

Psychology professors' book on personality sets 'new standard' in the field

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Oakland University Psychology Professors Todd K. Shackelford (left) and Virgil Zeigler-Hill co-edited the newly published "SAGE Handbook on Personality and Individual Differences," a comprehensive three-volume set that features contributions from leading scholars in the field. Credit: Oakland University

What is personality? Where does personality come from? How does personality influence health, politics, economics, relationships and other aspects of life?

The SAGE Handbook of Personality and Individual Differences, which is co-edited by Oakland University Psychology Professors Virgil Zeigler-Hill and Todd K. Shackelford, provides a comprehensive analysis of these questions and more. Published in June, the three-volume set consists of 79 chapters written by leading experts from universities around the world.

Dr. Shackelford described the book as "a new standard" in the field of personality and individual differences.

"We tried to be as broad and inclusive as possible, bringing in different theoretical perspectives,

research strategies and methodologies," said Shackelford, distinguished professor and chair of OU's Department of Psychology. "The book is going to be very useful in graduate courses and advanced undergraduate courses."

Zeigler-Hill added that, while the topics are scholarly in nature, they are accessible to general readers.

"Personality is something that people tend to find really interesting outside the field of psychology," Zeigler-Hill said. "People are deeply curious about what makes people tick. That's really at the heart of personality . . . how people differ from each other, how they're similar, and what makes them that way."

Along with Shackelford and Zeigler-Hill, several OU psychology faculty contributed to the book.

Jennifer Vonk co-authored a chapter called "Personality in Nonhuman Animals: Comparative Perspectives and Applications." In addition, Steven J. Stanton, Mathew J. W. McLarnon, Ashton Southard and Viviana A. Weekes-Shackelford were part of a 25-member editorial board that reviewed and provided feedback on chapter submissions.

While the publication's first two volumes lay the groundwork for understanding origins and theoretical approaches to personality and individual differences, the third volume highlights practical applications, such as how the results of personality research can help people find suitable careers and achieve better health outcomes.

"If you're an extraverted, outgoing person, being alone in an office may not be the best work environment," Zeigler-Hill explained. "If you're an introverted, shy type of person, a sales job may not be the best fit."

He also noted that people with certain personality

traits may achieve better health outcomes.

"People who have the ability to control their behavior have a better chance of staying on track with certain health goals," he said. "People who lack that ability may need additional assistance like an online health coach."

Shackelford pointed out that the topic of [personality](#) is one of the broadest areas of psychology and it intersects with many fields.

"It links up to everything that is of interest to psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, criminologists, and other scholars," Shackelford said. "It's definitely a mainstay of social and behavioral science, and this book is the largest-scale effort to create a truly comprehensive work on this topic."

Provided by Oakland University

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