beginning of his textbook, Mischel (1971) wrote in awe and admiration of this vast thing called "personality psychology." Mischel, like many of his contemporary textbook authors, took great pains to attempt to coherently illustrate personality psychology for the tyro presumably reading along. In similar fashion to other textbook authors, he pointed toward the endlessly sprawling and perpetually changing chaos of personality psychology to help explain the absence of any clear and concise definition of the field and its contents. Recognizing it as a field or area of disciplinary psychology (using the terms interchangeably), he understood the structure and place of personality psychology in similar way to Tucker's (2011) description of the field forty years later: as a central hub from which spokes run through every neighbouring field within and without the discipline. Mischel was struck by how much broader the purview of personality was than other areas of psychology, while it also overlapped and intertwined with all other areas of psychology:

The field of personality is at the crossroads of most areas of psychology: it is the point of convergence between the study of human development and change, of abnormality and deviance as well as of competence and fulfillment, of emotions and thought, of learning, and of social relations. The breadth of the field is not surprising because for many psychologists the object of personality study has been nothing less than the total person. Given such an ambitious goal, the student cannot expect to find simple definitions of what personality study includes. (p. 2).

Although he began his explanation of the field as indecipherable, he quickly thereafter

opined the direction personality was headed. Mischel believed that personality psychology was progressing from a field focused on theorizing the nature of humans toward a more empirically-oriented, research-based scientific study of persons and society. Unlike textbook authors such as Hogan (1976), who viewed the empirical tradition or future direction of personality psychology to consist largely of psychometric trait approaches (particularly the adoption and implementation of factor analysis into trait measurement and theory), Mischel (1971) thought that much of the contemporary empirical research “focuses on the role of specific social experiences and environmental events in personality development” (p. 6). Given Mischel’s training under Rotter at Ohio State University, and his association within the social learning movement at Stanford with other psychologists such as Bandura, it is perhaps unsurprising that he believed the future of personality psychology would largely have to do with environment and society (i.e. “the situation”).

Mischel (1971) did not write about a person-situation controversy or a person-situation debate in the first edition of his textbook, but he did devote a large section to trait psychology and its (in many ways superior, at least in his view) alternatives. He explained that trait theory was a more sophisticated and accurate update of personality typology. A trait was a measurable psychological construct that was best understood as a fluid dimension rather than typology; an individual possessed a degree of a trait (e.g. a score on an extraversion scale) rather than being on type of person or another (e.g. an extravert, introvert, or ambivert). He provided Norman's (1963) proposed five traits of human personality as his primary example (Norman's early FFM consists of extraversion or surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and culture). Citing FFM research in a personality textbook during the 1970s, judging by the current sample, is extremely rare; and making it centre-stage is truly unique. Mischel explained that if

we are to believe that a position along a trait dimension, such as extraversion, is observably stable across situations and time, then the personality psychologist's *raison d'etre* is to construct reliable and valid instruments that measure a person's internal traits.

He further explained what this psychometric-trait approach elides from its focus: “[measurement] has been the predominant concern of traditional trait approaches ... Less attention has been paid to the effects of environmental conditions on traits and behavior” (p. 21). Given that at the beginning of his textbook Mischel opined that contemporary psychology was shifting its focus toward the situational (i.e. environment and social), pointing out this glaring lacuna of the psychometric-trait approach could be read as Mischel implying that this approach is something of the discipline's past. Nevertheless, Mischel seemed to partially admire the psychometric-trait approach, and indicated that research from this approach had “help[ed] to illuminate the organization or structure of personality and indicate what kinds of behaviors are most likely to occur together” (p. 22). But he did temper his praise with a discussion of the many questions of human psychology the psychometric-trait approach alone could not answer, implying a complementary or updated approach that could answer these elusive questions.

The psychological approach best suited to address questions about complex individual and interpersonal behaviour, according to Mischel (1971), is of course his very own approach: social learning. To support his claim that the social learning approach has been a fruitful endeavour, Mischel explained that the principles of learning had “been taken out of the animal laboratory and applied to diverse human domains” (p. 70), offering the work of Julian Rotter (1954), Bandura (Bandura & Walters, 1963), his own writing (Mischel, 1968), and surprisingly even research published by pioneering and legendary factor-analytic trait psychologist Hans J. Eysenck (Eysenck & Rachmann, 1965). He attempted to strengthen the clear distinction

between social learning and psychometric-trait approaches in the mind of the student reading along, and explained that trait theories “emphasize differences *between* people in their response to the same stimulus. In contrast, social behavior theories emphasize the behavior of the *same* person as a result of even slight changes in conditions” (p. 78, his italics). This enforced dichotomy between ways of doing psychology clearly echoed Cronbach's (1957) two disciplines—correlational and experimental—although Mischel does not rely on the former APA president's disciplinary insights to guide his textbook explanations to nearly the same extent that some other 1970s authors did (e.g. Pervin 1970; 1975). Regardless of this exploration of his area of expertise (social learning theory and research), Mischel returned to trait theory as the textbook progresses in order to outline what he considered “[p]robably the most important impact of the trait approach” (p. 113)—its methodology.

Although Mischel appreciated and admired the sophisticated methodology and tools within the trait psychologist's arsenal—tools that other psychologists frequently use, as Mischel wrote about his research on the delay of gratification as a measurable trait in this textbook—he offered the student a critical look at both personality tests and factor analysis. His skeptical tone towards the trait approach's tests and methods obviously mirror his 1968 book, but his skepticism concerning factor analysis also mirrors other 1970s personality textbook authors who were not as skeptical of the psychometric-trait tradition—some were even proponents of the tradition. Despite having used test construction and trait measurement in the context of his experimental research, such as his experiments on the delay of gratification trait, Mischel wrote in his introductory text to the personality novice a weighty metaphysical caveat: “In spite of some early hopes to the contrary, no psychological test provides anything remotely analogous to a mental X-ray. A test merely yields a sample of behavior under particular eliciting conditions”



(p. 120).

Mischel tempered the celebratory optimism around the psychometrician's tools of discovery, by demoting them from scientific processing machines that churn out objective data about an individual's internal life to scientific, but limited, human-made objects that provide the researcher with data tainted by myriad contextual confounds and layers of intertwined subjectivity. In a quote that perhaps best represents that "extremist" side of Mischel that some psychologists only saw, he went to explain that "[n]o matter how carefully standardized, the test is never able to eliminate or 'control out' all determinants other than the trait of interest" (p. 120). The status of Walter Mischel as the head honcho of the situationist extremists (as many authors seem to understand them), or as the worst case of the new school behaviourists (i.e. West coast social learning theorists), is quite apparent in his 1970 textbook. Given that the first edition was published a mere two years after his admittedly polemical *Personality and Assessment*, a book he was most likely working on concurrently with this textbook, it is not too surprising that a strong situationist position is implicitly and explicitly woven throughout this text. Nevertheless, this textbook also contains a (relative to the rest of the current textbook sample) a lot of information on factor analysis methodology and research projects; particularly focusing the uptick of five-factor research that almost all other textbook authors, proponents of factor analysis or otherwise, chose to exclude.

Paralleling his skepticism of the ontology and epistemology of personality tests *per se*, Mischel cited similar metaphysical concerns with regards to factor analysis. Within a section entitled "Does Factor Analysis Discover Traits?" he reasoned that although factor analysis potentially could "reveal the basic traits of a person" (p. 140), it is a method that does not necessarily result in such discoveries. Similar to Salvatore Maddi's (1972) skepticism about the

ontological unity of factors and traits—despite being displeased with the rise of social learning theorists such as Mischel—he viewed factor labels as an arbitrary name given to a correlation found by a particular measure within a particular context using a particular set of subjects. Given that he had already established the dubiousness of personality measures themselves as scientific tools that only yield objective and non-contextual data, *ipso facto* factor analysis, which depends on these tests, also warranted a skeptical glare from the contemporary, experimental, situationist psychologist. Essentially, Mischel viewed factor analysis as a “very useful tool” for simplifying and reducing patterns within a large data set; but a tool that could not “go beyond the limitations of the original tests” (p. 140).

In the context of factor analysis, Mischel (1971) wrote about the FFM: particularly Norman (1963) and Tupes & Christal (1958; 1961). He notes how exciting it was for independent researchers to find remarkably similar results regarding the structure of personality, that the “same set of five relatively independent factors appeared consistently across several studies” (p. 141). Mischel even pointed out that that these basic five factors were not only found in studies where persons rated their peers’ personality, but they were also discovered in studies where complete strangers rated each other (e.g. Passini & Norman, 1966). Singing the same skeptical tune, though, Mischel dampens this excitement by explaining that this rating system (particularly in the context of persons rating the personality of strangers) could be quite low on construct validity: “the factors identified by trait ratings may reflect the social stereotypes and concepts of the judges rather than the trait organization of the rated persons” (p. 141). Again Mischel raised the scientific limitations of any form of mental measurement, but briefly discussed as an addendum to his critique “sophisticated trait research” that takes “situations and ‘stimulus conditions’ into account seriously” (p. 149) in a section about the interaction of

dispositions and conditions. Herein he also briefly highlighted ecological psychology as possible route for this type of interaction or holistic research to take. Discussion of interactionism in the first edition is limited; though it was greatly protracted in the second edition.

Walter Mischel opened his *Introduction to Personality 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (1976) by making note of the addition of a new chapter that the “flood of theoretical and empirical developments dealing with the role of the environment, the analysis of situations, the conceptualization of individual differences, and the interaction of the person with specific conditions” (p. *ix*). He admitted that as of late in academic psychology there had been a decry against “situationism,” exemplified best by personality psychologists lamenting the behaviorist and anti-personality tone of situationism, such as Carlson’s (1971) famous article wondering “where is the person?” in contemporary psychology. Mischel seemed quite perplexed by those accusing him and his ilk of wanting to excise the person from personality: “This is a serious charge; losing the person in personality psychology would be as bizarre as losing matter in physics or the elements in chemistry” (p. 497). He added that personality psychology is obviously the study of the person, and any disagreement and criticisms are about *how* psychologists ought to study the person—not about how to best omit the person altogether. Mischel took this opportunity to distance himself from the charge of situationist extremist, and instead cites himself (Mischel, 1973) when explaining to the reader that there is now a consensus in academic psychology that “an adequate approach to personality must deal both with the person and the situation” (p. 95).

Rather than understanding the person-situation controversy as a monolithic event or era that he devilishly instigated by tilting the person-situation see-saw dangerously toward the latter, Mischel understands the issue as a series of controversies surrounding the exploration of how a person and his or her situation interact: “The controversies are complex, the implications are

profound, and there is little agreement on how to resolve the basic issues” (p. 95). He kept his sections on traits, psychometrics, and factor analysis relatively the same as the first edition (including his highlighting of Norman’s FFM research as a main example of contemporary factor analytic research), and tacked on a new chapter devoted entirely to discussing “The Interaction of Person and Situation.”

Mischel (1976) began his discussion of interactionism by explaining the issue of the specificity of personality traits, stating that research findings against trait approaches “may be leading to a crisis in the area” (p. 493). After having explained the shortcomings of the trait approach in understanding behaviour, he compared this with research that demonstrated how research on situations (e.g. environments, ecologies, settings, etc.) also produce non-generalizable and weak effects. Mischel uses a quote from Bowers (1973) to clearly convey his meaning: “Although it is undoubtedly true that behavior is more situation specific than trait theory acknowledged ... situations are more person specific than is commonly recognized” (p. 307, as cited by Mischel, p. 398). Ultimately, Mischel (1976) thought of the interactionist approach as a step toward a more unified and complex “image of man”—one which, although filled with the promise of rendering our psychological models of humans more accurate and realistic, was also filled with the promise of defying modes of thinking about personality with categories and labels.

## **Discussion**

There was talk about controversy and revolution in some of these textbooks, though it did not usually near discussion of a full-blown disciplinary crisis, nor was the controversy tied to any general skepticism toward traits that was in the air (or in the *Zeitgeist*). Of course, such assessments might only happen retrospectively. Many authors, particularly those from Harvard’s

Department of Social Relations such as Lawrence Pervin and Gardner Lindzey, saw the person-situation controversy as important but were unsurprised by it—understanding it as another manifestation of a long-running argument in psychology. Salvatore Maddi was extremely negative about Mischel’s critique, understanding it as anti-personality and perhaps even another version of radical behaviourism. Though some, such as Maddi and even Endler, viewed the controversy as a pseudo-issue that had been resolved, other authors saw it as an important debate that would continue into the following decades.

The person-situation controversy, when it was discussed, was usually placed within the story of trait psychology generally. Its connection to the FFM was not made, though the FFM was not yet a popular or well-known model. From the viewpoint of the official FFM history, the controversy and Mischel were impeding the discovery and acceptance of the FFM, thus perhaps as we move into the FFM Renaissance (i.e. the 1980s) and beyond the connections will be made. Interestingly, the only textbook author to discuss the FFM was Mischel, who focused on Norman’s version of the FFM as an example of factor analysis—and not in a wholly destructive and critical light as would be expected from the FFM histories. Factor analysis as a method had some presence in discussions about trait psychology, and although it was understood as a potentially very useful method many were skeptical of its application to personality—again, particularly those coming from Harvard’s Department of Social Relations, including Allport himself (as Hall and Lindzey explain in their textbook series).

## Chapter 2:

### The Controversy in 1980s Personality Textbooks

In this chapter I continue the analysis of personality textbooks. Some of these textbooks are revised editions, such as Walter Mischel's or Lawrence Pervin's. These were chosen to continue the analysis from the 1970s textbooks into the 1980s as following editions were published, and to see if these authors changed their understandings and writings about the topics of interest as time went on. Other textbooks are original editions new to the analysis, and for the sake of variety they range from famous psychologists such as Hans Eysenck, to unknown psychologists such as Alex Ross. The inclusion of new authors and their first editions will determine which revised editions are included for consideration in the 1990s sample (i.e. their future editions are included whenever possible).

Table 2

*1980s Sample (# of textbooks per year)*

1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
4	1	1	0	3	4	1	2	2	2

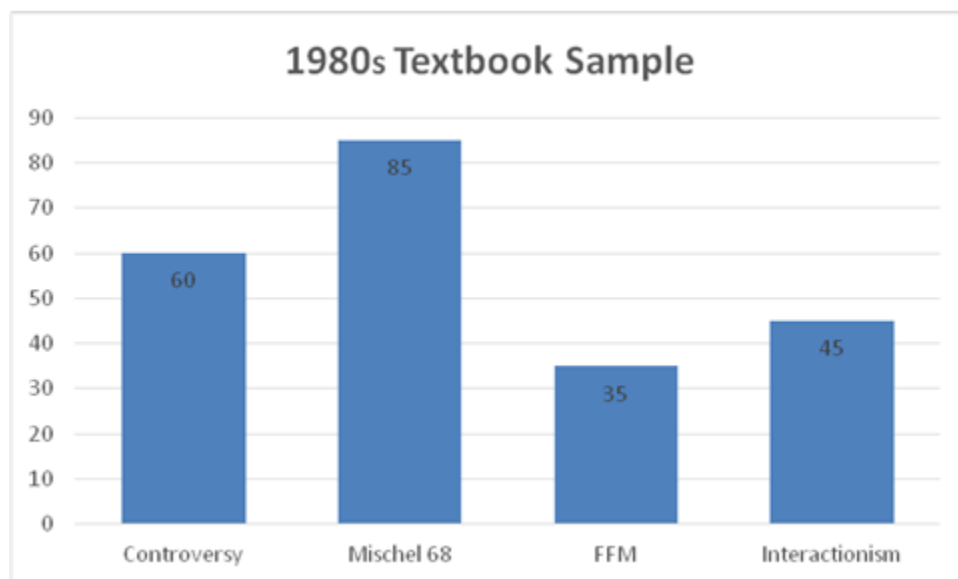


Figure 2: Inclusion (%) of topics in 1980s personality textbooks.

### Was There Controversy?

In the 1980s personality psychology textbooks sample inclusion of all topics of interest to this thesis increased; including the person-situation controversy itself. 60% of the 1970s ( $n = 20$ ) textbooks analyzed in the previous chapter included some mention of the controversy (or a debate or crisis). While still included in over half of the textbooks sampled, it appears that the person-situation controversy is not essential enough to be a surefire inclusion for every textbook author tackling the arduous task of summarizing personality psychology. Interestingly, Walter Mischel's (in)famous 1968 publication *Personality and Assessment* was included far more often (85%) than any discussion of a particular controversy or debate that it may or may not have instigated. As in the previous chapter, this sub-section will explore how these authors understood and wrote about the controversy—at least those who chose to include it. At the close of the 1970s, some textbook authors viewed the controversy as old hat while others hailed it as the tip of the iceberg. Textbook authors of the 1980s either understood the controversy as

something dead and of the past, or something that was still very much alive in contemporary personality psychology.

Although there was some discussion of the person-situation controversy during the opening of the 1980s in these textbooks, the topic was usually demoted to a “debate,” rather than a full-blown controversy or crisis. These debates were often summarized as harsh criticisms from situationists. Monte in his second edition of *Beneath the Mask* (1980) did not particularly reword or update his discussion of the debate, calling it “heavy criticism in contemporary psychology” (p. 9) from situationists such as Walter Mischel. Liebert and Spiegler (1982) similarly saw the debate as consisting largely of “scathing critiques” and “attacks” (p. 234) from the situationist side, citing Mischel as standing “[a]t the forefront of this group of critics” (p. 165), along with others such as Krasner and Ullman (1973).

Textbook authors in the first half of the 1980s who did not write about a person-situation controversy or debate did still write about Walter Mischel's 1968 critique to some extent. For example, Ewen (1980) mentioned briefly that there were some psychologists (particularly Mischel) who viewed the environment and interpersonal aspects of warranting much more attention than internal and intrapersonal aspects. He went on to mention that “even Allport himself indicated a similar concern” (p. 272), citing Allport (1968) to support this claim. Ewen (1984) repeated this pithy observation about situationist critique in his next edition. Although Hergenhahn (1980) mentioned neither the person-situation controversy, nor Walter Mischel's 1968 book, in the first edition of his textbook, he added a brief write-up about Mischel's situationist critique in the Social Learning chapter of his second edition (Hergenhahn. 1984). He paid particular attention to Mischel's challenge to the assumption of behavioural consistency across situations, noting that “Mischel calls this weak correlation the *personality coefficient*” (p.



237, his italics).

During the 1980s, Lawrence Pervin (1980; 1984; 1989) continued to explain the person-situation controversy within an historical context. He had previously subsumed the controversy beneath the greater and long-running internal-external controversy—though his wording this time seems to equate the two controversies. As he explained, “[s]ince the publication of Mischel’s book and its development of this issue, considerable attention has been given to the internal-external (person-situation) controversy” (Pervin, 1980, p. 16). He understood the controversy/controversies as a double round of debates: the first round having been about whether persons or situations control behaviour; the second having been about whether persons or situations were more important. A clear distinction between these similar-sounding debates is not exactly offered, but one could understand Pervin’s mini-history lesson as such: first, psychologists debated which aspects of reality (internal or external aspects) determined human behaviour (an ontological argument regarding causality); and then, psychologists debated which aspect of reality they ought to focus their science upon (an epistemological argument regarding the best source of or tactic toward scientific knowledge). Despite having framed these debates and controversies as something of the past, Pervin (1980) also noted that “the internal-external debate remains lively and is an issue to be kept in mind in considering various theoretical points of view” (p. 17).

The dual status of the controversy as something of the past and the present, and something of relevance and irrelevance, continued in other sections of Pervin’s 1980s textbooks. In his section on “Trait Theory and Situationism Criticism,” he discussed the issues as something of the past, writing that “for some time debate raged over which regularities in behavior could be accounted for by aspects of the person . . . or by aspects of the situation” (Pervin, 1980, p. 270).

One of the most interesting and unique parts of Pervin's textbook is the inclusion of a personal communication with Hans J. Eysenck—presented here as a contemporary authority on the psychometric-trait approach (including the peculiar and sophisticated mathematical method of factor analysis) and intellectual progeny (along with Raymond B. Cattell) of Allport and his trait approach. Pervin offered a typically combative Eysenck quote that informs the student reading along of the ultimate futility, pointlessness, and scientific absurdity of the person-situation controversy:

Altogether I feel the debate is an unreal one. You cannot contrast persons and situations in any meaningful sense, or ask which is more important because clearly you will always have person-in-situations, and the relative importance of personality and situational factors depends on the nature of the situation, the selection of people, and in particular the selection of traits measured. No physicist would put such a silly question as: Which is more important in melting a substance—the situation (heat of the flame) or the nature of the substance! (Eysenck as quoted in Pervin, 1980, p. 271).

In the middle of the decade Hans Eysenck, along with his son Michael, published their own textbook entitled *Personality and Individual Differences: A Natural Science Approach* (1985). At the very beginning of the textbook, they explained how this book is “not a textbook in the usual sense” (p. v). Bemoaning the misguided approaches taken by other textbook authors, such as presenting psychometric and statistical methods and problems or presenting a series of theorists and their works, the Eysencks claim that their non-traditional textbook will reveal the true paradigm of personality psychology. Citing Kuhn (1970), they blame this non-cohesive and indecisive mess of personality theories and methods (in other words, the presentation of a field without a paradigm) usually presented in textbooks as part of the reason psychology (along with

all the social sciences) is viewed as separate from the revered natural sciences: “this defect is more noticeable, perhaps, in the study of personality and individual differences than in any other part of psychology” (p. v). In typical Eysenckian fashion, the authors vie for the status of a hard or natural science just out of reach for personality psychology, and aim to close this gap by writing their “Natural Science Approach” textbook. To this end, they presented the student reading along with a “large amount of material around a few fundamental concepts ... to show that these concepts, in both their descriptive and causal aspects, embrace a sufficiently large area of what is usually called personality to be considered a true paradigm” (p. vi).

It is within this preamble on what distinguishes their textbook as superior to other personality textbooks that the Eysencks quickly and concisely tackle the person-situation controversy. They promised the reader that they will take to task “a number of theoretical views that, although popular, we believe are quite mistaken” (p. vi). The primary theoretical view that they abhor is the situationist critique of personality traits as being inconsistent and situation-dependent. Later on, in a section called “Situationism Versus Type-Trait Theory,” they explained that theorists such as Walter Mischel and Edward Lee Thorndike (the latter being an unusual inclusion when discussing “situationists,” but nonetheless a famous behaviourist) deny the essentials of trait theory. The Eysencks cite their 1980 paper before enumerating the principles accepted by trait theorists, including a final principle that avers “[t]he relationship between traits or states and behavior is typically indirect, being affected or *moderated* by the interactions that exist among traits, states, and other salient factors” (p. 34). The Eysencks spent the remainder of the chapter (eight further pages) detailing the various research articles—authored by friendly and controversial psychologists such as J.P. Rushton—that refute any situationist critiques of trait theory, including Mischel’s critiques and his personality coefficient.

On the other hand, rather than placing Mischel's work as part of a larger series of fruitless critiques of trait-based theories, Hall, Lindzey, and others (1985; this time joined by two other authors for a special, simpler edition of their textbook) continued to understand the topic as the "person-situation controversy" (p. 561). The textbook authors saw Mischel's 1968 book as "controversial," and cast Mischel as a impactful rogue who "challenged some of personality psychologist's most fundamental beliefs about the consistency of personality and social behavior" (p. 557). Additionally, they felt that, although such a controversy did indeed exist and had an impact on the field, Mischel's role in this history had been (and was still being) distorted and he was vilified. They explain that even though Mischel ultimately presents an interactionist picture for understanding personality psychology, he was nevertheless "accused of 'advocating extreme situationism' and 'taking the person out of personality psychology'". Mischel feels that his work has been seriously misunderstood" (p. 559). Similar to Pervin's long-held position of the person-situation debate being subsumed under, or synonymous with, the internal-external debate, Hall et al. thought that Mischel did not offer psychologists a new general theory with which to work. Rather, his work and the person-situationist controversy it instigated highlighted an arduous and perpetual theoretical difficulty with which psychologists will always have to face.

Moving into the latter-half of the 1980s, the person-situation controversy was still present to some degree in many textbooks. Monte (1987) did not change his understanding of Mischel and the person-situation controversy, adding that social learning theory had become an imperfect paradigm within personality psychology that primarily worked against the mistakes of previous paradigms. There are limitations to this negative paradigm, as Monte explains: "there is a Catch-22 ... other paradigms' 'mistakes' were not made deliberately and were not made stupidly ...

[social learning theory] is susceptible to limitation from the same obstacles” (p. 581). In a section titled “Situation or Trait?” Ross (1987) explained that “[t]his controversy is known as the person-situation debate ... As with any other controversy in science, the answer must be sought not in argument but in research” (p. 351)<sup>7</sup>. According to him, after the publication of B.F Skinner’s *Science and Human Behavior* (1953), clinical psychologists far and wide adopted a behavior therapy that ditched the need for internalities such as traits and psychodynamics. Ross (1987) further explained that “[w]ith traits seemingly unnecessary in the treatment of psychological disorders, the stage was set for raising the question whether traits had any unity at all. The appearance of Mischel’s (1968) book ... marked the beginning of a controversy *that is still going on*” (p. 367, my italics). Echoing Hall and Lindzey (1985), Ross thought that Mischel and his influential 1968 critique was “[m]isunderstood and distorted ... [but] served the important and useful function of stimulating others to rethink and sharpen their notions of consistency in personality in general” (pp. 368-9).

At the close of the decade, authors like Carver and Scheifer (1988) understood the controversy as spawned by Mischel and his personality coefficient and as an aspect of situationism. This duo believed that all personality approaches had their “own theoretical controversies—issues that are difficult for the approach to deal with or questions that come up about some of its constructs” (p. 76). This was simply another controversy, one which belonged to the trait approach when clashing with social psychologists (i.e. situationists). While Pervin

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<sup>7</sup> It is unclear what Ross actually meant when he explained to the reader that the controversy was actually known as a debate (perhaps a disciplinary controversy or crisis veiled beneath academic debates?); nevertheless, Ross had a unique understanding of the controversy.

(1989) was still writing about the controversy in the historical context of the ongoing internal-external debate, Maddi (1989), the University of Chicago psychologist who had written in the mid-1970s that the controversy was over, seemed flummoxed that there were still lingering aspects of the person-situation controversy; he repeated his refrain that “Perhaps the most sensible position is that as the existing data support both positions [i.e. the person and the situation] equally well, there is no empirical basis for concluding counterintuitively that personality does not exist” (p. 582). Indeed, at the close of the decade interactionism was a *sine qua non* for nearly all authors who included the person-situation controversy narrative in their textbooks.

### **Was Interactionism Part of the Story?**

During the 1980s just under half (45%) of the sampled textbooks ( $n = 20$ ) included some mention of interactionism as a distinct theory or research topic that served as a solution or ultimate development of the person-situation controversy. Not every textbook that discussed the person-situation controversy included interactionism as the balanced dialectical solution to the dichotomous tension (e.g. Liebert & Spiegler, 1982; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Monte, 1987). To be clear, Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) *did* include a brief allusion to the idea that states or traits and behaviour interact, but they viewed this as an implicit understanding (indeed, an obvious axiom) of the trait approach to personality. They did not include interaction as an ism, nor did they cite any popular interactional psychologists such as Norman Endler. When it was included, the interactionism of the 1970s was seen as the rational resolution to the person-situation controversy.

At the opening of the 1980s, textbook authors such as Christopher Monte or Lawrence Pervin continued to include interactionism in their respective long-running series as the natural

conclusion to the person-situation controversy. Monte (1980) wrote about interactionism as a theoretical tradition that psychologists were now beginning to “capitalize experimentally on a theoretical tradition until which recently only lip service had been paid” (p. 337). Monte cited the work of Endler and Hunt (1969) and Endler and Magnusson (1976) when explaining what he viewed as the superior complex realism inherent to interactionism (as compared to either personological or situationist traditions). It appeared as though Monte was thoroughly impressed with ability of interactionism to appreciate the dynamic relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, person and situation, explaining that their relationship was complex and “subject to, as yet, unpredictable changes by virtue of the person’s awareness of his effects on the situation, and regulated in part by the person’s perception of the meaningfulness of his transactions with people and things in the world” (p. 9). Pervin (1980) updated his understanding of interactionism to now include famous interactionist researchers Endler and Magnusson. Pervin explained that after much debate, it was finally accepted by nearly all psychologists that an interactionist position toward understanding behaviour was the most viable. Given that he viewed the person-situation controversy as a facet of, or synonymous with (see previous section for this confused distinction), the historically recurring internal-external debate, Pervin went on to add that interactionism was only partially plugged the leaking dams of debate:

Almost all researchers today suggest an emphasis on person-situation interaction ... Even when persons, situations, and interactions are all accepted as important, there are theoretical differences about *what* in the person interacts *how* and with *what* in the situation. Thus, the internal-external debate remains lively and is an issue to be kept in mind in considering various theoretical points of view. (pp. 16-7).

Around the middle of the decade, many of the same aspects of the interactionism as

conclusion narrative were being written in other personality textbooks. Pervin (1984) repeated practically verbatim his explanation of the person-situation controversy and its interactionist resolution. Hall and Lindzey (1985), in the fourth edition of their widely used *Theories of Personality* textbooks, contextualized interactionism in their typical fashion as a part of a greater disciplinary history. While mentioning the usual story of Endler's famous work on interactionism, as they had in their previous edition (Hall & Lindzey, 1978), they also explained that Henry Murray had "anticipated by some 30 years the 'interactionist' position now widely held by investigators who until recently had argued hotly for one side or the other of the 'person-situation debate'" (p. 309)<sup>8</sup>.

Conversely, Monte (1987) apparently ditched his explanation and admiration for the interactionist approach to personality and behaviour—supplanting it with a section on a late Gordon Allport paper (1966) and his "heuristic realism" regarding trait theory (see Monte, 1987, pp. 479-80). In more keeping with the usual story, Ross (1987) presented the interactionism of Endler and Magnusson (1976) as an intuitive, rational, and pleasantly balanced compromise or synthesis of the tense person-situation dichotomy. As he explained, this controversy was no different from other either-or arguments, and as usual "the answer is likely to lie in the middle—that behavior is the function of an interaction between person and situation, between internal dispositions and external circumstances" (p. 367).

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<sup>8</sup> They are alluding to his personality theory work on psychogenic needs (internal) and presses (external) as motivations for behavior. Why Henry Murray was chosen as the leading exemplar of proto-interactionism, rather than psychologists such as Lee Cronbach or Kurt Lewin as other textbooks authors had, is unclear. Perhaps Murray's former presence at Harvard, and role in founding the Department of Social Relations, is the connection to the authors.



Carver and Scheifer, in their 1988 textbook *Perspectives on Personality*, included interactionism as an essential facet of the personological approach in their chapter titled “Types, Traits, and Interactionism.” They saw interactionism as a new approach that “emerged ... from the debate over these [person *versus* situation] issues” (p. 79). They understood interactionism in the simplest terms, namely that it was “the idea that personality traits and situations interact with each other to influence behavior” (p. 79). There are many things that set this duo apart in their understanding of interactionism from the other personality textbook authors of the 1980s.

Although they viewed interactionism as a new approach in personality psychology, Carver and Scheifer also wrote that it was an idea with a long intellectual history. Instead of citing Hartshorne and May, or Kurt Lewin, they understood Gordon Allport as an early example of interactionism, by providing a very short quote that does not make Allport interactionist leanings as evident as the textbook authors may have intended: “traits are often aroused in one situation and not in another” (Allport, 1937, p. 331 as cited by Carver & Scheifer, 1988, p. 79)<sup>9</sup>. They went on to add how interactionism has been useful in clinical contexts, particularly the diathesis-stress model and behavioural problems.

Overall, it appears that for many 1980s personality textbook authors who deemed the person-situation controversy a topic worthy of inclusion saw interactionism as an essential climax to the story. Long-running series authors Pervin (1989) and Maddi (1989) continued to

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<sup>9</sup> Additionally, a connection that other textbook authors did not make that Carver and Scheifer did was that between person-situation interactionism and factorial analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Given that interactionism focused on how the person and situation combined their effects on the person to create interactions and new effects, they saw it as the perfect example of an area ripe for potential two-factor ANOVA research.

include nearly identical explanations of interactionism in their textbook editions that closed off the decade. Apparently for Maddi, not much had changed within the context of interactionism and the person-situation controversy. Although his lack of interest in revising this story might have to do with the fact that he was never all that impressed with Mischel's situationism, nor enthralled with the apparent controversy around it, as he had declared the controversy over as early as 1976. In the 1980s, interactionism was largely understood as the territory of Endler, Hunt, and Magnusson—and, by some, as the historical territory of Henry Murray, Hartshorne and May, and even the idiographic-oriented father of traits Gordon Allport.

**Is this the story of the FFM, of factor analysis, or of traits in general?**

The 1980s sample of personality textbooks follows the 1970s sample in how it positions the person-situation controversy narrative, although there begins to be some divergence near the end of the decade. As the 1980s drew to a close, the FFM became a popular inclusion in textbooks, although the direct connection between the model and the person-situation controversy and disciplinary crisis is not made; certainly not to the extent that the official FFM histories saw the controversy as an essential detour to the model's unfolding story. Within the 1980s textbook sample, 35% included any mention of the FFM. All of these were 1985 and after, with the exception of Walter Mischel's 1981 textbook. This is unsurprising, as Walter Mischel, apparent enemy of traits, was the only textbook author sampled that included any in-depth exploration of the FFM research that occurred during the early 1960s. The uptick in the late 1980s inclusion of the FFM is certainly a function of the "renaissance" of FFM research, particularly led by researcher Lewis Goldberg, and further popularized by duo Paul Costa and Robert McCrae. Factor analysis is also present in the 1980s sample, though not every author viewed it in the same light, and not every author included the FFM as an example of factor

analytic research—pioneers R.B. Cattell and Eysenck were still very much understood as the primary factor analytic researchers.

During the first half of the 1980s, textbook authors who included the person-situation controversy continued to understand it as related to the trait approach; though factor analytic researchers, such as Cattell or Eysenck, were not always seen as part of the trait approach given their emphasis on advanced statistical methodology and factors *in lieu* of traits. When factor analytic approaches were included as part of the trait approach, the connection between such as Eysenck or Cattell with the person-situation controversy was not clearly drawn. For example, Ewen (1980; 1984) thought that situationists such as Mischel were critiquing the traditional trait approach within the purview of Allport. He viewed Cattell as worthy of inclusion, but a pure anomaly. Practically warning students of the strangeness ahead, Ewen (1980) braced the reader for his introduction of Cattell and his peculiar methods: “Before we conclude, however, there does remain one recognized but enigmatic personality theory which is important enough to be accorded some consideration” (p. 46). He thought that Cattell wanted psychology to become much more mathematical in order to become a mature and objective science, and “bases his extensive research into dimensions of personality on a complicated statistical technique known as factor analysis” (p.460). Monte (1980) also saw the controversy as largely a critique against traditional trait theories, which were best represented by Gordon Allport, and in addition to a critique of traits others (Hergenhahn, 1984; Liebert & Spiegler, 1982) also viewed it as a critique against personality psychology in general.

Similarly, Pervin (1980; 1984) saw the controversy as a broad critique of traditional personality approaches in general (e.g. psychodynamic), but as particularly targeted at trait theory. As he explained, “over the past decade trait theory has come in for considerable criticism

because of the emphasis it gives to the hierarchical organization of stable and enduring properties of the person” (Pervin, 1980, p. 27). Unlike other authors during the first half of the 1980s, Pervin (1980; 1984) included Cattell and Eysenck as a legitimate part of trait theory and directly linked them to what he called the “situationism criticism.” As noted in the previous section, Pervin (1980; 1984) included a personal communication with Eysenck (dated 1978) about that absurdity of the person-situation controversy, in which Eysenck called the debate “an unreal one.” Additionally, Pervin thought that the situationist criticisms lodged against trait theory were essentially a straw man argument, as Mischel and others ignored the trait research that was both correlational and experimental—in other terms, both to do with the internal and external, person and situation. If one understood Cattell and Eysenck as the main representatives of trait theory, then this position is understandable, as both were well known for fusing traditional correlational, psychometric work within experimental settings (see Buchanan, 2010; Tucker, 2009). Directly before citing independent research by Cattell and Eysenck, Pervin (198) argued that:

To a great extent these [situationist] criticisms present a distorted picture of trait theory, one in which it is the person or trait alone that accounts for behavior—as if the situation has nothing to do with behavior. But it is clear that trait theory does recognize the importance of situations. (p. 271).

In this new organization for his second edition and third edition, where Pervin (1980; 1984) placed Cattell and Eysenck with Allport in a mass trait-psychometric-factor analytic approach, he also included critiques of factor analysis. The criticisms against the usefulness of factor analysis which Pervin outlined include: the basic ontology of factors (e.g. are factors equivalent to traits?); the ontological equivalence of factors found in independent research; the

correct number of factors (an area where Cattell and Eysenck disagreed, being proponents of 16- and 3-factor models, respectively); and the assumptions endemic to the factor analytic approach (see Pervin, 1980, pp. 265-6). Pervin (1980) also mentioned that psychologists were critical of factor analysis due to its inability detect or describe the various complex relationships that exist between behaviours, “[s]ince factor analysis emphasizes only the joint rise and decline of behaviors, it will not pick up on this more complex relationship” (p. 266). Later, Pervin (1984) added that “[i]n sum, the factor-analytic procedure has its problems; and researchers in the field are far from agreeing on its place in personality research” (p. 296). Ultimately though, Pervin seemed to appreciate the arguments on both sides of the debate about the usefulness and place of factor analysis as a methodology in personality psychology. He cited Overall (1964) while explaining that:

we cannot expect factor analysis to point out to us, in a magical way, the basic structures of phenomena. However, we can expect factor analysis to help us to discover an underlying structure to a mass of data and to discover dimensions that are, in their own way, meaningful ... In other words, meaning is defined here in terms of usefulness in prediction rather than in terms of familiarity ... In general, the main question is whether we can rely on factor analysis to discover the basic dimensions or underlying structure of personality. It is clear that Cattell remains convinced that factor analysis is an adequate, in fact, necessary, tool for the job. However, others have reservations. (Pervin, 1980. p. 268).

Other textbook authors of the first half of the decade also included the debate around factor analysis itself. Ewen (1980; 1984) referred to the debate around the usefulness and place of factor analysis as “methodological controversies.” Whether these controversies and debates

play as essential a role to the history of the FFM as the person-situation controversy is unclear, as it is minimized or omitted from the official FFM histories. Ewen's basic assessment of the apparently controversial method was as follows: "On the surface, factor analysis would seem to add a much-needed quantitative aspect to the study of personality. Appearances are often deceiving, however, and this technique is actually more controversial and less objective than its mathematical nature might imply" (p. 462). Some of the criticisms differ from Pervin's (1980; 1984) list, such as the problems of deciding what to use as your input, how to decide what to name the factors, along with procedural errors and mathematical misunderstandings.

Ultimately, Ewen (1980) argued that "quantification is no scientific panacea [and that] psychologists should devise methods more appropriate to their own unique subject matter, rather than trying to emulate the numerical precision of physics and chemistry" (p. 470). He ended his assessment of the methodological controversy surrounding factor analysis by warning those who wanted to better understand the debate that they "will find that Cattell's writings offer considerable difficulty because of their mathematical, neologistic nature" (p. 470)—essentially bemoaning the rigid barriers to entry factor analytic researchers had raised around their field.

Eysenck and Eysenck (1985), as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, saw the person-situation controversy as an asinine situationist attack on the trait tradition. After listing several studies that they view as directly contradicting Mischel and the situationist position, the authors used the idea of *Zeitgeist* to explain the persistence in popularity of situationism in other personality textbooks: "Here let us merely note the paradox that although empirical studies have on the whole decisively disproved Mischel's position, it is still widely and uncritically accepted and referred to as if authoritative in many textbooks" (p. 38). The Eysencks (1985) went on to explain that E.G. Boring would have used the concept of a *Zeitgeist* to understand such a

paradox, “and no better explanation presents itself” (p. 38). They also offered a historical perspective on the situationist critique, arguing that a fundamental misunderstanding of traits (that when they are measured they are necessarily related to the situations they are measured in) stems from the works of Hartshorne and May (1928) and Hartshorne and Shuttleworth (1930), “when they said that a trait theory of honesty would demand that children who were dishonest in one situation should also be dishonest in another” (p. 39). The Eysencks do not relate the person-situation controversy directly to factor analytic research. Given Hans Eysenck’s status as a factor analysis pioneer, he and his son did not spend much time writing about its own shortcomings and controversies; they did, however, spend much time examining other factor analytic personality models, such an early version of what would become Costa and McCrae’s FFM.

The Eysencks (1985) did not write substantially on Costa and McCrae’s three-factor Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness to Experience (NEO) model of personality, except that it was another factor analytic model such as Cattell’s or Guilford’s. They did not see the progress of their own work, or work of other factor analytic researchers, impeded by the *Zeitgeist* that allowed Mischel’s situationism to be popular (according to the Eysencks) in personality textbooks. Undoubtedly, Eysenck viewed Costa and McCrae’s NEO model as incorrect, and repeatedly hinted that the NEO was a deformed and inaccurate version of his Psychoticism-Extraversion-Neuroticism (PEN) model. For example, when introducing the factors included in the NEO, the Eysencks (1985) rather snidely wrote that “[t]wo of these superfactors, *N* and *E* [i.e. neuroticism and extraversion], are of course replications of well-known factors; openness, however, is introduced as a new concept” (p. 137). Later on in their NEO section, they more openly critique Costa and McCrae’s NEO model as consisting of factors that are essentially the

same as Eysenck's PEN model. In this way, the Eysencks seem to belittle rival factor analytic researchers, Costa and McCrae, and their model as old wine in a new bottle:

The nature of the three superfactors, as determined by the content of the questionnaires, suggests that openness represents possibly the opposite end of a continuum to psychoticism; for *N* and *E* there are available high correlations with Cattell and Eysenck scales to demonstrate that the concepts are very similar, if not identical. (p. 138)

Near the close of the decade skepticism toward factor analysis continued in the textbook writings of Ewen (1988), as well as newcomers such Ross (1987). The latter psychologist, while explaining how factor-analytic inventories were constructed, pointed out the illusory objectivity that factor analysis provided the personality psychologist—much like Mischel had been doing in his academic books and textbooks. According to Ross (1987), the method as applied to personality relied on layers of subjectivity (e.g. the participant and the investigator), and not unlike “the computer that is used to carry out the complex statistical calculations required by a factor analysis, the method itself depends for its product on the data fed into it. These data are not ‘pure nature, untouched by human hands’” (p. 228). In a much more favourable overview of factor analysis, Carver and Scheifer (1988) place the factor analysis as the main contemporary method for researcher traits. By doing so, they also directly connected the method to the person-situation controversy; introducing the method, and the models of Eysenck and Cattell, before exploring the history of the person-situation controversy as an attack on the psychometric-trait-factor analytic approach. Indeed, the end of the decade also showed some other changes and further connections between our topics of interest: albeit in only a small number of the sampled textbooks.

The FFM had begun to be included far more often in the latter half of the decade than the



first half (i.e. 1980-1984: 11% included mention of the FFM; 1985-1989: 55%). Sometimes this was in a very isolated fashion, such as when Maddi (1989) briefly mentioned Norman's original FFM, averring that "[d]espite the recent popularity of Norman's so-called 'big five' other investigators continue to report more than this number of factors" (p. 416). In this way, Maddi was perhaps attempting to dissent the turning tide of consensus by simply reminding the reader that there is disagreement about the number of factors among even the most renowned and rigorous factor analytic researchers. Conversely, other textbook authors at the close of the decade delegated the FFM a much more prominent position in the story of traits and the person-situation controversy.

The most visible connection made between the FFM and the person-situation controversy was made during the last year of the decade by Lawrence Pervin (1989) in the fifth edition of his long-running series. In a section title "Current Trait Research and the Person-Situation Controversy." After briefly regaling the student with the history of the person-situation controversy in his usual fashion, Pervin dove straight into what he termed "The Big Five" as the main trait model, lumping together Norman (1963), uncited independent works by Allport and Cattell, along with Digman and Innouye (1986) and McCrae and Costa (1987). Although giving prominence to the Big Five, Pervin (1989) did note for the reader that despite its popularity consensus has not been reached on the correct model or number of factors for the ultimate factor analytic-trait model of personality: "Various trait theorists emphasize fewer or more than five factors ... whereas some trait theorists consider the factor traits found as the ultimate building blocks, other suggest that they are best considered as useful ways of organizing information about people" (pp. 314-5). Despite the prominence that the FFM or the Big Five was rapidly gaining in textbooks, and despite the proximity and connections to the person-situation

controversy it was receiving in a couple of textbooks, the narrative of the person-situation controversy (and its surrounding or ensuing *Zeitgeist* or era) as the major impediment to the FFM as the *de facto* universal personality model is not present in the 1980s textbooks sampled.

### **Walter Mischel's Textbooks**

Mischel published the third and fourth edition of his *Introduction to Personality* textbook series at the beginning of the first half of the decade (1981) and the beginning of the second half of the decade (1986). To a large extent, the crux of the textbooks' content and message remained the same as in his previous two 1970s editions. He presented the psychometric-trait approach, and its accompanying method factor analysis, in respectful but critical light: weighing its longevity, achievements, and progress against its inescapable methodological and philosophical limitations and lacunae. What is unique about Mischel's third edition (1981) as compared to other 1980s textbooks is again its extensive inclusion of the Norman's (1963) FFM as a primary example of the psychometric-trait-factor analytic approach; this anomaly also set Mischel's previous two editions apart from most other 1970s textbooks. As the decade drew to a close, most textbook authors joined Mischel in this and began including the FFM; although this increased inclusion is most likely tied to the rising popularity of Costa and McCrae's NEO-PI model and scale, as well as Lewis Goldberg's Big Five research.

Mischel (1981) does not seem to write about the person-situation controversy as a series of multiple controversies, or as a debate, but does retain the idea that findings that challenged basic assumptions (such as the behavioural specificity of traits) "produced a crisis in the area" (p. 517). This apparent crisis had occurred in the past, as in the previous 1976 edition Mischel was speculating that situationist findings challenging behavioural specificity "may be leading to a crisis in the area" (p. 493). Interestingly, in both editions when Mischel wrote about a looming

or experienced crisis in personality psychology, he cited Donald W. Fiske's 1974 *Journal of Personality* article "The limits for the conventional science of personality." In the official FFM histories and even in popular press books such as historian of psychology Wade Pickren's *The Psychology Book* (2014), Fiske is viewed as one of the earliest, if not the first, discover of the five-factor personality structure. How Fiske's early involvement in FFM research, as well as his involvement in the critique against traditional personality during era of skepticism, reconcile with each other is unclear in the typical history of the FFM (such connections will be further explored in the Conclusion). Nevertheless, Mischel in 1981 viewed the "crisis" in the personality area of psychology as having ended; though he still thought the issues around behavioural specificity and interactionism as "highly controversial and often debated vehemently" (p. 517).

While his criticisms toward the trait approach and factor analysis—very much echoing the criticisms in *Personality and Assessment* (1968)—stayed the same, some aspects surrounding traits and their critiques were added to the third edition. In particular a section titled "In Defense of Traits" was added, where Mischel (1981) looked at rebuttals to situationist criticisms. One of these defenses of traits was that "if we want to test how well a disposition (trait) can be used to predict behavior we have to sample adequately not only the disposition but also the behavior we want to predict" (p. 171). Mischel immediately jettisoned this defense, as he noted that many trait researchers had attempted and failed to accurately predict single acts beyond the personality coefficient (e.g. physical aggression when insulted as based on a self-rated aggression scale). The second main defense of traits Mischel wrote about was the notion that increasing the number of item on a scale will increase its reliability. Although Mischel argued that this is not the case, he cites research (Epstein, 1979) that indicates tests averaged over many days have much more

“temporal stability” than a single day test consisting of a large amount of questions. Again, he taints this minor achievement by reminding the student reading along that “most of the evidence so far is relevant to the temporal stability of traits, not to broad cross-situational consistency of behavior in social or personal domains” (p. 172).

Mischel (1981) still viewed the charge of “situationism” as absurd and hyperbolic: he argued that social learning theorists and cognitive learning theorists (along with most personality theorists in general) viewed an interactionist position regarding person and situation as the most rational belief. He argued that the initial swing toward focusing on situations that briefly preceded interactionism was a result of frustration with strictly individualistic research approaches, and excitement over more realistic approaches and models. In his words, “[t]he new interest in environments (situations, psychological ecology) expressed by personality psychologists reflects in part increased dissatisfaction with traditional trait-oriented theories that tried to understand people without adequately considering the specific conditions of the individual’s life from moment to moment” (p. 524). Mischel also noted that this newfound interest marked the recognition that human behaviours “depend crucially on the mutual (reciprocal) influence of the person and the situation; that is, their ‘interaction’” (p. 524).

One salient addition to Mischel’s fourth edition (1986) is a section on “Intelligence, Heredity, and Race: A Controversial Issue.” The controversies surrounding intelligence and race were not included in any other 1980s textbook sampled, nor in the 1970s sample. This absence includes Eysenck’s textbook, a psychologist closely tied to these controversies (see Buchanan, 2012); though he viewed his beliefs and research empirically-driven and non-controversial. Mischel used this section to further emphasize the importance of an interactionist position when considering traits and behaviours. Mischel agreed that individuals more closely related

genetically have similar IQ scores. After posing the rhetorical question to his reader “Are people who are more closely related also more alike in IQ?” Mischel pithily answered “In general, the answer is clearly yes” (p. 141). But he reminded his reader of the importance of an interactionist position for every personality trait, including intelligence: “In sum, intelligence is importantly influenced by heredity and to a significant but probably lesser extent by environment: the two influences continually interact” (p. 142). Mischel explained that the topic of race and intelligence became “explosive” once Arthur Jensen published papers (1969; 1980) where he attempted to scientifically explain his presumed and unquestioned assumption of black persons as lower than white persons when measured on mental ability. Mischel thought that the academic and activist responses and criticisms of Jensen were “passionate” and “usually justified,” as he had largely ignored environment factors as cofounders.

Much like in the 1970s, Walter Mischel continued into the 1980s writing introductory personality textbooks that were quite distinct from other contemporary textbooks. He was a trailblazer in both the 1970s and 1980s for including the FFM as a central part of the trait approach to personality, along with devoting a significant portion of his book to exploring its accompanying method of factor analysis (both its achievements and limitations). This fact might help explain that while most other authors during the close of the decade who chose to include the FFM focused on Costa and McCrae and Goldberg, Mischel continued to view it as Norman’s model. He was truly alone in including any discussion of the controversy around race and intelligence as part of trait psychology’s story. In his last edition of the decade (1986), Mischel did not explicitly write about any person-situation or interactionist controversies, debates, or crises; perhaps he felt that whatever hype was once there was now gone, and his version of the facts would suffice for an introductory text. One aspect he had in common with other 1980s

textbooks, somewhat excepting Pervin's last 1980s edition, was the absence of any explicit connection between the person-situation controversy and the development (or pause of development) of the FFM.

### **Discussion**

Though it had been demoted to the status of debate(s) by many, the person-situation controversy was an even more popular inclusion in the 1980s than the previous decade. Its position was still very much seen as part of the history of trait psychology more generally, and this did not particularly change as the FFM and factor analysis became more popular inclusions. The controversy was still not seen as something that had delayed a reevaluation of Norman's FFM—and certainly not as something that had initially derailed the entire project. This makes sense, as the time between Norman's FFM work of the early sixties and Mischel's critique (or the general 1970s malignant *Zeitgeist* or era of skepticism) seems far too wide to explain the lack of interest in the FFM from personality psychologists, including fellow factor analysts such as Hans Eysenck, R.B. Cattell, Jeremy Wiggins (student of Cattell and 1970s textbook author), and Robert Hogan.

Focus in the 1980s was instead directed toward the wariness that many authors had toward factor analysis as a viable method for studying the person and his or her psychological structure, along with other controversies and debates. As the era of skepticism became more memory than reality, proponents of factor analysis, such as Hans Eysenck, were still highly skeptical of the FFM—though of course Eysenck (and other factor analysts) had his own model and scale to protect and popularize. The first mention of the controversy surrounding intelligence and race, one that Eysenck was involved in (see Buchanan, 2012) as well as R.B. Cattell as it would be much later revealed (Tucker, 2009), was introduced to textbook readers by

Walter Mischel. This latter issue is off-stage for all other textbook authors writing about the person-situation controversy, factor analysis, and the FFM. The possibility that the taboo that intelligence had gained, as IQ or even when understood as a superfactor such as Spearman's *g*, had tainted trait psychology, psychometrics, factor analysis, and FFM research within and without academic psychology is also excluded from Digman and Goldberg's understanding of this time—though it would seem to fit with their *Zeitgeist* explanations if they had any interest in making the connection.

### Chapter 3: The Controversy in 1990s Personality Textbooks

In this chapter I continue the analysis of general personality textbooks in order to continue the analysis from the 1990s textbooks into the 1990s, and to see if authors changed their understandings and writings about the topics of interest as further editions of their textbooks were published, most of the 1990s sample consists of revised editions. It should be noted that some of these authors are eventually joined by new co-authors, such as Walter Mischel with behavioural geneticist Robert Plomin in 1999, and Lawrence Pervin with Oliver P. John (whose work is sometimes included as part of the early 1980s FFM revival) in 1997. There are only a few new authors in this part of the analysis, and the sample includes their original editions as well as any revised editions that were published within the decade. These authors include well-known narrative psychologist Dan P. McAdams, as well as David C. Funder—the latter being the author of the still-running and immensely popular *The Personality Puzzle* textbook series.

Table 3

*1990s Sample (# of textbooks per year)*

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
3	1	1	3	3	1	2	3	2	1



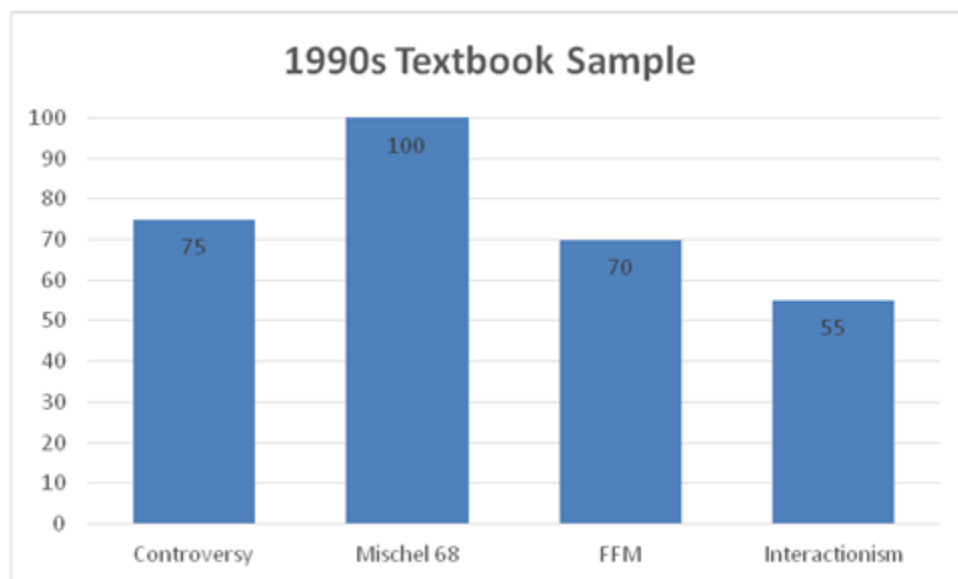


Figure 3: Inclusion (%) of topics in 1990s personality textbooks.

### Was There Controversy?

During the 1990s the person-situation controversy, or versions of it, became a more popular inclusion than in any other previous decade: 75% of the textbooks ( $n = 20$ ) included some mention of it. This might be viewed as unsurprising given that many authors from the previous decade who previously included the person-situation controversy continued to do so in their revised editions during the 1990s; but all of the new authors, such as McAdams (1990; 1994) and Allen (1994; 1997), include it as part of their textbooks as well. Even authors who did not have any previously found mention of the controversy in their older editions, such as Hergenhahn (1984) or Feist (1990), ended up including the controversy in their textbooks as the time went on (Hergenhahn, 1990; Feist, 1994; Feist & Feist, 1998). It appears that the controversy became a much more typical inclusion when preparing a textbook that introduces the student to the wide field of personality. Although it became a more canonical part of personality's past, at least within the terrain of textbooks, the person-situation controversy was

still understood and explained in different ways by different psychologists. Consensus on its importance to understanding the field was almost reached, as indicated by this sample, but consensus on the exact nature and story of the person-situation controversy was not as closely attainable.

During the first half of the 1990s authors who had included the person-situation controversy in the previous editions of their textbooks wrote about the topic in very similar ways. Monte (1991; 1995) continued to have a relatively narrow view of the controversy: that it was a brief time when Mischel critiqued trait research for its inability to find consistent behaviour in persons. He continued to not mention the interactionism as a resolution to the impasse, but instead placed Allport as the father of traits as well as the prophet of its critique. Pervin (1993) continued to also understand the person-situation controversy as largely finished debate triggered by Mischel and his slim, 'blasphemous' book. One change in this edition is that Pervin does not offer an historical perspective, and does not relate it to what he understood as the internal-external controversy. Pervin also now asked the student reading along which way a personality psychologist should lean: toward the person or the situation? In a surprisingly relativist fashion, Pervin concluded that evidence can be found that supports both positions, and that those who prefer one position will favour its supportive evidence: "Trait theorists are impressed with the former and use such evidence to support their position, whereas situationists theorists are impressed with the latter and use such evidence to support their position" (p. 330). Although many personality textbook authors presented the field as consisting of several approaches to understanding the person, not many admitted to the strange epistemological situation of the discipline: that there are competing truths and the psychologist chooses whichever suits her academic ambitions and identities.

As the controversy receded into the past, retrospectives about it became a more popular inclusion in textbooks. Carver and Scheier (1992) still thought of it as occurring “over the past two decades” (p.78). However, the duo added a new section titled “Looking Back,” offering a retrospective on the peak of the controversy during the 1970s. They argued that while the current understanding of the complex relationship between traits, situations, and behaviour is indeed an improvement over the previous view of traits determining behaviour, they in some ways doubt the earnestness of the older view. In a sub-section titled “Did anyone really believe the old viewpoint?” the authors explained how interactionism and situationism has a past prior to the 1970s person-situation controversy. They concluded their discussion of the controversy by explaining to the student that the problem of poor prediction of behaviour was never as bad as Mischel claimed (i.e. his personality coefficient), and that even if it were as low as a correlation coefficient of .30, that such a statistic was not “so bad after all” (p. 89). They maintained that it was important in raising theoretical and methodological questions vital to the progress of personality psychology, but students ought to keep in mind that “the core problem may not have been nearly as bad as he thought it was” (p. 89). Essentially, in hindsight Carver and Scheier understood the person-situation controversy as built around exaggerated or misunderstood evidence, and are left to wonder if the topics were ever as controversial as the usual discourse around it implied.

Other authors began including the person-situation controversy in their textbooks for the first time in the first half of the 1990s. For example, Hergenhahn (1990) chose to include the controversy when discussing the empirical support for social learning theory—particularly the theories and research programs of Albert Bandura and Walter Mischel. Following suit with many other textbook authors, Hergenhahn understood Mischel’s 1968 book *Personality and*

*Assessment* as having “triggered a debate among personality theorists concerning the consistency of human behavior that has lasted to the present time” (p. 332). He believed that the consequent research of this debate showed that whether such a consistency of human behaviour is found largely depends on “what is meant by consistency and how the research is performed” (p. 332). Before discussing interactionism as the compromise position eventually taken by Mischel (and implicitly other situationist critics), Hergenhahn quoted a long passage from Lawrence Pervin’s fourth edition (1984) to help illustrate for the reader how a more nuanced understanding of behavioural consistency and the relationship between person and situation is required to fully address the debate’s issues.

Feist’s series of textbooks is an interesting case in that he never included the person-situation controversy or debate by name, but he did expand his sections to include the issues within it. In Feist’s third edition (1994), as well as his fourth edition joined by his son (Feist & Feist, 1998), he did include some brief discussion about Walter Mischel’s *Personality and Assessment*, “the consistency paradox,” the situationist critique of traits, and Mischel’s eventual adoption of an interactionist position. Indeed, Feist quotes Mischel (1973) to flesh out his own explanation that “[p]erson variables *interact* with situation variables to produce behavior. Situation variables include all those stimulus inputs that people attend to in a particular situation” (p. 460).

Perhaps Feist’s exclusion of the controversy or debate has to do with his idiosyncratic (relative to other textbook authors) understanding of the typical narrative or chain of events. Whereas other textbook authors explain the impact of Mischel’s *Personality and Assessment* as a catalyst for the person-situation controversy, and the most extreme (if not the only) situationist critique of traits that trait psychologists have to contend with in the ensuing publications and

debates, Feist (1994) saw the reception quite differently. In a short biography of Mischel, Feist explained that Mischel's time as a consultant to the Peace Corps was the impetus to his critique of traits written in *Personality and Assessment*; he also explained that the book "upset many clinical psychologists who argued that the inability of personal dispositions to predict behavior across situations was due to the unreliability and imprecision of the instruments that measure traits" (p. 454). He added that "some believed" (presumably still meaning clinical psychologists) that Mischel was attempting to unravel and jettison the very concept of personality itself. Understanding the most significant aspect of Mischel's 1968 book as only upsetting clinical psychologists helps explain why Feist would not have seen it as an essential part of the history of trait psychology itself, warranting its own event title of "controversy" or "debate."

Newcomer Dan McAdams of Northwestern University, a respected personality psychologist who would soon be famous for his focus on narratives and life histories, as well as the idiographic method, had much to relay to his student about the person-situation controversy and Walter Mischel. McAdams (1990) presented personality psychology as "at the center of constellation of disciplines that examine how human beings, singularly and together, behave in the world" (p. iv). Unsurprisingly, given his research and methodological interests, he also highlighted Gordon Allport and Henry Murray as the personality pioneers and renegades that began this ongoing endeavour. As he explained in his textbook (1990), McAdams entered his Harvard graduate program in 1976<sup>10</sup> looking for psychology "heroes" to mimic and follow—but

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<sup>10</sup> Though this was after the dissolution of the Department of Social Relations, it is likely that McAdams was still influenced by its legacy of cross-disciplinarity—he was certainly influenced by figures such as Allport, given his interest in the idiographic method rather than nomological trait methods.

before he ever found his heroes he was presented with a villain:

I never met the villain face to face. But I read a lot about him, and I listened with strong emotions, ranging from outrage to despair, as my professors in personality psychology discussed, often with strong emotions of their own, the villain's controversial claims. The man about whom my professors spoke was a personality psychologist at Stanford University named Walter Mischel. In my mind, he was a villain because he claimed, as I saw it then, that *there is no such thing as personality*. If Mischel was right, personality psychologists had joined the ranks of those misguided many throughout the world who believed in Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, and ghosts. (p. 284, his italics)

McAdams' recollections of arriving at his Harvard graduate program in search of inspiration only to be fueled with hatred toward Mischel is certainly the most personal and candid passage about the controversy among any of the sampled textbook authors. Belonging to the next generation of personality psychologists, and therefore being a budding personality psychologist during not only the apparent "era of skepticism," but also the era of 1970s textbooks (and course instructors) that sometimes viewed Mischel as an extremist, an outgrowth or version of radical behaviourism, and generally a threat to the field, led McAdams to wonder in front of the audience of students reading along: why was it this way?

As McAdams indicated, he had since grown to respect Mischel's psychology project and has learned not to depend on academic heroes and villains. He still wondered about the culture of near-mythical heroes and villains he was in, and asked the reader "why *was* he [Mischel] a villain for me?"—to which he added "The answer tells us much about how personality psychologists have thought about persons and about the discipline of personality psychology during the last 20 years" (McAdams, 1990, p. 284). Although he does not exactly answer what

led to his professors and colleagues of the era to abhor and vilify Mischel, he does implicitly answer it by listing the various critiques by which Mischel challenged personality psychology. McAdams understood Mischel's critiques in the historical context of Hartshorne and May's (1928) famous situationist study, as well as the contemporary social psychology research on the fundamental attribution error (Jones & Nisbett, 1972; Ross, 1977). Ultimately, McAdams viewed Mischel's critique as having "launched what has been termed the *person-situation debate* in personality psychology" (p. 285)—although he believed that other, more general critiques of personality psychology, particularly citing Donald Fiske's (1974) lamentations of his field, as also having evoked these debates. He also believed that it had "died down in the early 1980s" (p. 286), citing Salvatore Maddi's fourth edition textbook (1984) as his source—though Maddi had been arguing that the controversy had ended as early as his third edition (1976).

It was rare to view the event or era a veritable disciplinary revolution rather than a mere a controversy or series of debates, but this perspective had a place in Bem P. Allen's textbooks. In a biographical passage that presents Mischel as Julian Rotter's most accomplished and influential student, Allen (1994) portrayed Mischel as an intellectually violent revolutionary who forever changed the trajectory of personality psychology: "Mischel started a revolution that caused psychologists to rethink their assumptions about traits. Although the 'bombing' of basic assumptions about traits has ended, some of those assumptions lie smoldering in the ruins. Trait psychology will never be the same" (p. 315). Allen went on to conclude that Mischel's contributions to the field were immense, having "started an intellectual revolution" and "opened up minds" (p. 324). In the second edition of his textbook, Allen (1997) maintained his view of Mischel as an inspiring revolutionary while adding a number of other controversies that are not present in most personality textbooks, such as evidence indicating Cattell's persistent belief in

eugenics, as well as the related Bell Curve controversies surrounding race and intelligence. With the exception of Mischel's later textbooks, these issues are not in other textbooks—and certainly omitted from FFM histories.

David C. Funder, of the University of California (Riverside), prominently featured the person-situation controversy in the first edition of his soon-to-be bestselling textbook series *The Personality Puzzle*. He termed it as a debate triggered by Mischel that centered around the essential question: “Which is more important for determining what people do, the person or the situation?” (Funder, 1997, p. 62). He aimed to convince the student reading along that something distinguished the person-situation debate from other debates: “It is not just a tempest in a teapot, as arguments among specialists so often are. Rather, the consistency controversy goes to the heart of how we think about people” (p. 63).

Funder also made it clear to his reader that he wants to avoid what many other authors do by focusing too much on Mischel and his critique, and not on the actual issues and the research surrounding them that was triggered by the debate. As he explained, “[a] small cottage industry sprang up within personality psychology during the 1970s, the main activity of which seemed to be to figure out what Mischel did and did not actually say. I was briefly a member of this enterprise myself (Funder, 1983)” (p. 63). Funder rather confusingly summarized the issues by writing that “[t]he debate among psychologists over this issue [behavioural inconsistency from one situation to another] was called the consistency controversy” (p. 74). Whether this controversy is synonymous with what Funder understood as the person-situation debate, or whether this is a parallel, parent, or child controversy is unclear. The switch in label demonstrates the looseness with which this historical event or era is understood and remembered by various personality psychologists.



During the second half the 1990s, long-running series authors such as Salvatore Maddi were writing about the person-situation controversy in familiar but slightly revised ways. In the sixth edition of his textbook (1996), Maddi took the opportunity to provide a brief retrospective of his series that began in the 1960s. Recalling that while he was “struggling for tenure” (p. vii) at the University of Chicago during the mid-1960s, many of his colleagues warned him about wasting his time on authoring textbooks. In 1996, writing from the University of California Irvine, he felt great pride in his ongoing series; a series that he viewed as influencing the younger generation of personality psychologists and their own texts. He even submitted that “[p]erhaps my book has had something to do with the resurgence of interest in personality among academics, following the doldrums of the 1970s” (p. vii). Maddi had never considered the person-situation controversy to be a serious issue, and he might be alluding to Digman or Goldberg’s wider “era of skepticism” or unwelcoming *Zeitgeist*—the exact cause of Maddi’s doldrums is unclear.

Similarly, Hall, Lindzey, and Campbell (1998) offered the same explanations of the persons-situation controversy as in their previous edition, but with some revisions (revisions that could be due to Campbell’s contributions). They introduced their textbook by reminding the reader that their original edition (Hall & Lindzey, 1957) “defined the field of personality, led to dozens of textbooks on personality theory, spawned hundreds of college and university courses, and yet remained a classic text through two revisions” (p. iv). They still understood *Personality and Assessment* as “one of the most salient events in the recent literature on personality” (p. 298), sparking a major debate in the field, but emphasize two points about the debate itself. First, as they always have in their textbooks, they explain the debate’s historical precedence and false novelty within the discipline; citing Allport’s reactions to Hartshorne and May (1928), and

also citing Pervin's textbooks to support their claim of historical precedence. Secondly, researchers (particularly Eysenck) have argued that the debate itself was an artifice as both the person and the situation are necessary to understand personality (as has presumably always been understood by theorists and researchers). These two points notwithstanding, Hall, Lindzey, and Campbell (1998) defend their inclusion of the person-situation controversy in their section on Allport: "The debate is noteworthy here, however, because one of the major contentions was argued in Allportian terms" (p. 299)<sup>11</sup>.

Overall, the 1990s proved a popular decade for the person-situation controversy. Longtime textbook authors who had previously included it continued with similar versions of the story, although sometimes updating it with revisions that focused on the view of things from a retrospective distance (e.g. Carver and Scheier, 1992), or updating it with further research evidence for or against the person, situation, and interactionism (e.g. Pervin & John, 1997). Walter Mischel was still usually seen as the controversy's instigator, sometimes in neutral ways, and other times in near-valorizing ways (e.g. Allen 1994; 1997). What exactly the controversy was, who actually believed in either extreme position, why certain characters were exaggerated as villains and heroes, and whether the controversy merits a place in a general personality textbook seemed to be questions that personality psychologists were publically posing within the medium of textbooks—and given the nature of this conduit, they were posing these questions to

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<sup>11</sup> It is not immediately clear what the authors mean by this, although I think it has to do with their understanding of the famous Bem and Allen (1974) paper that was published during the controversy. Hall, Lindzey, and Campbell (1998) suggest that this article points out the person-situation "literature falls prey to the nomothetic fallacy first pointed out by Gordon Allport ... the resulting research will fail to find evidence of cross-situational consistency, not because it does not exist, but because it is being pursued in the wrong place" (pp. 299-300).

themselves, to their community, and to the next generation of personality psychologists reading along.

### **Was Interactionism Part of the Story?**

During the 1990s, although the person-situation controversy was an immensely popular topic to include in general personality textbooks, its usual ending or resolution story of interactionism was less common. If we broadly include any mentions of the interactionist concept, that do not necessarily have to do with Endler and his associates or serve as a resolution to or outgrowth of the person-situation controversy, then 70% of the textbook sampled have passages about interactionism. If we include mentions of interactionism that refers to the circa 1970s research program and movement largely associated with Endler, then only slightly over half (55%) textbook authors wrote about interactionism. As will be shown, interactionism was not always immediately associated with Endler's research projects, and it was also omitted or minimized from some histories that had always prominently included interactionism as the resolution to the person-situation controversy.

Interactionism as a concept was generally written about in similar ways. Carver and Scheier (1992) continued to include it as direct consequence to the person-situation controversy, as they explained: “[f]urther thought and work led to another approach, termed interactionism” (p. 81)—citing Endler, Magnusson, and others. Hergenhahn (1990), in the third edition of his textbook, included a brief passage on the “interactionist” position for the first time. This is placed after he quotes from Pervin's fourth edition (1984) to explain that neither extreme (the situationist nor trait positions) are correct, and a compromise position that takes into account how these poles interact with one another is the wisest route to take. Though he joined many textbook authors of his generation by including interactionism, Hergenhahn understood it in a

very narrow way. According to him, it is the position that Mischel eventually adopted rather than his initial, extreme situationist position—and there is neither mention of Endler’s 1970s research program, nor its historical precursors.

Lawrence Pervin, on the other hand, who had always included interactionism—either as a historical position in his first edition, or as a position wrought by Endler which resolved the person-situation controversy in revised editions—does not seem to have included it in the sixth edition of his textbook (1993). Perhaps this is due to the excision of any historical context around the controversy, as well as how he once related it to the historically recurring internal-external controversy in previous editions. As noted in the previous section, rather than presenting interactionism as a balanced position to resolve the dichotomous tension of the person-situation controversy, Pervin (1993) offered his student a rather relativist view of the controversy—claiming that trait theorists prefer research evidence that favour their views, and situationist theorists prefer research evidence that favour their views (p. 330).

Historical precedence to interactionism (i.e. figures prior to 1970s interactionism) were mentioned in the 1990s sample. According to McAdams, Kurt Lewin had argued for an interactionist position half a century ago, and precursors such as this led to the form of interactionism that served as a “compromise position” (p. 286) effectively ending the person-situation debate. Feist did not include anything about a person-situation controversy or disciplinary crisis as linked to Mischel’s work, and understood interactionism as theoretical stance within social learning theory. According to Feist (1994), Julian Rotter was the leader of social learning theory, and was best understood as an interactionist psychologist. Rotter delegated total causal control of behaviour to neither the environment nor the individual; rather, he was concerned with our reactions to stimuli within the environment, reactions which are

dependent on “cognitions, past histories, and expectations of the future” (p. 434). Feist saw Rotter as believing that “human behavior stems from the interaction of environment and personal factors” (p. 434), the latter including needs and traits. While Feist is likely accurate by presenting social learning theorists (its progenitor Rotter, his colleagues, and students) as fundamentally interactionists rather than radical situation-fatalists, limiting interactionism as a unique position held only by Julian Rotter, and not as a movement and research program of the 1970s, sets him apart from many textbook authors during the 1990s.

Psychologist Bem P. Allen (1994) aligned with Feist in thinking that social learning theory “in some of its forms, amounts to an interactionist point of view” (p. 315). He understood Mischel’s research (along with what he terms “cognitive social learning theory” in general) as slightly different from an interactionism that includes traits as part of the personal factor. According to Allen, Mischel and cognitive social learning theorists considered the personal factors that play into the interactionist (person-situation) relationship determining behaviour were constructs such as memories and life history. Allen also placed his own work in further understanding interactionism, citing his own research (Allen & Smith, 1980) that demonstrated “contrary to the popular belief among many psychologists, when asked the ‘right’ questions, ordinary people reveal themselves to be interactionists, not trait theorists” (p. 323). Allen also included an “Uncovering Natural Interactionism” self-exercise: a brief demonstration to use on friends in order to reveal their interactionist beliefs by asking and probing how and why they describe others, eventually leading to qualified answers (e.g. “John is kind” changes to “John is kind in certain situations”).

It appears that interactionism was losing its status as the natural resolution to the person-situation controversy during the 1990s. Some authors did not discuss the 1970s form of

interactionism linked with Endler and his colleagues, while others qualified it with its many historical precedents. Interactionism was linked with social learning theory (e.g. Rotter and eventually Mischel). Some authors (e.g. Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998) were reassessing previous works, such as Allport, *in lieu* of showcasing Endler's interactionism as the solution to controversy. As the status and contents of the person-situation controversy and Mischel's critique were being reinterpreted by older authors, and explored for the first time by younger authors, the stable placement of interactionism as resolution became shaky.

### **Is this the story of the FFM, of factor analysis, or of traits in general?**

Most textbooks that included the person-situation controversy still positioned it as a story of trait psychology (as well as traditional, personological approach to personality in general). Inclusion of the FFM increased dramatically in the 1990s, with 45% of textbooks discussing the model during the first half of the decade (1990-1994) and 100% of textbooks during the last half of the decade (1995-1999). This is most likely due to the success of McCrae and Costa's NEO-PI scale, as well as the prolific amount of research they published. Their version of Goldberg's Big Five had become one of the most well-known personality models throughout the entire discipline of Psychology. Given this, the inclusion and exploration of factor analysis as a primary way of conducting trait psychology was increased and enriched. However, an older generation of authors seemed to have more skepticism toward the sophisticated and "arcane" methodology. Although factor analysis and the FFM were included far more often than ever before, the direct connection between these topics and the person-situation controversy or any disciplinary crisis was not apparent in most of these textbooks. Indeed, the only textbook that did lean toward drawing these connections drew directly from Goldberg's (1993) FFM history "What the Hell Took so Long?" when providing context for the Big Five.

The person-situation controversy was not always included within the psychometric-trait-factor analytic sections of these textbooks. For example Hergenhahn (1990) included it as part of his chapter on social learning theory and in particular his discussion of Mischel, as did Allen (1994; 1997), Maddi (1996), and McAdams (1990; 1994). Others thought of the controversy around traits to be an extension of Allport's story (e.g. Hall, Lindzey, & Campbell, 1998; Monte 1991; 1995) rather than to do with current psychometric (usually factor analytic) trait approaches. The rest of the textbook authors who included the controversy placed it as part of the story of trait psychology more generally, placing it near explorations of theorists besides Allport (e.g. Eysenck or Cattell) and their methodologies. Overall in the 1990s there was an immense amount of writing about both factor analysis and the FFM in general personality textbooks. As in previous chapters, I will explore how these were written about as the decade moved forward, and also how these were connected to the person-situation controversy (if at all).

The past generation of authors who were still publishing revised editions continued to write about the great uses and severe limitations of factor analysis as a personality methodology. Ewen (1993) wrote about it as a "complicated statistical technique" (p. 317) that belonged within the esoteric purview of Raymond B. Cattell; his "approach to personality is so abstruse that his writings are little understood by the majority of psychologists" (p. 318). Ewen, the most vocal critic of the factor analytic approach to personality among the sampled textbook authors, continued to include the "methodological controversies" (p. 319) around factor analysis, such as the inputting of data and the naming of factors. Maddi (1996), although seeing some uses for factor analysis particularly when it is employed to support theoretical positions with its empirical findings—rather than letting the method and its findings guide theory—still included a strong dose of criticism in his writings. He lamented the inductive approach he saw in factor analytic

studies, where “complex and ambiguous factors” are subject to “intuitive, crude ... interpretation” (p. 327). Maddi argued that “[t]he aura of empirical rigor and objectivity attending the inductive use of factor analysis is deceptive” (p. 328). Maddi added that there are many personality constructs that are not suitable to self-report and factor analysis, and much like Pervin and John (1997) pointed out the disagreement over the correct number of factors.

Hall, Lindzey, and Campbell (1998), as their *Theories of Personality* series usually did, had a unique way of presenting factor analysis. Exploring the method within the context of R.B. Cattell, the authors added their usual historical perspective to the method, explaining its lineage as stemming from Charles Spearman as well as Thurstone. They also provide unique and somewhat technical criticisms or limitations of factor analysis to the student, explaining that there are various types of factors that can be derived (relying on the Cyril Burt’s taxonomy), as well as informing the reader that the other “somewhat controversial” issue is “the distinction between *orthogonal* and *oblique* systems of factors” (p. 313, their italics)<sup>12</sup>. Ultimately, Hall et al. (1998) provide the reader with this caveat: “factor analysis can be abused, and the wisest investigators in this area emphasize the fact that it is no substitute for good ideas or detailed knowledge of the phenomena under investigation” (p. 313). These caveats and criticisms of factor analysis were not always included by the newer generation of textbook authors.

As sections on traits and factor analysis were updated to include the rise of the FFM, other authors still maintained there were serious limitations to the factor analytic approach (e.g. Pervin, 1993). Even when Pervin was joined by researcher Oliver P. John, whose early 1980s

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<sup>12</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore the dense historical and theoretical context of factor analysis *per se*, including the issues brought forth by Hall et al. (1998).



research is associated with the FFM Renaissance, the limitations of factor analysis were highlighted among the showcasing of the FFM—albeit in a fairly short section. Understanding factor analysis as “central to trait research, in particular the development of the five-factor model” (Pervin & John, 1997, p. 292), they explained that the method has critics—including even Gordon Allport, who is usually positioned as the father and defender of traits in most textbooks in general. Pervin and John’s main concern with factor analysis was how it is reputedly the method that distills the essence of universal personality from individuals, even though many disagree about which factors and how many there should be (linking the controversy over the correct number of factors to the contradictory but concurrent rising consensus toward the FFM). They warned the student reading along that “we must question whether factor analysis will provide the basic units of personality” (p. 293).

Personality textbook authors of the newer generation (i.e. authors who began their series during the late 1980s) were generally kinder to factor analysis, and went into greater detail about its procedure and uses. Dan McAdams (1990; 1994) only briefly presented factor analysis as a potential method when constructing a trait measurement: “We might also perform a factor analysis on the data, through which each item is correlated with every other item to determine empirical clusterings” (p. 202; p. 254). He went onto to inform the student that factor analysis can unveil nuances within the item responses that would not be found otherwise, namely relatively independent factors that could indicate separate facets of a trait if not separate traits altogether. Feist (1994) also included factor analysis as a method, but went into much more technical detail than McAdams; he also included criticisms of factor analysis and its theories of personality. Feist explained that “psychometrics, rather than clinical judgment, is the cornerstone” of the factor analytic approach, and although it appears to be strictly empirical and

scientific, “the results, though promising, are nevertheless disappointing” (p. 517). Comparing the use of factor analysis to uncover the essentials of human personality to discovering chemical elements, Feist reprised the familiar criticism that different researchers (e.g. Cattell *versus* Eysenck) can arrive at very different results.

In other textbooks written by newer authors, factor analysis is generally represented as an immensely useful and productive methodology, and is only subjected to modest criticism and warnings, such as the subjective nature of naming found factors (e.g. Allen, 1994, 1997; Carver & Scheier 1992, 1996). David Funder (1997), in the first edition of what would become one of the field’s most popular textbook series, discussed the value of factor analysis but does temper this by pointing out the method’s limitations—highlighting how the quality of its results are dependent on the quality of the input, the subjective decisions involved in its steps, and how the method can produce results that do not appear to make sense to the researcher. Though he highlighted only a few limitations, and quickly returned to its “important uses” (p. 89), he included criticisms and controversies around factor analysis to a much greater degree than his contemporaries.

As indicated above, during the opening half of the 1990s the FFM was included in slightly less than half (45%) of the textbooks sampled, but its history was understood in ways similar to the official histories of this time. During this time, Dan McAdams (1990) understood Costa and McCrae as one of the main traits theorists, and prominently featured the Big Five in his “What Are the Basic Traits?” section. He included some historical background of the FFM, following a typical trajectory stemming from Allport and Odbert (1936) studying the dictionary, to R.B. Cattell’s (1943) further refinement of their work, to Lewis Goldberg coining the label “Big Five” (Goldberg, 1981). McAdams made the point that “even those personologists who *do*

agree that personality traits should be boiled down to approximately five basic dimensions do not all agree on precisely what those dimensions are” (p. 207), citing Norman’s 1963 work as compared to Digman and Iouye (1986) or McCrae and Costa (1987). Nevertheless, McAdams decided to use Costa and McCrae’s labeling (OCEAN) of the five traits for the remainder of the textbook, citing their work’s influence as justification. He explored the first three traits of this model in great detail given the amount of research and history they have in psychology, but first reminded the student that “in accepting this classification system we are implicitly accepting the English lexicon as the ultimate source for our traits” (pp. 207-8). He ended his discussion of the FFM by letting the student know “[w]hile many personality psychologists are drawn to the Big Five . . . many others have adopted alternative perspectives on the organization of personality traits” (p. 226), and mentioning alternative proposal such as Jerry Wiggin’s circumplex model (e.g. Wiggins, 1996) and inventories such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI).

In the next edition, McAdams (1994) expanded his historical introduction to the FFM by including the idea that the research was put on hold for an unusually long amount of time. After noting that “seminal research on the five factors was conducted by the early 1960s,” meaning Fiske (1949), Norman (1963), and Tupes and Christal (1961), McAdams remarked that “it was not until 20 years later that personality psychologists came around to taking seriously what these early studies put forth” (p. 264). Coming close to Goldberg’s history of the FFM as consisting of a “1980s Renaissance,” McAdams recounts the various researchers throughout the decade who revived the FFM. Although he mentioned that there are “some significant disagreements about the meanings of some of these factors,” particularly focusing on openness to experience, the author also included the cross-cultural confirmatory studies and concluded that “the degree of

general agreement about the kind of content that makes up each of the five is quite impressive” (p. 265). Similarly, Carver and Scheier (1992) included the surging popularity of the FFM in a section entitled “Toward a Consensus on the Basic Dimensions of Personality.” The duo also included the notion of a protracted and oblique path of progress toward the FFM, writing that “[t]he evidence in support of a 5-factor view of personality structure has been accumulating for over 40 years, but it began to receive wide attention only within the past decade” (p. 72). The authors recounted the lineage as stemming from the 1940s (i.e. Fiske’s research), resurfacing in the 1960s (i.e. Norman’s research), and then during the 1980s there was “a virtual explosion of work on this topic” (p. 73). Much like McAdams (1994), Carver and Scheier explained that although consensus over the number of factors was emerging, what exactly these factors were was still being debated.

During the last half of the 1990s, there was a dramatic increase and all of the sampled textbooks included some mention of the FFM. Carver and Scheier (1996) continued to write about the FFM in great detail but in nearly identical fashion, offering much historical context (including the gap in research progress) as well as disagreement over the nature of factors. However, the model was the closest to a consensus among trait theorists. In similar fashion, Funder (1997) wrote: “At present, the most widely accepted solution to the problem of reducing many traits in language down to the few that are essential have been offered by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa” (p. 144). Funder had a narrow historical perspective of the FFM, understanding it as solely Costa and McCrae’s model, which they expanded from Norman’s earlier work, to the exclusion of pioneering FFM revivalists such as Lewis Goldberg. Funder did raise some criticisms toward the model, such as whether the five factors were truly distinct, and whether it was even realistic to reduce all of personality to such a small number of traits. Perhaps the

greatest transformation was present in Salvatore Maddi's textbook. Over the past thirty years of textbook editions, he had never once mentioned the FFM. However, he included the "Five-Factor Position" as a major personality theory in his sixth edition (1996). He presented it as largely Costa and McCrae's theory (again to the exclusion of Goldberg), although stemming from Norman's 1960s research. He noted that the FFM in general had "achieved real popularity only within the last 20 years" (p. 120). Maddi was fairly skeptical of Costa and McCrae's position and included several criticisms.

Other revised editions textbooks likewise gave unprecedented attention to the five factor model. Although Hall, Lindzey, and Campbell (1998) saw the emergence of the FFM as "[o]ne of the most important developments in personality in recent years" (p. 345), and provided a typical historical trajectory from Allport to the 1960s surge to the 1980s revival, the authors provide ample examples of the model's critics and dissenters. On the other hand, Allen (1997) included the FFM for the first time, but rather than a detailed historical overview, relegated discussion of the model to a paragraph within his chapter on Eysenck. This passage brought up how factor analytic trait models were in disagreement over the correct number of factors, and Allen concluded that "[p]erhaps we should entertain the possibility that personality is much too complex to be characterized by 3, 5, or even 16 factors" (p. 420). Although the historical context, including the unusually long and indirect route toward consensus, was usually included in these descriptions of the FFM and provided for student consumption, more explicit connections between this unusual route of scientific progress and the person-situation controversy was only included in a couple of the sampled textbooks.

Lawrence Pervin had previously placed the FFM near the person-situation controversy in his textbooks simply due to the fact that they were both part of trait psychology, but did not

drawn a direct connection between research progress and controversy. Now joined by FFM revivalist Oliver John as his co-author (Pervin & John, 1997), the authors quoted directly from Goldberg's (1993) history when explaining "[t]he past decade has witnessed an electrifying burst of interest in the most fundamental problem of the field—the search for a scientifically compelling taxonomy of personality traits. More importantly, the beginning of a consensus is emerging about the general framework" (Goldberg, as quoted by Pervin & John, p. 257). The authors spent several pages explaining the various research programs and applications (e.g. Goldberg *versus* Costa and McCrae), as well as the model's limitations (e.g. it offers "no therapeutic approach"). Although Pervin and John (1997) seemed to closely place the person-situation controversy with factor analytic research such as the FFM, he did not indicate that controversy, or any broader disciplinary crisis or skeptical mood, served as a hindrance on FFM research, other factor analytic research projects, or trait research in general. In fact, in his view "trait psychologists have been very active in research. If the person-situation controversy has not been settled, at least there is considerable evidence of stability in personality functioning" (p. 331).

The only author that explicitly drew a connection between the controversy and FFM research's progress was Christopher Monte, in the fifth edition of his *Behind the Mask* (1995) textbook series. He also relied on Goldberg's history of the FFM when contextualizing what he understood as "a growing consensus among psychologists that a comprehensive, empirical, and coherent description of personality can be made in terms of five major traits" (p. 20). Quoting directly from Goldberg's (1993) history, indicating that "once upon a time, we had no personalities (Mischel, 1968)" (Goldberg, as quoted by Monte, p. 20), Monte (1995) explained that there was a period in the history of psychology (specifically during the late 1960s and early

1970s) when “the study of personality traits fell into some disrepute” (p. 20). In this way, by relying on Goldberg’s history, Monte directly links the “era of skepticism,” or what Goldberg understood as a hostile *Zeitgeist*, to the pause in FFM research.

### **Walter Mischel’s Textbooks**

The content of Walter Mischel's personality textbooks of the 1990s (Mischel, 1993; Mischel & Plomin, 1999) did not differ greatly from previous editions. The only major change or expansion of the material previously covered is in the sixth edition where he is joined by a new co-author (or, as described in the textbook, partial contributor): behavioural geneticist Robert Plomin, of the Institute of Psychiatry in London—longtime research home to Hans Eysenck. Given that Mischel included near-identical discussions of the issues around the person-situation controversy, as well as trait psychology and its factor analytic approach, much of this section will be focused Mischel's evolving views on the FFM and its historical context.

As in the previous edition, the idea that there may have been a crisis in personality psychology is not present in Mischel’s 1990s textbooks. Although Mischel presented the trait approach in a fair and respectful light, he did continue to weave many theoretical and methodological issues throughout his exploration of the approach (e.g. problems of behavioural consistency, the usefulness of trait ratings in general, the illusory promise of truly objective data etc.). Mischel had previously included a discussion about the controversy around intelligence and race, and although he introduced the psychometric-trait approach with the measurement of intelligence the racial controversy seems to have been discarded. Interactionism, particularly Enderl et al.’s various works, is still prominently explored in both 1990s textbooks, with a noticeable expansion in the sixth edition (1999). Presumably reflecting Plomin’s contributions, Mischel extends the idea of interactionism (and the importance of considering situations when

studying the person) to genetic and evolutionary psychology. Indeed, he repositions his discussion of “The Expression of Traits in Interaction with Situations” within the new chapter on biological bases and behavioural expression of traits.

It is within this discussion of factor analysis that he touched on the FFM research. Mischel had been including Norman’s FFM research as an example of factor analytic research since the very first edition of his textbook, and in this edition he updated this by adding some of the FFM revivalists of the 1980s. After discussing work done by Norman, and Tupes and Christal, Mischel noted that “[t]he same set of five relatively independent factors appeared consistently across several studies and continues to form the basis of what has become the Big Five structure” (p. 190). He later explained to the student that it had been a long quest of some personality psychologists to discover a universal taxonomy of traits, and that recently “consensus has grown among many researchers to focus on five dimensions of personality” (p. 158). Tables that had previously included Norman’s five factors had been usurped by McCrae and Costa’s (1987), with a note adding that “essentially similar results were found by John (1990) and by Norman (1963)” (Mischel, 1993, p. 159). Of course, Mischel does not directly link the person-situation controversy (or the issues being debated during that time, as Mischel did not usually talk explicitly about a controversy) with the revival of the FFM. The controversies and limitations of the factor analytic approach and the fundamental lexical hypothesis, much like many other textbook authors of the 1990s, seemed more pertinent to the revival of FFM research and its contemporary place in personality psychology.

## **Discussion**

The 1990s was a decade of major transformation in terms of the content of personality textbooks. The higher inclusion rate of the person-situation controversy could be due to the



temporal distance between the 1990s and the 1970s: it served as a time for older generation textbook authors to reflect, as well as a time for newer generation authors to explore an era they may have witnessed as graduate students (e.g. Dan McAdams) or heard about through their own personality textbooks written by the older generation. A more thoughtful retrospective tone was afforded to the person-situation controversy, and some authors even wondered how exaggerated, mythical, or unique the entire era or event was (e.g. did psychologists *really* believe in one extreme or another?).

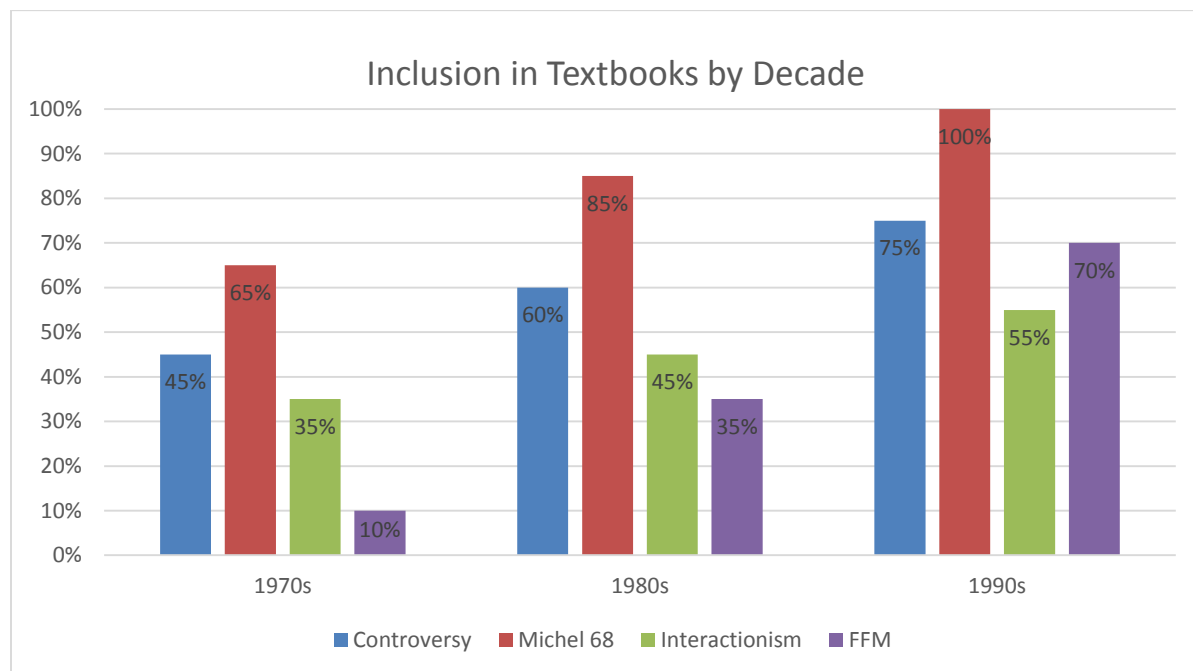
During the 1990s, particularly during its last half, the FFM—often understood as Costa and McCrae’s model, though branded with Goldberg’s model’s name of the “Big Five”—was featured more widely and extensively than ever. Using these textbooks as a basic historical index or measurement (which is a simplistic understanding of these historical texts), it would seem that the FFM revival did indeed occur and was influential enough to warrant a place in nearly every textbook. Though Goldberg ostensibly led the revival, it was most likely Costa and McCrae’s scale that pushed the model’s popularity past the threshold—explaining their dominance in the textbooks over Goldberg. Although the FFM’s rising inclusion does coincide with the official FFM histories of a 1980s renaissance, some authors did not seem particularly surprised that the factor analysts had continued working. Any explanation for the pause on FFM research itself was not usually offered, except for when authors were relying on Goldberg’s FFM history. Though there was excitement about an emerging consensus building in an impossibly fractured field, the sureness of five factors being the accurate model of human nature was not as present in the textbooks. As Lawrence Pervin wrote: “Although it is true that reports of the death of trait theory were unfounded, it is equally the case that proclamations of discovery of the basic structure of personality seem premature” (1996, p. 33).

Perhaps the person-situation controversy did not serve as a sole detour toward to the truth (i.e. the FFM), but more pertinent controversies and debates about the factor analytic approach (and its varied results) as the new and improved mode of investigating the person impeded the research just as much if not more. In line with this thinking about the recent history of personality psychology, although the controversy may have caused some paucity in trait psychology research, the factor analytic approach was often viewed as a newer and distinct form of trait psychology that had its own controversies and problems limiting its progress. Additionally, as Lawrence Pervin and Oliver John (1997) implied, perhaps the FFM is not the eventual and fated terminus of truth *vis-à-vis* human personality that proponents claim.

## Conclusions

The current findings suggest three points: that the person-situation controversy is a broader narrative in the historiography of personality psychology (including its textbooks) that historians of the FFM drew on to make sense of what they can only describe as a “curious history”; that many factor analytic researchers seemed unconcerned, and the progress of their research unaffected, by the ongoing person-situation controversy; and that there are many other methodological, theoretical, and political controversies surrounding the FFM itself, its methodology of factor analysis, and the methodology’s notorious pioneers such as Hans Eysenck and Raymond B. Cattell, that have been minimized or omitted in favour of the vague “era of skepticism” grand narrative. The current evidence from these textbooks is indirect, and has more to do with the interpretation, pedagogy, and historiography of personality psychology than its historical events directly. This thesis did not address enough direct evidence to challenge the historical veracity of the *Zeitgeist* interpretation offered by Lewis Goldberg or Joseph Digman in their official histories of the FFM, as the textbook passages are not precise measures or indices of the discipline. Rather, they offer multiple and contradictory stories, interpretations, and opinions surrounding these issues as written by personality psychologists to the present and future academic community. As such, these textbooks constitute an important part of personality psychology’s historiography.

## The Person-Situation Controversy in Textbooks



*Figure 4:* An overall graph showing percentage of textbooks including topics of interest by decade.

The person-situation controversy was considered an important enough disciplinary event or era to be included in many general personality psychology textbooks. The inclusion rate was modest during both the decade of the controversy (the 1970s) and the decade immediately after (the 1980s), and increased considerably during the 1990s. Although this could be viewed as an artefact considering many of the authors sampled for that decade also included the controversy in previous editions of their textbooks (e.g. Lawrence Pervin), it is also indicative of the previously sampled authors who included the controversy for the first time (e.g. Hergenhahn), as well as younger textbooks authors who felt the need to include the controversy in their first edition and onward (e.g. Dan McAdams). Although it was often situated within the history of trait psychology, or in the history of social learning theory, the controversy was often considered as a

potential breaking point or crisis, or retrospectively as an important turning point, for traditional approaches to personality psychology in general—sometimes described as “personological.”

At the beginning of the 1970s, during the peak of “the era of skepticism,” discussion of any controversy around personal or situational determinants of behaviour often had to do with what Hall and Lindzey (1978) described as the first wave situationists, such as Hartshorne and May or Kurt Lewin. Perhaps indicative of the delay between disciplinary events and their uptake in textbooks, it was not until later in the 1970s that discussion around the person-situation controversy or debate was usually understood as a contemporary event that was influencing (for better or worse, depending on the author’s viewpoint) personality psychologists and their field. Walter Mischel, and the publication of his 1968 *Personality and Assessment*, was highlighted as the most important and salient catalyst for the controversy. Mischel was portrayed as either an extreme situationist, a reasonable interactionist who was misunderstood or had since recanted his extreme views, or as part of a movement that was far outside the purview of personality psychology and was better understood as an outgrowth of behaviourism. At the close of the 1970s, some textbook authors considered the controversy as a resolved issue of the past, while others thought it was still an ongoing site of contention that was challenging the credibility of traditional approaches to personality.

In the 1980s, if textbook authors discussed the person-situation controversy they usually framed it as a debate or series of debates; this label would continue into the 1990s, especially for younger textbook authors. Singling out Mischel and his 1968 book as the catalyst was still typical, although some authors understood the debates in historical terms: for example, as a recurrence of a larger internal-external debates (e.g. Lawrence Pervin), or as a second wave of situationists challenging traditional personality approaches (e.g. Calvin S. Hall and Gardener

Lindzey). Echoing some authors from the previous decade (such as Salvatore Maddi), the debates were sometimes portrayed as a pointless exercise in intellectual argumentation: such as Pervin's personal communication with Hans Eysenck, where the British factor analytic pioneer demoted the debate to "an unreal one" founded on an asinine distinction (person *versus* situation) that other scientists would not entertain. It was found that during the 1990s the person-situation controversy became a more popular inclusion than ever for personality textbook authors. Although very similar versions of the story were carried into the 1990s, there were retrospective addendums and revisions questioning the veracity or exaggerations of the person-situation debate, what the debate was precisely about, and what was learned from this event or era.

With regards to who included the person-situation controversy in their textbook, there are no strong patterns in the data. The controversy was not ignored by personality psychologists on one side of the debates and emphasized by the other, as authors had varied opinions about the constructiveness, destructiveness, or emptiness of the controversy or debates in general. The only basic pattern that emerged was that personality psychologists who worked within the factor analytic tradition often did not include any discussion of the controversy itself, for example: Jerry Wiggins<sup>13</sup> (Wiggins et al., 1971; Wiggins et al., 1976), a student of factor analysis R.B. Cattell; Robert Hogan (1976), a researcher sometimes associated with the FFM revivalist research boom; and Hans Eysenck and his son (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). The latter is not surprising, given Eysenck's position on the person-situation debate as revealed by his personal communication with Pervin. This pattern did not always hold: for instance Oliver P. John,

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<sup>13</sup> Wiggins did talk about the methodological importance of Mischel's critique in his 1976 textbook, but did not indicate that the critique was destroying or impeding factor analytic research such as his own.

another FFM revivalist, included the controversy as part of his textbook co-written by Lawrence Pervin (Pervin & John, 1997)—although whether John actually wrote the sections on the controversy is unknown. Walter Mischel was very consistent in not including the controversy or debate by name (though sometimes indicating a larger disciplinary crisis), but he did write at length about the issues surrounding the controversy in all his textbooks; these passages were repetitions and expansions on the issues raised in *Personality and Assessment* (1968), a few years before he began his long-running textbook series.

Many textbook authors certainly positioned the person-situation controversy as a part of trait psychology's history, as in more recent general histories of personality psychology (e.g. McAdams, 1997) but the direct connection between the controversy and the slowness in achieving a consensus on the correctness of FFM was not made in the sampled textbooks. Although the controversy was eventually placed nearby sections on the FFM as the model grew in popularity and became prominently featured in chapters on trait psychology, the only explicit connection between a destructive *Zeitgeist* and a detour to the truth of the FFM is Christopher Monte's *Behind the Mask*, wherein he relied on Lewis Goldberg's history of the FFM. The person-situation controversy survived throughout the decades, even gaining popularity and influence as a narrative to include in personality psychology's history as the millennium approached. It is likely that the inclusion of the person-situation controversy in popular textbooks series (e.g. Lawrence Pervin's or Hall & Lindzey's) helped it remain a pedagogical point of interest for instructors and their students; some students who would go on to become instructors or even textbook authors themselves (for example, Dan McAdams story of being educated in the context of crisis, heroes, and villains, and choosing to include the controversy in his own textbooks).

The debate or controversy or crisis has remained a part of general personality psychology historiography (in the form of textbooks, handbook chapters, or other academic sources), and the official FFM histories attempted to make use of this grand narrative to explain the perplexing delay in both research on the FFM as well as its acceptance within the discipline. There is something unsatisfactory about emphasizing vague intellectual forces or “bad vibes” as one the primary frameworks to understand the history of the FFM. Goldberg’s use of the *Zeitgeist* reflects one half of what E.G. Boring (1955) understood as its dual role in scientific progress: “sometimes helping and sometimes hindering ... Forces in themselves are not good or bad” (p. 103). Hans Eysenck, as shown in Chapter 2, was also fond of invoking the forces of the *Zeitgeist* to help explain the persistent popularity of Mischel’s critique despite what he saw as ample evidence to ignore it entirely. The difference here is that Eysenck did not see this *Zeitgeist*, again best represented by Mischel’s critique and the ensuing controversy, as a hindering force that worked against FFM research; he saw it as impeding personality psychology’s transformation into a natural science which used sophisticated methodology such as factor analysis along with biological explanations of the self. From Eysenck’s point of view, this hindering force had little to do with the FFM as it was an inaccurate malformed version of his PEN model<sup>14</sup>.

The era of skepticism, or the person-situation controversy, or the malignant *Zeitgeist*, or the general 1970s personality crisis portrayed as a destructive intermission for progress in the FFM and trait histories has similarities to evolutionary psychology’s use of the Standard Social

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<sup>14</sup> In a world where Eysenck’s model and scale became dominant, proponents would most likely invoke the *Zeitgeist* to explain their protracted struggle in showing the truth to non-believers.



Model (SSSM) in their historical narratives. Winston (2007) explains that it is used in introductory evolutionary psychology textbooks as the “dominating force” in social science which evolutionary psychology has had to continually struggle against. This has become such a standardized story in textbooks, and other popular sources—such as Steven Pinker’s bestselling *The Blank Slate* (2002)—that Winston (2007) contests that it constitutes a “discursive social practice”. Regardless of this historical narrative’s pervasiveness “[t]he conception of the SSSM against which [evolutionary psychology] directs much of its critical energy is a straw man” (2004, p. 461). Rather than a simple historical narrative that informs the reader of her discipline’s past, it serves as “a narrative to delegitimize the opposition to their program, as well as a narrative for legitimization” (Winston, 2006). The historical narrative of the SSSM has been repeated and perpetuated enough that it has become the accepted form of history within evolutionary psychology and other areas. It is possible that this alternative and incorrect version of social science history, the SSSM, had some influence in shaping the era of crisis and situationist critique narratives found in textbook histories of the FFM, traits, and personality in general.

Another precursor is the crisis in social psychology, “[t]hroughout the latter half of the 1960s and continuing throughout the 1970s, several social psychologists voiced their concerns regarding the current and future state of their discipline” (Faye, 2012, p. 514). As early as 1962, experimental methodology was one of the most salient concerns of the internally perceived crisis of social psychology. Whereas recent writings of the crisis by social psychologists emphasize its disciplinary importance and significance, indicating that many of the issues brought up during the crisis are still not resolved, FFM researchers treat their disciplinary crisis as an annoying pause; one which spawned methodological questions they feel were sufficiently answered during

the peak of the person-situation controversy. Though Sturm (2012) notes that, contrary to Kuhn's view, crisis talk in the history of psychology is not always the tool of the analysts but also the actors, psychologists clearly drew on Kuhnian language to help orient themselves and their field. Even Walter Mischel briefly alluded to a disciplinary crisis in some of his textbooks, though largely pointing toward Donald Fiske's critique rather than his own as its best representation; and later in life he considered his own 1968 critique as a challenge to the dominant paradigm (2001) and spawning a "paradigm crisis" (2007). For Mischel, this period of crisis was much more constructive than destructive, helping rather than hindering, and had little to do with unveiling the truth of the Big Five.

To speculate within the viewpoint that *Zeitgeists*, era-determined moods, and disciplinary crises did play into the history of the FFM, it could be understood that these forces in fact fully helped rather than briefly hindered the FFM. As the person-situation controversy receded into the past, and the NEO-PI scale became more popular, textbook authors across the board began writing about an emerging consensus toward five factors as the universal model of human personality—even if they agreed with it or not. After such a period of skepticism and near-crisis in personality psychology, when heavyweights such as Fiske were lamenting the field's fractured state and dubious future, perhaps it was such a refreshing change of pace for there to be a small pocket of researchers actually *agreeing* on a personality model or theory that the discipline was more ready and willing than ever to champion the FFM; or at the very least celebrate the whispers of consensus in a field assumed to be forever in a desultory state of pre-paradigmatic, pre-normal science. As many psychologists were influenced by, and understood themselves through, the popular ideas of Kuhn (Driver-Linn, 2003; Leahey, 1992), any form of consensus after a crisis or revolution would be welcome and expected. Of course this point of view is

speculative, and its reliance on collective forces and moods is as unsatisfactory as the current FFM histories—but it does reveal how such a vague story could be reimagined.

### **The Role of Donald Fiske: Discoverer and Skeptic**

Another figure who complicates the traditional FFM history is Donald Fiske. He is usually portrayed as one of the earliest discoverers of the five factors, along with L.L. Thurstone. Goldberg (1995) argues that Thurstone's five factors would not be recognized as the same five found in contemporary FFMs; the portrayal of Fiske as the actual initial discoverer of the FFM is carried over into mass audience books on psychology (see Pickren, 2015). Indeed, Lewis Goldberg's FFM history essay "What the Hell Took So Long?" was written as a chapter for a festschrift honouring Fiske's legacy and impact on personality theory and methods. After having his FFM research published in 1949, according to Digman Fiske inexplicably abandoned the project. Due to a 1974 article critiquing the state of personality psychology, Fiske is also featured in some of the textbook histories as a figure in the person-situation controversy, although more so in the broader crises and critiques that were happening in personality psychology around that time. Fiske's involvement is especially highlighted by critics of traits such as Walter Mischel or Dan McAdams.

From the viewpoint of traditional FFM histories, Fiske's 1974 lamentations about his chosen field could be viewed as further proof that there was something skeptical and malicious in the air during this time that even reached traditional personality psychologists, such as the forefather of the FFM Donald Fiske. On the other hand, this does not explain why Fiske discontinued researching the FFM after his initial discovery in 1949, nor why he was not promoting the FFM to factor analytic and other trait researchers during its pseudo-revival in the early 1960s (e.g. Warren Norman, Tupes & Christal). Fiske (1995) offered his own view on the

“curious history” of the FFM in his festschrift, and explained that although his report on the FFM was new in 1949 it “provoked no one” (p. 354). Additionally, he seemed to appreciate Goldberg’s exploration of “all the possible reasons for the slow acceptance of that quintet” (p. 354), including Goldberg’s overarching narrative of a sour *Zeitgeist*, but opined: “Although all of his reasons seem plausible, I like best the idea that people tried to replace that set with other sets, but failed to do so” (p. 354). This shifts the emphasis away from *Zeitgeist* or era explanations toward the primary importance of the debates among factor analytic researchers about the appropriate number of factors in a universal model of personality; but also implies that the FFM was an eventual truth that all researchers now heed. Fiske admits that such a consensus on the truth of the FFM may have more to do with the opinions of FFM proponents than actual agreement among personality psychologists:

If my memory serves me, rarely if ever before have so many personality psychologists agreed on any substantive proposition. To be more cautious, never have those concerned with personality measurement seemed to agree so closely. (I have no data on the extent of such agreement. Goldberg and I just choose to believe it is quite high.). (p. 354).

### **Factor Analysis Controversies in Textbooks**

The controversies and concerns surrounding factor analysis, excluded from official FFM histories, were featured in many of the sampled textbooks. During the 1970s it was a methodology associated with either R.B. Cattell or Hans Eysenck in textbooks, often situating them as distinct from Gordon Allport’s trait psychology or as its newest incarnation. There was much skepticism about its uses in personality psychology, given that many authors viewed it as esoteric and were unsure about how it could contribute to personality theory; at the same time, there was plenty of optimism about its future influence. Authors such as Robert Hogan (1976)

championed it as a continuation of the atheoretical empirical tradition, but also felt it did not warrant a place in textbooks discussing theories of personality. Similarly, Hall and Lindzey (1970) were doubtful about the method's current research programs would contribute greatly to theories of personality, but also believed it introduced a "style or mode of approach" (p. 412) to research that might impact how theories are developed in the future. Levy (1970) was prophetic when he opined that the future of trait theories "cannot be divorced from that of factor analysis" (p. 216), anticipating the methodology's current limitations to be overcome.

In the 1980s, some textbook authors began more directly associating factor analytic researchers (e.g. Eysenck and Cattell) with trait psychology, especially Pervin (1980; 1984). Although factor analysis was gaining increased page numbers and more prominently positioned sections, the controversies around the method were also being highlighted. For example, although Pervin placed it within trait psychology, he emphasized that Cattell was one of the psychologists convinced that factor analysis could uncover the basic structure of personality. Even authors who did not discuss the person-situation controversy were critiquing factor analysis, such as Ewen's (1980; 1984) list of "methodological controversies," warning students that "this technique is actually more controversial and less objective than its mathematical nature might imply" (p. 462).

The skepticism toward factor analysis was carried into the 1990s textbooks usually by the older generation of authors, while younger authors tended to be more accepting of it as the primary method of conducting trait research (although usually still including its critiques and shortcomings). Despite the eventual normalization of the method in the 1990s, I would argue that the earlier and harsher skepticism toward factor analysis was not merely another facet of the era of skepticism or anti-personality situationist *Zeitgeist* being expressed in textbooks. Even

textbook authors who wrote very negatively of situationist critiques toward their preferred person-focused or personological traditions, such as Salvatore Maddi, or did not care to include the person-situation controversy at all, such as Robert Ewen, were wary of the methodology as a legitimate approach to personality.

Controversies surrounding race, intelligence, and eugenics were brought up rarely in general personality textbooks—the exceptions being Walter Mischel and Bem P. Allen—and certainly absent from FFM histories. As noted at the end of Chapter 2, the controversies around intelligence and race that directly involved the two most well-known representatives of factor analytic trait psychology, Hans Eysenck and (though connections were only later revealed) R.B. Cattell, could have played an important role in the rejection of psychometric trait approaches in general. This is a significant part of the history of factor analytic approaches to personality that could even lend itself to fleshing out Digman's era of skepticism or Goldberg's malignant *Zeitgeist*. As Buchanan (2012) points out, Eysenck's 1971 book *Race, Intelligence, and Education* "caused considerable ructions even before it saw the light of day" (p. 287), indicating how contentious and taboo the scientific study of intelligence and race was during "the era of skepticism." Perhaps their exclusion from the FFM histories is due to Cattell and Eysenck not being direct historical actors in discovering or reviving the FFM. To be sure, discussion about how Eysenck and Cattell promoted factor models of less and more than five, respectively, was included in the FFM histories; but controversies surrounding their work and lives was left out, and how that may have affected the reputation of factor analysis, were left out.

I would argue that the controversies and critiques addressed toward factor analysis itself—from both situationists such as Mischel, but also more traditional person-focused personality researchers and theorists—as well as its most well-recognized pioneers (Eysenck and

Cattell) deserve more attention in outlining a history of the FFM than the more general person-situation controversy. The latter appeared to be a controversy that trait psychologists did engage with to some extent, but did not appear to discontinue their work or destruct their belief systems about the person—this is very true for the factor analytic trait researcher, who was not always even viewed as a legitimate trait psychologist. These critiques and controversies could perhaps fit in with an “era of skepticism” grand narrative, although Mischel and the situationists would have to be demoted to one aspect of the story rather than the crux. Additionally, the era of skepticism or destructive *Zeitgeist* would have to be extended long after the 1970s and into the 1980s and 1990s, as many authors were still unsure about the legitimacy of both factor analysis and the FFM research project even during Goldberg’s Renaissance and after the surge in popularity of Costa and McCrae’s NEO-PI and its accompanying emerging consensus toward the Big Five.

### **How to Frame these Histories?**

Questions about the historiography of personality psychology—a corpus written almost exclusively by personality psychologists (usually within handbooks, textbooks, journal articles, and sometimes festschrifts)—regarding how events or eras such as the person-situation controversy or the revival and celebrity of the FFM is understood and written about is tied to how these psychologists understand their field. How psychologists engage with or use philosophy of science, particularly Thomas Kuhn and his associated concepts of paradigms and revolutions, has been previously explored. As Driver-Linn (2003) demonstrates, it is not uncommon for psychologists to make use of Kuhn’s immensely well-known concepts, particularly the stages of paradigmatic science, since the 1962 publication of his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Reasons for the popularity of citing Kuhn are numerous, and include the

fact that Kuhn's theory of science, given its Piagetian influences, mirrors a psychological stage theory. Psychologists often draw on Kuhnian concepts when they are trying "to size up the field, to figure out where psychology is and where it ought to be" (Driver-Linn, 2003, p. 274). Due to psychology's vastness and polyvalence as an academic discipline, profession, and science, attempts at applying epistemological meta-narratives such as a progressing, pre-paradigmatic science in order to assuage the tension and confusion makes sense—and this is also true for psychologists trying to make sense of areas within the discipline itself. For instance, famous textbook authors Hall and Lindzey used Kuhn's theory to try to explain the perplexing number of disparate (and sometimes contradictory) approaches to doing personality psychology:

[I]t seems easiest to view this area as in a preparadigmatic state. That is, while there are plentiful sets of systematic, or somewhat systematic, ideas, none of these has gained a position of real dominance. There is no single theory that serves as a 'paradigm' to order known findings, determine relevance, provide an establishment against which rebels may struggle, and dictate the major path of future investigation. If Kuhn's historical analysis is accurate, it remains for the future to develop a systematic position that will sweep all, or most, of the field with it for at least an academic generation" (1970, p. 14-5).

Other personality textbook authors in the 1970s and afterward followed suit, such as Byrne (1974) when discussing the situationist versus trait approaches in particular, and even as late as Hergenhahn (1980) when discussing personality psychology in general: "The most important point to be made here regarding paradigms is that it is not necessary to consider one correct and the others incorrect; they all simply generate different research methodologies" (p. 12). Drawing on Kuhn appears to have been a way for personality psychologists to embrace the disunity endemic to personality psychology, and also as a way to explain the person-situation



controversy. Regardless of potential revolutions and competing paradigms, authors such as Cartwright (1974) were content with this sub-disciplinary disunity as the different approaches to personality were seen as varying ways to unveiling the same reality: “[The approaches to personality psychology] *could* be assumed to be alternative conceptualizations of the same reality ... Let us make a different assumption: that each approach is a conceptualization of *some* part of reality” (p. v, his italics). Whether pining for the day that scientific revolution strikes and a normal science stage begins for personality psychology, or drawing on the discipline’s newest philosophical argot, for many personality textbook authors the use of Kuhnian concepts was essential to both understanding their own polyvalent area of study, as well as explaining it the new recruits reading their textbooks.

This language continued somewhat into the 1980s<sup>15</sup>; for example when Monte (1987) wrote about social learning theory as an imperfect and negative paradigm that existed by critiquing other paradigms. Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) were very open in their views on personality psychology’s paradigm and its relationship with textbooks, as explored in Chapter 2 of this thesis. They had concluded that the reason most psychologists thought of personality as a messy area consisting of numerous paradigms was how the presentations of disparate theorists and methods were usually displayed in textbooks; and that by adopting their “natural science approach” in writing their own textbook, they would show the student reading along personality psychology’s “true paradigm” (p. vi).

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<sup>15</sup> Some older authors carried over Kuhnian concepts into the 1990s; with regards to mining popular philosophers of science, newer authors seemed more likely to engage with Karl Popper and his principle of falsification (leaving ideas of paradigms and revolutions behind).

How one understands the historical events, changes, and approaches within personality psychology is still unclear, although Ian Hacking's styles of reasoning framework is a potential analytic lens. Styles of reasoning is an historical epistemology approach originating from Crombie's (1995) work on styles of scientific thinking, and elaborated by Hacking (2002) and Arnold (2002). Hacking chose to replace Crombie's 'scientific thinking' with 'reasoning' "because thinking is too much in the head ... [r]easoning is done in public as well as in private: by thinking, yes, but also by talking and arguing and showing" (p. 180). Thus it is a less restrictive historical approach to understanding disparate perspectives than delimiting it to understanding 'thinking' only. Styles of reasoning may bear a superficial resemblance to the Kuhnian epistemological framework of paradigms and incommensurability, but Hacking argues that it in fact is more related to Feyerabend's ideas of incommensurability. As Hacking explains, "the Kuhnian 'no common measure' does not apply in any straightforward way, because when we reason differently, there is no expectation of common measure of the sort that successive Kuhnian paradigms invite", and thus "it is the more extreme, Feyerabendian ... inability of one body of thought to understand the other" that should be used (p. 170).

Applying styles of reasoning to different approaches within personality psychology echoes the two distinct disciplines of psychology—experimental and correlational research—that Lee Cronbach proposed in 1957. As noted in Chapter 1, Cronbach's distinction between the experimental and correlational disciplines of psychology guided how some textbook authors understood the tension between experiment-oriented situationists and correlational-oriented personologists (particularly those within the psychometric-trait approach). Cronbach's concluding remarks about how combining the foci of both the experimental and correlational approaches to understand the interaction between internal and external determinants of behaviour

was also used to explain the 1970s wave of interactionism—and Cronbach was sometimes viewed as an proto-interactionist. From this viewpoint, it could be argued that given the unusual emphasis that factor analysis pioneers R.B. Cattell and Hans Eysenck had on both correlational and experimental research, that they were also proto-interactionists. If Cronbach's two disciplines combine to create an interactionist discipline that encompasses multiple methodologies, factor analytic researchers would be placed alongside several psychologists who had very distinct views about what personality is and how it should be studied.

Perhaps it is best to understand factor analysis as a distinct style of reasoning about the person that gained further popularity and acceptance after the revival of the FFM during the 1980s. Indeed, this is similar to how Hall and Lindzey (1970) viewed the sophisticated but controversial methodology: “the style or mode of approach of [factor analytic] theorists will surely have an impact upon the way in which future theory will develop” (p. 412). Although is it actually the case that factor analytic researchers and other personality psychologists have a complete inability to understand one another, as per Hacking's description of two distinct styles? While separate approaches do have their preferred understandings and interpretations of personality and how it is best studied, they can indeed understand each other's points of view to engage in theoretical and methodological debates. There are also essential epistemological differences between researchers within the factor analytic approach, such as Goldberg's FFM research being framed within the fundamental lexical hypothesis making it a taxonomy of descriptive language and behaviour *versus* Costa and McCrae's FFM research that assumes the actual internal existence of the five traits and as having biological bases (e.g. genetics).

One thing that certainly does appear to distinguish factor analytic researchers from other personality researchers is that the method is often championed as being atheoretical, and any

theory about personality is derived from the results of the factor analysis. In some ways, factor analytic research is an extreme example of Bakan's methodolatry (1966) or Danziger's methodological imperative (1985). Given the complexities endemic to methodological and theoretical differences between personality researchers, it is difficult to know how to organize the projects: in terms of paradigms, disciplines, styles, schools, or approaches. This is an issue that perplexes both historians and textbook authors, and is another issue that could be better addressed with the use of social network analysis (e.g. Green, Feinerer, & Burman, 2013, 2015; Pettit, Serykh, & Green, 2015).

### **Final Remarks**

As alluded to at the beginning of this section, there are many limitations to what the current study can show us—given the type of evidence and my approach. Future historical and theoretical work with the aim of better understanding the trajectory and impact of the FFM, factor analysis, or the person-situation controversy should engage with digital historiography. As I noted in the Chapter 2 discussion, the distance between Norman's FFM and the era of skepticism prompted by Mischel makes the latter an unlikely primary reason for the lack of interest in FFM research. Tracing the impact or influence of Walter Mischel's *Personality and Assessment* (1968) within academic journals, and early FFM research such as Warren Norman's, would be a worthwhile endeavor best suited for basic citation analyses or social network analyses (such as co-citation or co-author networks). Networking some of the key personality journals over time could help us better understand the structure and changes that personality psychology has gone through. It would help us situate events or eras such as the person-situation controversy, and unveil whether their representation in traditional disciplinary histories is replicated in more macroscopic and data-driven approaches to disciplinary histories.

Understanding the structure and transformations of personality psychology could also serve as an initial step to tracing the influence and impact of psychological concepts and methodologies within the public (via popular culture, industry, governments, and other realms of society). Trait psychology, the Big Five, and the factor analytic approach have played important parts in the history of the quantified self during the twentieth century and into the current century. Personality models, theories, scales, and tests—promoted or completed in earnest or in jest; with benevolent, indifferent, or malevolent intentions—have become crucial sites of understanding ourselves and others. Increasing our knowledge about the histories of these topics can lead to increasing our knowledge of how academic psychology affects and interacts with the public and shapes identities and subjectivity; it can also lead to using historical methods as a way of investigating human psychology in general, not only the academic discipline.

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