The Psychology of Personality

**Personality**: An individual’s unique and relative consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. A person’s characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors (page 409).

**Personality theory**: A theory that attempts to describe and explain similarities and differences in people’s patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving (page 409).
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?

- Psychoanalytic Perspective
- Humanistic Perspective
- Social Cognitive Perspective
- Trait Perspective
  - Strengths and weaknesses of each perspective

**How do we assess personality?**

- Projective Tests
- Self-Report Inventories
  - Strengths and weaknesses of each method
- Pseudoscientific methods
The Psychology of Personality

What is personality?

- Psychoanalytic Perspective
- Humanistic Perspective
- Social Cognitive Perspective
- Trait Perspective
Personality Assessment

- Projective tests
- Self-Report Inventories
- Pseudoscientific methods

**TABLE 12.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle One</th>
<th>Sample Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>I enjoy getting into new situations where you can’t predict how things will turn out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zuckerman et al., 1994.
This metaphor shows that our understanding of reality 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.
Personality (old school)

Personality: An individual’s unique and relative consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. A person’s characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors (page 409).

Our personality affects our

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Brain" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Emotions" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Behaviors" /></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
**Personality**

Personality: An individual’s unique and relative consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. A person’s characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors *(page 409)*.

Who we are interacts with our environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality + social environment interact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Personality and environment" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

affects our

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thoughts</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Brain" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Feelings" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Behavior" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personality

Personality: An individual’s unique and relative consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. A person’s characteristic thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviors (page 409).

Who we are interacts with our environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality + social environment interact</th>
<th>affects our</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Central versus secondary traits are better predictors  
• Traits predict “on the average”, not specific instances | Thoughts |
| • Strong situations (the social environment)  
versus weak situations (the social environment),  
have a larger influence on thoughts, feelings and behaviors. | Feelings |
|                         | Behavior    |