

The Social Cognitive perspective and Albert Bandura

Key terms:

- Reciprocal determinism
- Self-regulation
- Self-efficacy

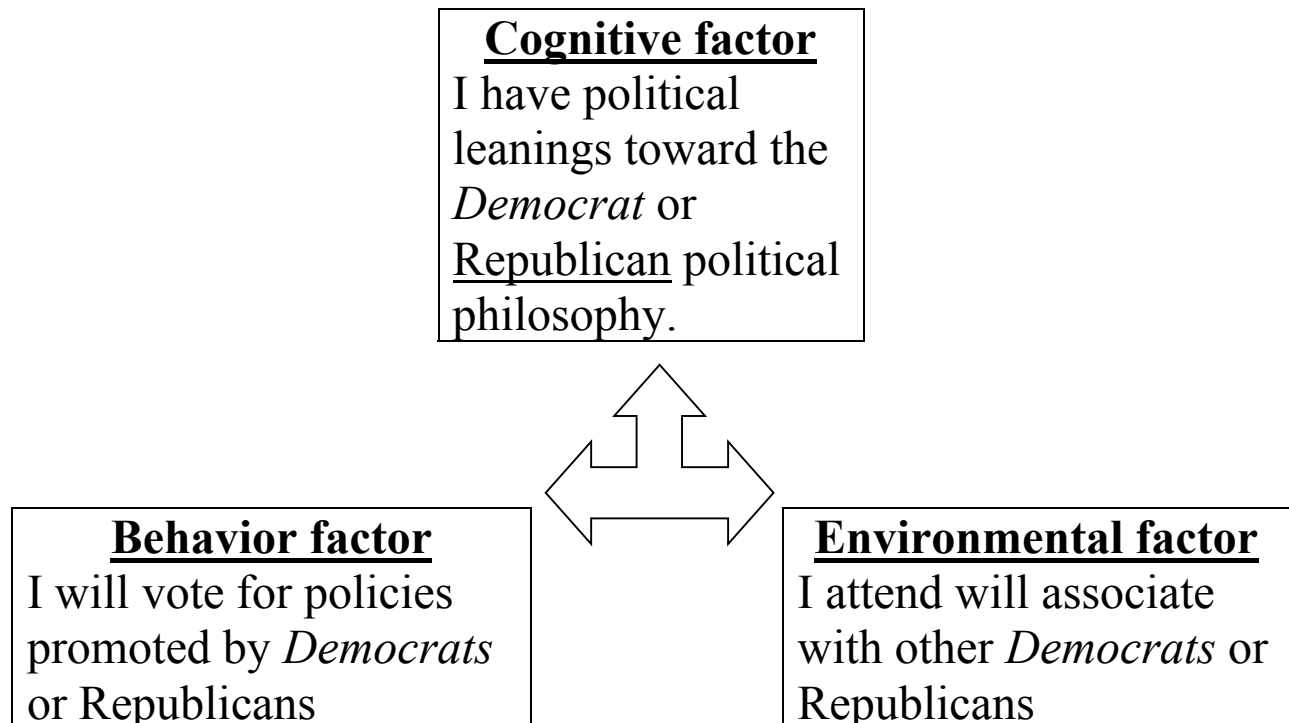
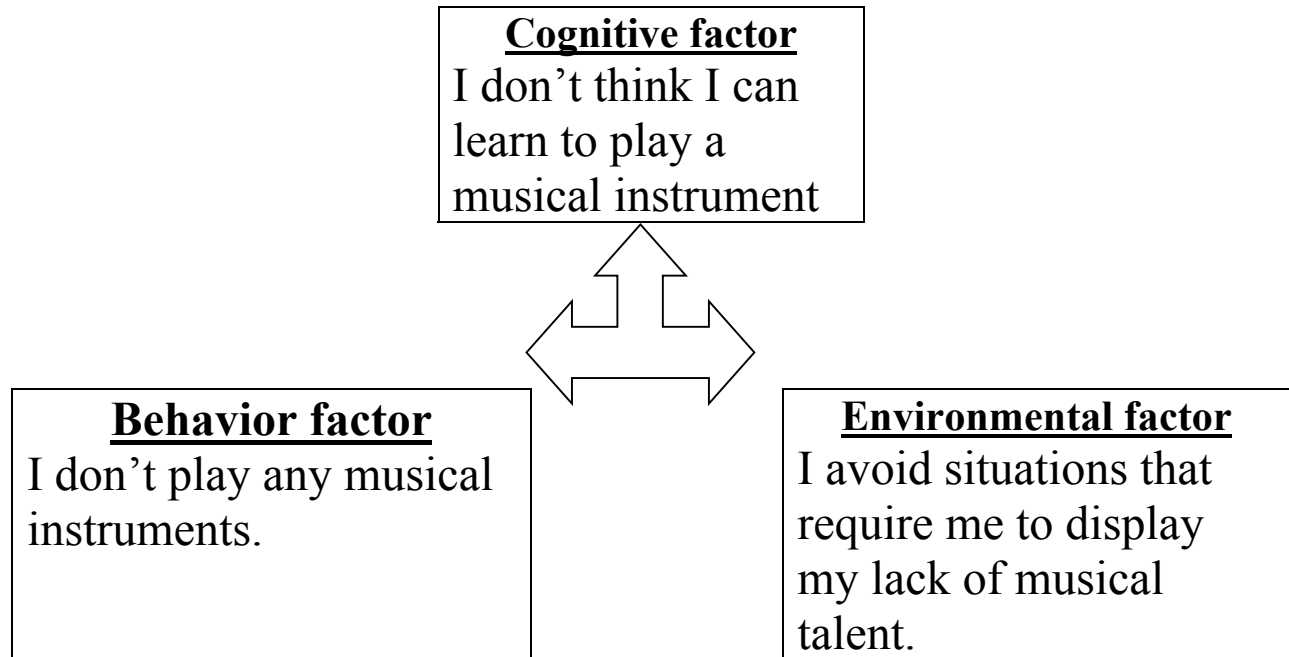
To understand personality, you need to know the social environment in which the person exists. Thinking (cognition), personality, the environment, and behavior all interact; each can only be understood relative to each other.

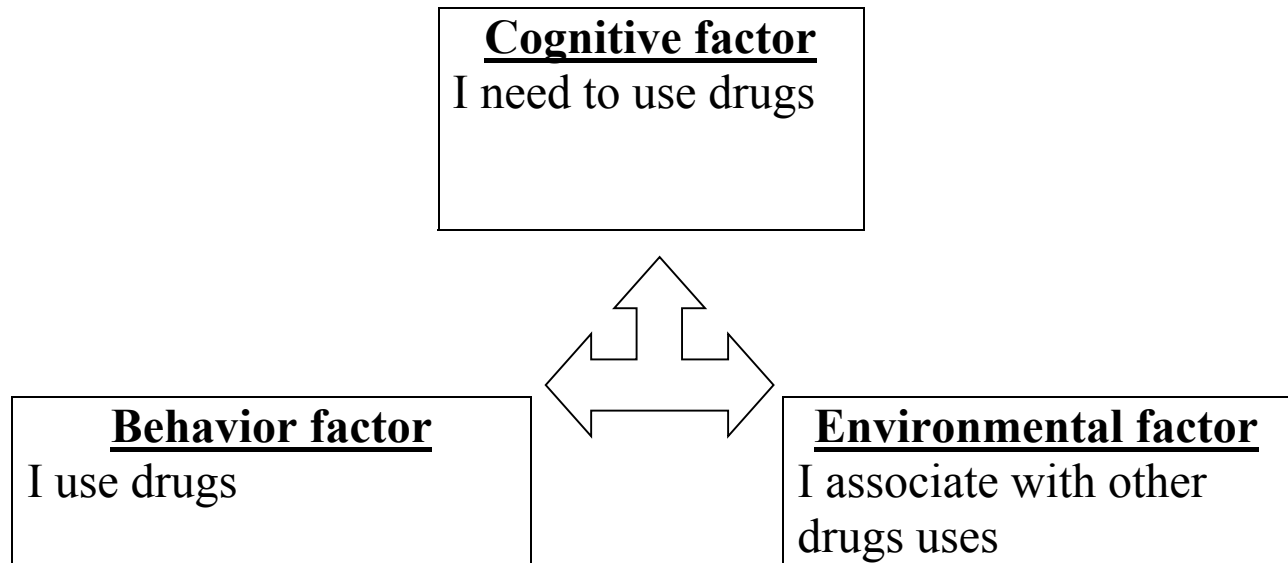
- Social cognitive theory emphasizes the social origin of thinking and behavior as well as active cognitive processes (unlike the psychoanalysts). Our sense of self can vary depending on our thoughts, feelings and behaviors in a given situation (context).
- It emphasizes conscious self-regulated behavior, 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.
- 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. 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...

Self-regulation

Self-regulation refers to setting goals, evaluating ones performance and adjusting ones behavior to achieving these goals in the context of ongoing feedback. People are constantly setting goals, applying their skills to reach their goals, monitoring their thoughts and actions to see if their goals are met. We try to seek out social environments (situations) we prefer and can be successful.

Reciprocal Determinism





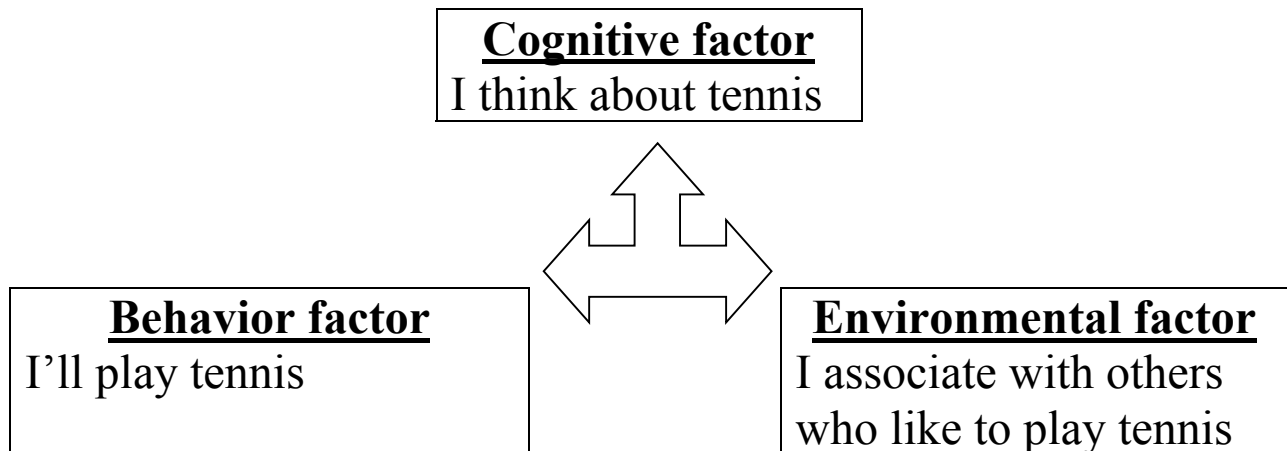
In order to understand the problems of drug abuse, you need to understand the process of reciprocal determinism, as well as the neurochemical basis of addiction (the neurotransmitter dopamine) and learning (classical conditioning and operant conditioning).

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

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.



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)
 - Extraversion / Introversion
 - Neurotic / Stable (emotional reactivity)
 - Psychoticism
- The Five Factor Model (5 dimensions of personality)
 - **O**penness to experience
 - **C**onscientiousness
 - **E**xtraversion
 - **A**greeableness
 - **N**euroticism

Hans Eysenck

- **Extraversion / Introversion**: The degree to which a person directs their energy outward toward the environment or inward towards the self.
 - Introverts tend to be quiet and keep to themselves, socially inhibited, serious, cautious.
 - Extroverts tend to be sociable and outgoing, active, willing to take risks.
- **Neurotic / Stable**: The degree to which a person can become emotionally unstable or stable.
 - Neurotic people tend to be moody, restless, tense, depressed, worrisome and anxious, lower self-esteem.
 - Stable people tend to be calm, relaxed, even-tempered and emotionally stable, higher self-esteem.
- **Psychoticism**: The degree two which a person is anti-social or pro-social.
 - People high on psychoticism tend to be cruel, cold and reject social customs, aggressive, egocentric, impulsive, anti-social.
 - People low on psychoticism tend to be warm and caring towards others, empathic, controls their impulses.

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

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
O penness to Experience	down-to-earth conventional, uncreative prefers routine “conservative” uncurious	imaginative original, creative prefers variety “liberal” curious
C onscientiousness	lazy aimless quitting disorganized late	hardworking ambitious persevering organized punctual
E xtraversion	reserved loner quiet unfeeling	affectionate joiner talkative passionate
A greeableness	antagonistic ruthless suspicious stingy critical irritable	acquiescent softhearted trusting generous lenient good-natured
N euroticism	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 poor predictors 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.

In order to have a valid assessment technique, it needs to have the following characteristics:

Standardized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The administration of a test to a large, representative sample of people under uniform conditions for the purposes of establishing performance norms.
Reliable	<p>The ability of a test to produce consistent results when repeatedly administered under similar conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are given an IQ test, then you should get a similar score if you take it 3 months from now, or even 1 year from now.
Valid	<p>The ability of a test to measure what it is intended to measure. If it is designed to measure intelligence, it measures intelligence and not cultural knowledge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If a test is designed to measure honesty, it should measure honesty, and not social desirability.

These principles applies to tests of intelligence, SAT's, personality tests, honesty test, multimeters, speedometers, etc.

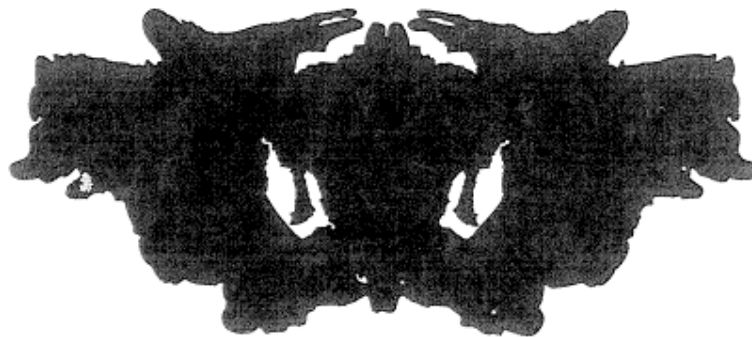
Personality Assessment

Accepted Strategies for Assessing Personality

- **Projective Tests:** A type of personality test that involves a person's interpreting an ambiguous image; used to assess unconscious motives, conflicts, psychological defenses, and personality traits.

Example: Rorschach Inkblot Test

FIGURE 14.6 An Inkblot Similar to One
Used for the Rorschach Inkblot Method



- **Self-Report Inventories:** A type of psychological test in which a person's response to standardized questions are compared to established norms. Examples: MMPI, CPI, 16PF, Just World Belief Scale...

Unaccepted (pseudoscientific) strategies for assessing Personality

- Phrenology: Determining personality characteristics from the shape of the skull. (see Chapter 2: Neuroscience and Behavior, page 64)
- Graphology: Determining personality characteristics from your handwriting. (see Chapter 11: Personality, page 487)
- Horoscopes/astrology: Determining personality characteristics from your birthday. (see Chapter 11: Personality, page 485)
 - Personal validation

A pseudoscience is a fake or false science (see chapter 1 for a definition of pseudoscience and science) that makes claims based on little or no evidence. Examples of the pseudosciences of personality are:

Questions we should be asking:

- What is the scientific evidence?
- Are these methods of assessment of personality reliable and valid?
- If there is little scientific evidence to support them, why do these pseudosciences persist?

What do we do when we have very little knowledge about how to assess these questions?

Strengths and Weaknesses of Each Method of Personality Assessment

Projective tests strengths:

- Provides a wealth of qualitative information that can be followed up if used for psychotherapy

Projective test weaknesses:

- The testing situation and examiner's behavior affects the response
- The scoring on the test is subjective and inconsistent among scorers
- Test-retest inconsistencies are common
- Poor predictors of future behavior.

Self-report inventory strengths:

- Objectively scored and compared to standardized norms collected on large groups of people (they receive the same instructions).
- Validity of self-report inventories is greater than projective tests.

Self-report inventories weaknesses

- People are able to fake socially desirable responses
- Some people are prone to pick "the first answer"
- Some personality inventories are long and tedious which lends to the problem listed above.
- People are not always accurate in assessing their own behavior, attitudes or attributes. Some people deny their own feelings
- People do change over time.