**The Social Cognitive Perspective**

Coined the social-cognitive perspective by **Albert Bandura**, its proponents believe that our behaviors are influenced by our environment and by our sense of **personal control** in a particular environment or situation. They apply principles of learning, cognition, and social behavior to personality and emphasize ways in which personality is influenced by interaction with our environment.   
  
***Reciprocal Determinism***  
  
Bandura used the term **Reciprocal Determinism** to describe the process of interacting influences between personality and environmental factors. For example, television influences viewing preferences, which in turn influences behavior.  
  
We are reminded that:

1. Different individuals prefer different environments.
2. Individual differences in personalities dictate how we interpret and react to situations.
3. These differences in personality are partly responsible for creating the situations to which we respond.

***Our Sense Of Personal Control***  
Social-cognitive psychologists also emphasize our sense of **Personal Control**, our sense of whether or not we feel that we have control or are controlled by our environments. According to them there are two extremes when it comes to perceptions of control:

1. **External Locus of Control**- this is the perception that outside forces beyond one's personal control determines a person's fate.
2. **Internal Locus of Control**- this is the perception that one controls one's own fate. Studies show that "internals" achieve more in school, act more independently and feel less depressed than do "externals". Internals tend to be better at delaying gratification and coping with stress.

Usually when a person feels helpless it suggests that he or she perceives control as external and that there is nothing that they can do to make things right. These feelings may lead to **Learned Helplessness**, the hopelessness and *passive resignation* that an animal or human learns when they are unable to avoid repeated aversive events. It refers to losing the drive to help oneself and it is this perceived control that is vital to healthy human functioning.   
  
It has been shown through many studies that **Optimism** or lack thereof affects well-being. Depression and hopelessness weakens the immune system thereby reducing the effectiveness of the disease-fighting immune system. A person's **attributional style** is linked to how optimistic or how pessimistic one is. If your attributional style is positive then you attribute poor performance to something that you can change. For instance, a poor test score would motivate you to change your study habits. If your attributional style is negative you may blame the teacher or attribute poor performance to a lack of ability. It is this sense of lacking control in one's life that leads to pessimism and feelings of hopelessness.

***Assessment Techniques***  
Assessment techniques include studies of people's feelings of personal control. To these theorists, the best means of predicting people's future behavior is not personality tests or an interviewer's intuition. Rather, it is past behavior in similar situations. For example, they would suggest that the best predictor of future grades is past grades or that the best predictor of future aggressiveness is past aggressiveness.

***Evaluating this perspective***  
This perspective is often criticized for underestimating people's unconscious motives, emotions and dispositions (traits).

However, this perspective has been developed from research on learning and cognition and reminds us of the importance of social situations with respect to how they affect us as well as how we affect the situation. Ultimately, the cognitive-behavioral theory is currently the predominant psychological approach to explaining human behavior.