Strangers in a Strange Lab: How Personality Shapes Our Initial Encounters with Others

Can we predict how well--or how poorly--two strangers will get along? According to social psychologist William Ickes, the answer is yes. Drawing upon relevant research findings from his 30-year career, Ickes explains how initial interactions are shaped by gender, race, birth order, physical attractiveness, androgyny, the Big Five dimensions, shyness, and self-monitoring.

Ickes's work offers unprecedented insights on the links between personality and social behavior that have not previously been compiled in a single source: how sibling relationships during childhood affect our interactions with opposite-sex strangers years later; why Latinos have a social advantage in initial interactions; how men react to the physical attractiveness of a female stranger in a relatively direct and obvious way while women react to the attractiveness of a male stranger in a more indirect and subtle way; and how personality similarity is related to satisfaction in married couples.

This relatively short, highly accessible work serves as an ideal supplementary text for undergraduate and graduate-level courses in personality and social psychology. It will also appeal to scholars working in the fields of personality and social psychology and to laypersons who are interested in learning what researchers have discovered about the links between personality and social behavior.