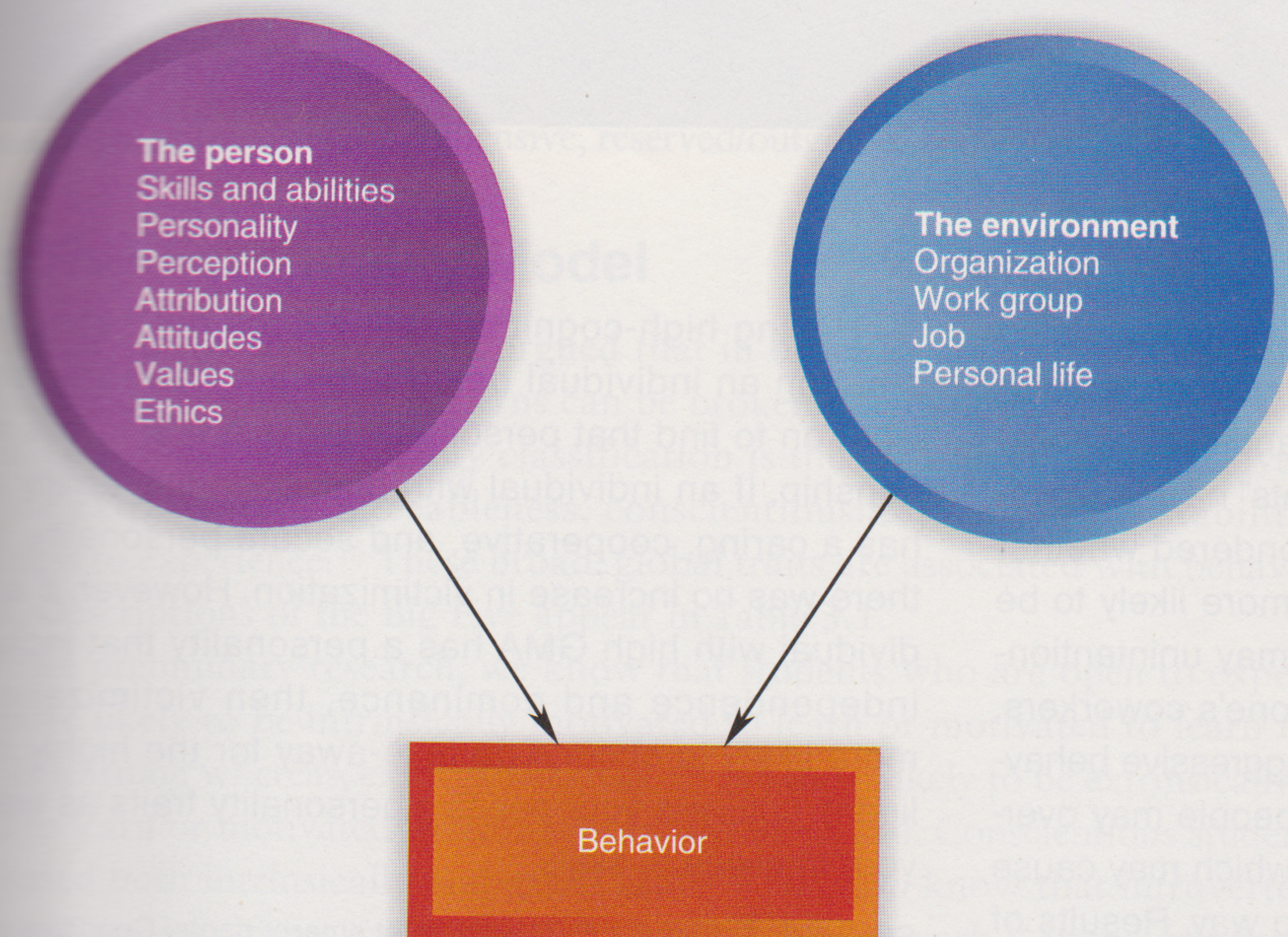


FIGURE 3.1 Variables Influencing Individual Behavior



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3. People vary in many characteristics, including cognitive, affective, motivational, and ability factors.
4. Two interpretations of situations are important: the objective situation and the person's subjective view of the situation.⁶

The interactional psychology approach points out the need to study both persons and situations. We will focus on personal and situational factors throughout the text. The person consists of individual differences such as those we emphasize in this chapter and Chapter 4: personality, perception, attribution, attitudes, emotions, and ethics. The situation consists of the environment the person operates in, and it can include things like the organization, work group, personal life situation, job characteristics, and other environmental influences. We will briefly discuss skills and abilities which are individual differences that impact behavior at work and then move to a fascinating individual difference: personality.

Skills and Abilities

Many skills and abilities relate to work outcomes. *General mental ability* (GMA) was introduced by Spearman (1904)⁷ more than 100 years ago. It is defined as an individual's innate cognitive intelligence. In studies both in the United States⁸ and abroad⁹, evidence indicates that GMA is the single best predictor of work performance across many occupations. GMA also relates to economic, physical and subjective well-being.¹⁰ Is high GMA always a good thing? Read the Science feature for more information. Some would argue that intelligence testing should be the primary gauge for selecting employees.¹¹ But what about aspects of one's personality? Next, we will discuss personality characteristics that influence organizational outcomes.



Characters on CBS's *The Big Bang Theory* have high general mental ability.

Matt Kennedy/CBS via Getty Images