The Social Cognitive Approach

To understand personality, you need to know the social environment in which the person exists. Thinking (personality), 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 reciprocal determinism.

In order to understand behavior, you need to know personality and the situation
Social Cognitive Perspective: Reciprocal Determinism

**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
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.

If we believe we “we are the center of the world”, we hang around others who treat us this way, and act this way, but others may not believe this so it comes as a shock when we come across those who are different.
The Social Cognitive Approach

People are not simply reacting to the environment (as B.F. Skinner would say), but are actively creating an environment and changing it. Beliefs and thoughts (cognitions) determine how environmental events will be perceived and acted upon. People act in a way that is consistent with their beliefs and choose environments that reflect those beliefs.

What kind of life do you want?
- I want a life where people grow with me and accept me for who I am (unconditional positive regard).

**Cognitive factor**
I want to be accepted for who I am (I want to live a life consistent with my self concept)

**Behavior factor**
I will accept others for who they are, provide constructive criticism, supportive of others

**Environmental factor**
I will associate with people who accept me for who I am and who are supportive
Reciprocal Determinism

**Cognitive factor**
I am optimistic and have an internal locus of control

**Behavior factor**
I am more likely to be persistent and more likely to be successful

**Environmental factor**
People will be more likely to give you a chance to be successful and encourage success
Cognitive factor
I am pessimistic and have an external locus of control

Behavior factor
I am less likely to try new things and more likely to fail

Environmental factor
People are less likely to be supportive and encouraging
Not only can the compensatory response become triggered biologically through the use of a drug, it can be triggered by environmental cues.

If you want to reduce drug use, you may need to change environments. According to the principle of reciprocal determinism, beliefs, environment and behavior are intertwined.
In order to understand the problems of drug abuse, you need to understand
- the process of reciprocal determinism,
- as well as the neurochemical basis of addiction (the neurotransmitter dopamine) and
- learning (classical conditioning and operant conditioning).

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

### TABLE 12.5

**Rotter’s Locus-of-Control Scale**

For each pair of items, choose the option that most closely reflects your personal belief. Then turn the book upside down to see if you have more of an internal or external locus of control.

1. a. Many of the unhappy things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck.
   b. People’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.

2. a. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.
   b. Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.

3. a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it.
   b. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.

4. a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.
   b. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.

*Source: Rotter, 1966.*
Those who believe they have an internal locus of control believe they can control outcomes to some extent. Those with an internal locus of control,

• tend to be less anxious,
• achieve more, and
• cope better with stress (page 492).

The objective reality may not be as relevant as how you interpret it. Whether the glass is half empty or half full is objectively the same, but what you believe it to be matters.