<u>The Social Cognitive perspective and Albert Bandura</u>
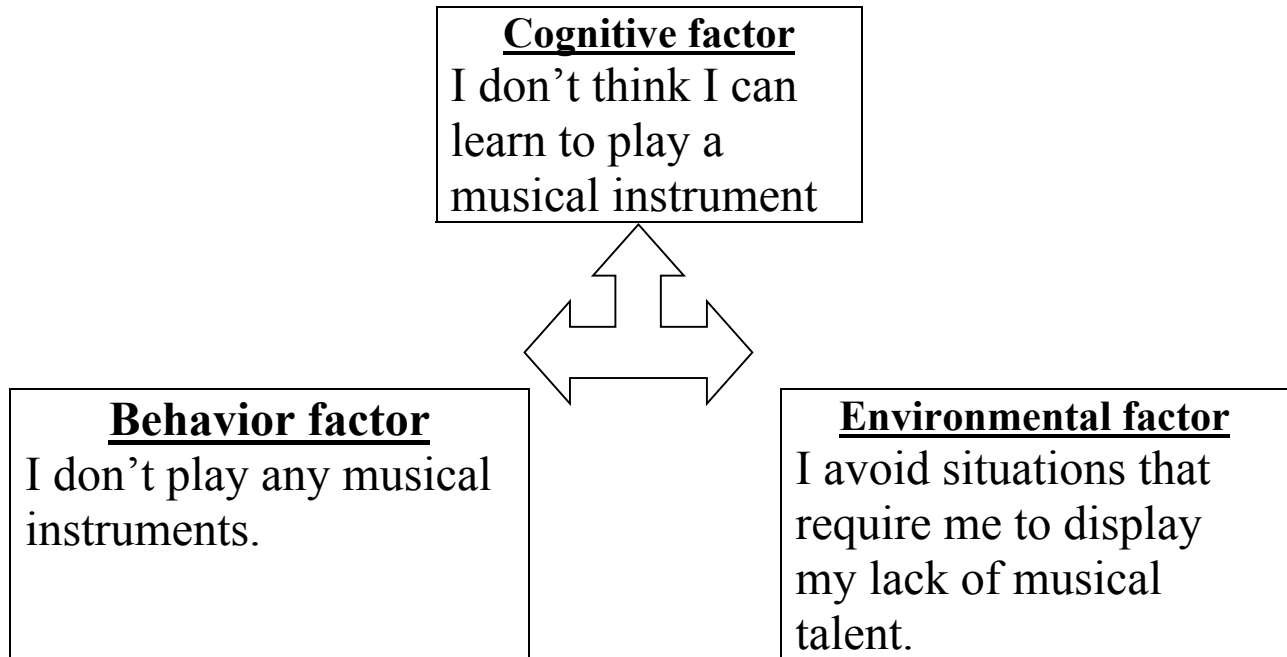
For more information on Albert Bandura and the Social Cognitive Perspective, see Chapter 5: Learning and Chapter 8: Motivation and Emotion.

Social cognitive theory emphasizes the social origin of thinking and behavior as well as active cognitive processes (unlike the psychoanalysts). Our sense of self can vary depending on our thoughts, feelings and behaviors in a given situation (context).
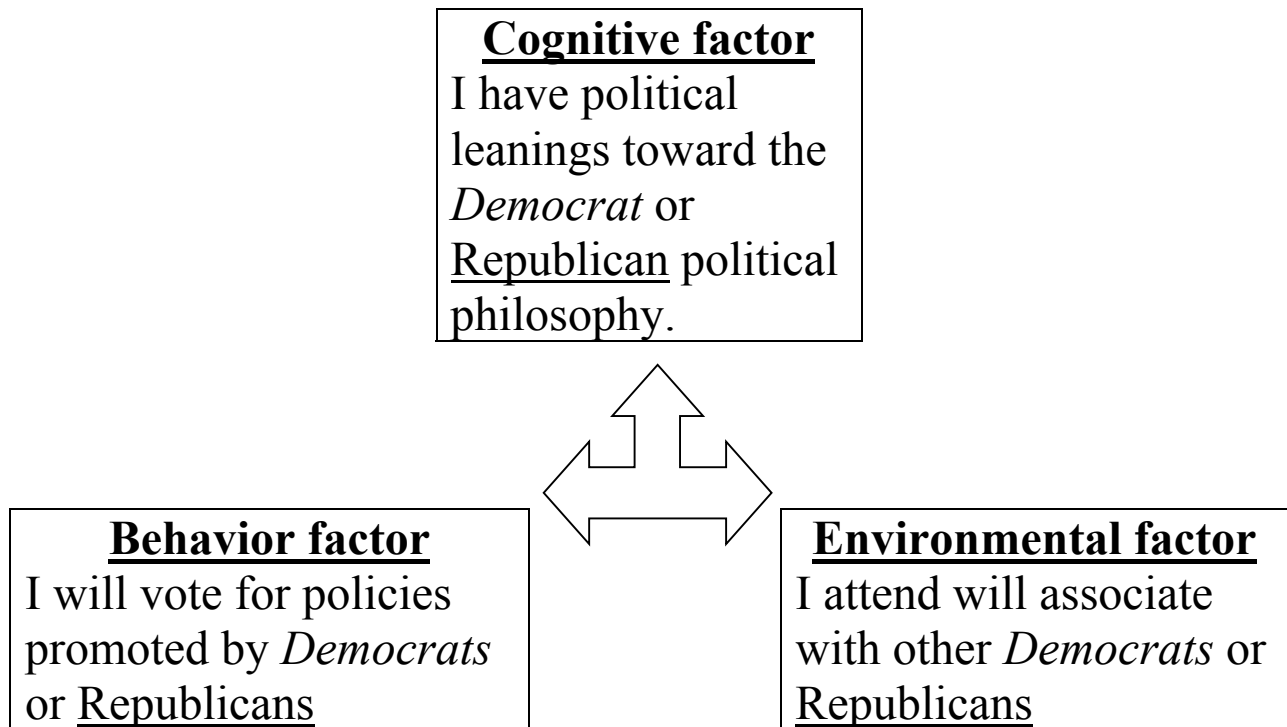
It emphasizes conscious self-regulated behavior, rather than unconscious motives and drives. The person is an active participant in their environment. People do not simply react to the social environment, but they actively create their own environment and acts to change them. Thinking, the environment, and behavior all interact; each can only be understood relative to each other.
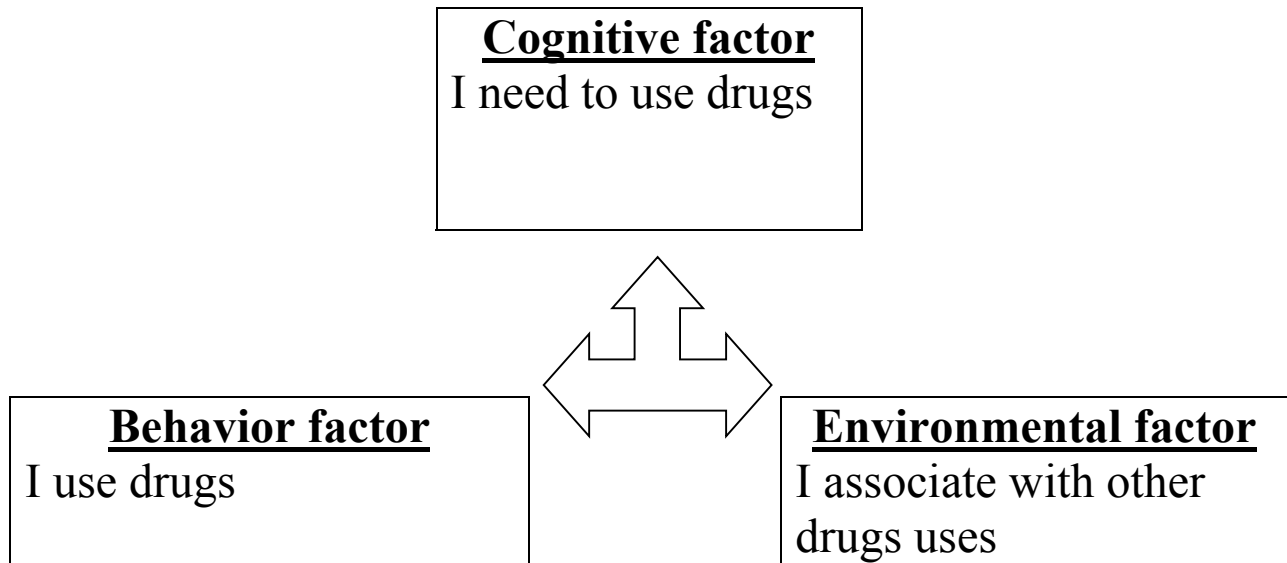
Based on beliefs we have, we act a certain way and chose to act in certain social environments. Personality is shaped by through <u>reciprocal determinism.</u> Our social environment affects our thoughts and actions, our thoughts and actions affect the social environment we choose, our actions influences our thoughts and social environment we choose…

Reciprocal Determinism

Cognitive factor
I don't think I can learn to play a musical instrument

Behavior factor
I don't play any musical instruments.

Environmental factor
I avoid situations that require me to display my lack of musical talent.

How about my knowledge of 70's music

Cognitive factor
I have political leanings toward the *Democrat* or Republican political philosophy.

Behavior factor
I will vote for policies promoted by *Democrats* or Republicans

Environmental factor
I attend will associate with other *Democrats* or Republicans

Cognitive factor
I need to use drugs

Behavior factor
I use drugs

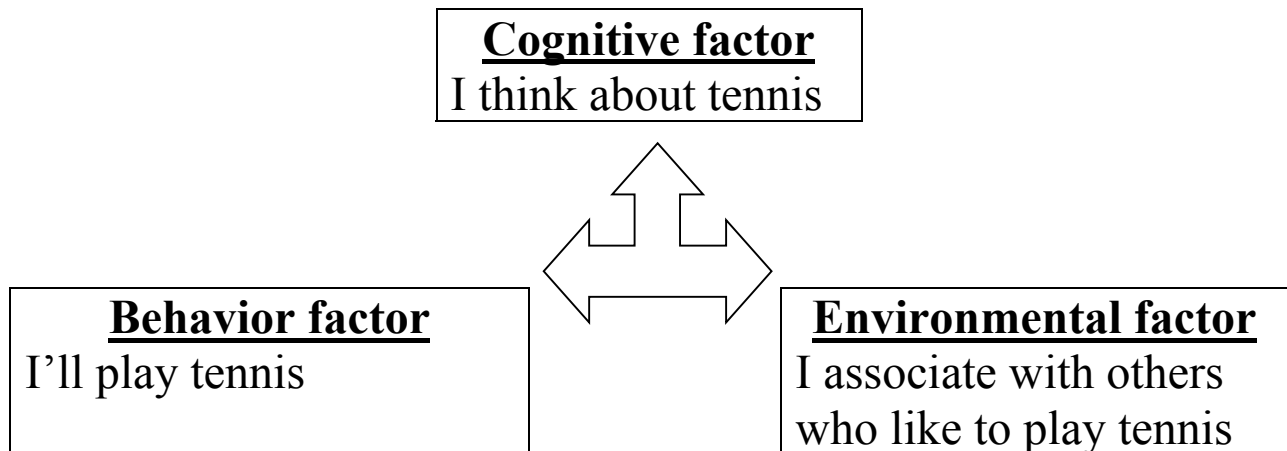**Environmental factor**
I associate with other drugs uses

You can easily replace this with criminal behavior. This helps explain some programs to help disrupt the cycle of criminal behavior and drug use.

Reciprocal Determinism

For example:

Playing basketball (a behavior) leads to thinking about basketball, which in turn may lead to playing basketball. Seeing a basketball (in the environment) leads to thinking about basketball, which in turn increases the chances of noticing people playing basketball. Playing basketball may lead to environmental rewards, which in turn reinforce basketball playing. All three elements—behavior, thought, and environment—take turns influencing or being influenced by each other.

Cognitive factor
I think about tennis

Behavior factor
I'll play tennis

Environmental factor
I associate with others who like to play tennis

Strengths and Contributions of the Social Cognitive Perspective

The understanding human behavior comes from insights based on experimental findings, not clinical observations such as with the Freudians and Humanists. The social cognitive approach is based on good scientific data that can predict behavior—people who's self-efficacy was raised were more likely to find a job after being laid off. Clinical observations have difficulties predicting behavior.

Weaknesses and Problems of the Social Cognitive Perspective

Some researchers claim that social cognitive perspective describes people better in artificial situation of the laboratory and not in the complex real world, where real external factors are constrained.

The social cognitive perspective ignores the unconscious influences of our emotions, subjective experience, internal conflicts we may have and genetic and biological issues. This perspective focuses only on a limited aspect of personality and not the whole person and the context in which they live.

The Trait perspective of personality

There are relatively stable, enduring predispositions to consistently behave in a certain way. The trait approach to personality focuses primarily on individual differences.

Raymond Cattell (16 personality factors)
Hans Eysenck (3 dimensions of personality)
- o Extraversion / Introversion
- o Neurotic / Stable
- o Psychoticism

The Five Factor Model (5 dimensions of personality)
- o **O**penness to experience
- o **C**onscientiousness
- o **E**xtraversion
- o **A**greeableness
- o **N**euroticism

Hans Eysenck

Extraversion / Introversion: The degree to which a person directs their energy outward toward the environment or inward towards the self.
- o Introverts tend to be quiet and keep to themselves.
- o Extroverts tend to be sociable and outgoing.

Neurotic / Stable: The degree to which a person can become emotionally unstable or stable.
- o Neurotic people tend to be moody, restless, tense, depressed, worrisome and anxious.
- o Stable people tend to be calm, relaxed, even-tempered and emotionally stable.

Psychoticism: The degree two which a person is anti-social or pro-social.
- o People high on psychoticism tend to be cruel, cold and reject social customs.
- o People low on psychoticism tend to be warm and caring towards others.

Refer to Figure 11.4 to see how these source traits manifest themselves as surface traits.

Eysenck contends that individual differences arise from biological differences. Introverts require less cortical stimulation and arousal than extroverts to operate efficiently and perform at optimal levels (also see arousal motivation in Chapter 8: Motivation and Emotion).

> For example, introverts tend to need less barbeque sauce to like a hamburger,
> more sensitive to lemon juice,
> like a lower volume of music to feel comfortable, etc.
> Interestingly, when assigned to a task, extraverts perform at an initial high level and gradually declines. Introverts will perform at a consistently at a moderate level.

Sample items from Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire

Extraversion

1. Do you like mixing with people?
2. Do you like going out a lot?
3. Would you call yourself happy-go-lucky?

Neuroticism

1. Does your mood often go up and down?
2. Do you often feel "fed-up"?
3. Are you an irritable person?

Psychoticism

1. Do you enjoy cooperating with others?
2. Do you try not to be rude to people?
3. Do good manners and cleanliness matter to you?

The Big Five (Five Factor Model), see Table 11.3, p 456:

Openness to experience: The extent to which people are imaginative and open to new experiences as opposed to insensitive and reluctant to have new experiences. People often high in openness to experience are creative and often get along with people from cultures different from their own.

Conscientiousness: The extent to which people are neat, self-disciplined, and organized as opposed to sloppy, lacking self-discipline, and disorganized. People high in conscientiousness tend to get things done to get things done on time; they do well in fields requiring high levels of neatness and organization.

Extraversion: The extent to which people are outgoing and impulsive as opposed to reserved and cautious. People high in this dimension often make friends more easily and tend to be successful in fields requiring lots of contact with strangers (eg. sales).

Agreeableness: The extent to which people are cooperative, trusting and easy to get along with as opposed to uncooperative, suspicious, and difficult. People high in agreeableness tend to have few problems getting along with others.

Neuroticism (emotional stability): The extent to which people are calm, composed, and stable as opposed to nervous, anxious and unstable. People high in neuroticism are able to cope with high levels of stress better than persons low in neuroticism.

The Five Factor Model of Personality

Factor	Low	High
Openness to Experience	down-to-earth conventional, uncreative prefers routine	imaginative original, creative prefers variety
Conscientiousness	lazy aimless quitting	hardworking ambitious persevering
Extraversion	reserved loner quiet	affectionate joiner talkative
Agreeableness	antagonistic ruthless suspicious	acquiescent softhearted trusting
Neuroticism	calm even tempered, unemotional hardy	worrying temperamental, emotional vulnerable

Strengths and Contributions of the Trait Perspective

Several independent researchers find similar results (the five factors OCEAN) in their factor analysis, and the five factors reliably appear across a wide range of cultures. Traits are relatively stable over time.

Weaknesses of the Trait Perspective

Trait theories don't really explain personality. They simply label general predisposition.
Trait theories don't attempt to explain how or why individual differences develop.
Trait approaches fail to address basic motives that drive people and the role of unconscious thought processes, beliefs about the self or how people develop over the lifespan.
Traits are <u>poor predictors</u> of behavior in specific situations. However, it tends to predict how the person will behave "on the average". Supporters of the trait perspective argue that personality traits have a stronger influence in situations that are less socially structured, more familiar, informal or private.