

The Social Cognitive perspective and Albert Bandura

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 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...

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 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.

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

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)
 - Extraversion / Introversion
 - Neurotic / Stable
 - 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.
 - Extroverts tend to be sociable and outgoing.
- 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.
 - Stable people tend to be calm, relaxed, even-tempered and emotionally stable.
- Psychoticism: The degree to which a person is anti-social or pro-social.
 - People high on psychoticism tend to be cruel, cold and reject social customs.
 - 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

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
O penness to Experience	down-to-earth conventional, uncreative prefers routine	imaginative original, creative prefers variety
C onscientiousness	lazy aimless quitting	hardworking ambitious persevering
E xtraversion	reserved loner quiet	affectionate joiner talkative
A greeableness	antagonistic ruthless suspicious	acquiescent softhearted trusting
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.

Freudian Defense Mechanisms

When the demand of the idealized self (superego) and the impulsive self (id) overwhelm the rational self (ego), anxiety results.

According to Freud, one way for the rational self (ego) to temporarily reduce this anxiety is to distort your thoughts and perception of reality. These deceptions can help you maintain an integrated self while searching for a realistic and acceptable solution for the conflict between the superego and id that produces anxiety (also you also might think of it in terms of humanist theory when your experiences are inconsistent with your self-concept).

The use of defense mechanisms is very common. Many psychologically healthy individuals temporarily use defense mechanisms to deal with stressful events (Chapter 13: Stress, Health and Coping).

However, when defense mechanism delay continually distort “reality” or interfere with our use of more constructive coping strategies, they can be counterproductive and keep us from learning from experience. Why?

The Major Ego Defense Mechanisms

Defense Mechanism	Explanation	Example
Repression	Unacceptable or unpleasant impulses are pushed back into the unconscious	A woman is unable to recall that she was raped
Displacement	The expression of an unwanted feeling or thought is redirected from a more threatening, powerful person to a weaker one	A brother yells at his younger sister after a teacher gives him a bad grade
Sublimation	Diversion of unwanted impulses into socially approved thoughts, feelings, or behaviors	A person with strong feelings of aggression becomes a soldier
Rationalization	A distortion of reality in which a person justifies what happens (also known as sour grapes)	A person who is passed over for an award says she didn't really want it in the first place
Projection	Attributing unwanted impulses and feelings to someone else	A man who is angry at his father acts lovingly to his father but complains that his father is angry with him
Reaction Formation	Thinking or behaving in a way that is the extreme opposite of unacceptable urges or impulses	Threatened by their awakening sexual attraction to girls, adolescent boys often go out of their way to tease and torment adolescent girls
Denial	Refusal to accept or acknowledge an anxiety-producing piece of information	A person who is convicted for DUI three times this year denies that he has a problem with alcohol.
Undoing	A form of unconscious repentance that involves neutralizing or atoning for an unacceptable action or thought with a second action or thought	A woman who gets a tax refund by cheating on her taxes makes a larger than usual donation to the church collection on the following Sunday
Regression	People behave as if they were at an earlier stage of development	A boss has a temper tantrum when an employee makes a mistake

What are examples of behaviors/experiences that are inconsistent with your self-concept that can cause one to use a defense mechanism (and which one)?

Is homophobia an indicator of latent homosexuality?

Homophobia consists of feelings of fear, discomfort and aversion that some people experience in interacting with gay individuals. Psychoanalytic theorists have argued that homophobia among men may be rooted in anxiety about the possibility of being or becoming homosexual. Psychoanalysts argue that homophobia results from repression of one's latent homosexuality and reaction formation, which leads some men to accentuate their masculinity and to be especially hostile towards gays.

The following two groups (heterosexual, highly homophobic men compared with heterosexual, low homophobic men) watched three types of explicit sexually erotic videos and measured their sexual arousal.

Differences in Sexual Arousal to Erotic Videos

	Female heterosexual activity	Female Homosexual activity	Male Homosexual activity
<u>Heterosexual men</u>			
• High homophobic	No	No	Greater arousal by
• Low homophobic	Difference in arousal	Difference in arousal	the highly homophobic men

Although the highly homophobic men were physiologically more aroused by video of male homosexual activity, their self-report of sexual arousal was similar to those low in homophobia.