



# Persons: Understanding Psychological Selfhood and Agency

*Jack Martin, Jeff H. Sugarman, Sarah Hickenbottom*

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At its core, psychology is about persons: their thinking, their problems, the improvement of their lives. The understanding of persons is crucial to the discipline. But according to this provocative new book, between current essentialist theories that rely on biological models, and constructionist approaches based on sociocultural experience, the concept of the person has all but vanished from psychology.

Persons: Understanding Psychological Selfhood and Agency recasts theories of mind, behavior, and self, synthesizing a range of psychologists and philosophers to restore the centrality of personhood—especially the ability to make choices and decisions—to the discipline. The authors' unique perspective de-emphasizes method and formula in favor of moral agency and life experience, reveals frequently overlooked contributions of psychology to the study of individuals and groups, and traces traditions of selfhood and personhood theory, including: The pre-psychological history of personhood, a developmental theory of situated, agentive personhood, the political disposition of self as a kind of understanding, Human agency as a condition of personhood, Emergentist theories in psychology, the development of the perspectival self.

Persons represents an intriguing new path in the study of the human condition in our globalizing world. Researchers in developmental, social, and clinical psychology as well as social science philosophers will find in these pages profound implications not only for psychology but also for education, politics, and ethics.

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