The Psychology of Personality

Personality: The characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors that are relatively stable in an individual over time and across circumstances (page 569).

Questions addressed in this chapter are:

**What is personality?** Where does it come from, how does it develop and change, why do I do what I do?

- Psychodynamic Approach
- Humanistic Approach
- Social Cognitive (Learning and Cognition) Approach
- Trait Approach
  - Strengths and weaknesses of each perspective

**How do we assess personality?**

- Objective measures
- Projective measures
  - Strengths and weaknesses of each method
- Pseudoscientific methods

**How does personality affect us?**
There are four basic groups of theorists who try to describe and explain individual similarities and differences, how personality develops and why individuals are unique. As you read through the theories of personality, remember, **NO SINGLE** theory of personality explains all aspects of human personality. Every personality theory has its own unique contribution to our understanding of personality and weaknesses in its approach to explain personality.
There is a metaphor for our understanding of reality in that it is limited. Our ability to understand reality is limited to where we are looking. Blind women and men only know a small part of reality and can disagree because they are looking at different parts of reality (the elephant). In order to understand the reality of the elephant, you need to understand multiple perspectives.

Understanding psychology is similar. In order to understand thinking and behavior, you have to understand different perspectives.
The Psychology of Personality

What is personality?

- Psychodynamic Approach
- Humanistic-Existential Approach
- Social Cognitive Approach
- Trait Approach

Personality Assessment

- Projective measures
- Personality measures
- Pseudoscientific methods
Personality

13.1 How Have Psychologist Studied Personality?
- Psychodynamic Theories Emphasize Unconscious and Dynamic Processes
- Humanistic Approaches Emphasize Integrated Personal Experiences
- Personality Reflects Learning and Cognition
- Trait Approaches Describe Behavioral Dispositions

13.2 How is Personality Assessed?
- Personality Refers to Both Unique and Common Characteristics
- Researchers Use Projective and Objective Methods to Assess Personality
- Observers Show Accuracy in Trait Judgments
- People Sometimes are Inconsistent
- Behavior is Influences by the Interaction of Personality and Situations
- There are Cultural and Sex Differences in Personality

13.3 What Are the Biological Bases of Personality?
- Animals have Personalities
- Personality is Rooted in Genetics
- Temperaments Are Evident in Infancy
- Personality Is Linked to Specific Neurophysiological Mechanisms
- Personality is Adaptive
- Critical Thinking Skill: Avoiding Single-Cause Explanations
- Personality Traits Are Stable Over Time

13.4 How Do We Know Our Own Personality?
- Our Self-Concepts Consist of Self-knowledge
- Perceived Social Regard Influences Self-Esteem
- Critical Thinking: Resisting Appeals to Snobbery
- We Use Mental Strategies to Maintain Our Views of Self
- There are Cultural Differences in the Self
- Psychology: Knowledge You Can Use: Do Personalities Matter in Roommate Relationships?
**Personality (old school)**

**Personality:** The characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors that are relatively stable in an individual over time and across circumstances (page 569).

Our personality affects our

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts</th>
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<th>Behaviors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Brain Image]</td>
<td>![Emotion Images]</td>
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It turns out that personality doesn’t do a good job at predicting our thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
Personality

The understanding of Personality can have limits. You can’t understand or predict how people will act in social situations. Although the following are not personality traits, stereotypes we have of individuals can make it difficult to predict individual behaviors.

Who would you like to have as a leader of your nation?
- A vegetarian
- An alcoholic
- A womanizer
Are pit bulls “bad”? Are they innately aggressive?
**Personality**

**Personality:** The characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors that are relatively stable in an individual over time and across circumstances (page 569).

Who we are interacts with our environment

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<td><img src="image1.png" alt="People" /> <img src="image2.png" alt="Environment" /></td>
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**Personality**

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Who we are interacts with our environment

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- Central versus secondary traits are better predictors
- Traits predict “on the average”, not specific instances
- Strong situations (the social environment)
- Versus weak situations (the social environment),
  has a larger influence on thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

affects our

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Identify traits (elements of the self) that are
- Central traits
- Secondary traits

Honesty
Adventurous
Imaginative
Independent
Interdependent
Likes variety
Likes routine
Worried
Calm
On-the-go
Relaxed
Organized
Spontaneous
Likes structure
Avoids structure
Social in large groups
Social in small groups
Helpful
Trusting
Affectionate
Animal Lover

Dog person
Cat person
Musically inclined
Math Oriented
Literature Oriented
Science Oriented
Art Oriented
City person
Nature Person
“Foodie”
Fiscal Conservative
Social Conservative
Fiscal Liberal
Social Liberal
Thrifty
Industrious
Religious / not religious
Politically active / inactive
Athletic
Nurturing