The Psychology of Personality

**Personality**: A person’s characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors ([page 549](#)).

**Personality trait**: A pattern of thought, emotion, and behavior that is relatively consistent over time and across circumstances ([page 549](#)).
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 stable is personality?

**How do we assess personality?**
- Objective measures
- Projective measures
  - Strengths and weaknesses of each method
- Pseudoscientific methods

**How does we know our own personality?**
The Blind Men and the Elephant

This metaphor shows that 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.
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.
The Psychology of Personality

What is personality?

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

- Projective measures

- Personality measures

- Pseudoscientific methods

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### TABLE 12.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensation-Seeking Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circle One</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sample Items</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T</strong></td>
<td>I enjoy getting into new situations where you can't predict how things will turn out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>I'll try anything once.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes do “crazy” things just for fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>I like to explore a strange city or section of town by myself, even if it means getting lost.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zusman et al., 1994
Personality (old school)

Personality: A person’s characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors (page 549).

Our personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Brain Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Emotion Images" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Behavior Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
Related topics:
• Are pit bulls “bad”? Are they innately aggressive?
**Personality**

**Personality trait:** A pattern of thought, emotion, and behavior that is relatively consistent over time and across circumstances (page 549).

Who we are interacts with our environment

Personality + social environment interact

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### Personality

**Personality:** A person’s characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors ([page 549](#)).

Who we are interacts with our environment

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<th>Personality + social environment interact</th>
<th>affects our</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Personality image" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Social environment image" /></td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Behavior image" /></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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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.