

# Reciprocal Determinism: How Your Environment Shapes You

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Reciprocal determinism is the theory set forth by psychologist Albert Bandura that a person's behavior both influences and is influenced by personal factors and the social environment. Bandura accepts the possibility of an individual's behavior being conditioned through the use of consequences. At the same time he asserts that a person's behavior (and personal factors, such as cognitive skills or attitudes) can impact the environment. These skill sets result in an under- or over-compensated ego that, for all creative purposes are too strong or too weak to focus on pure outcome.

An example of Bandura's reciprocal determinism is when a child is acting out in school. The child doesn't like going to school; therefore, he/she acts out in class. This results in teachers and administrators of the school disliking having the child around. When confronted by the situation, the child admits he/she hates school and other peers don't like him/her. This results in the child acting inappropriately, forcing the administrators who dislike having him/her around to create a more restrictive environment for children of this stature. Each behavioral and environmental factor coincides with the child and so forth resulting in a continuous battle on all three levels.

The basis of reciprocal determinism should transform individual behavior by allowing subjective thought processes transparency when contrasted with cognitive, environmental, and external social stimulus events. Reciprocal determinism is the idea that behavior is controlled or determined by the individual, through cognitive processes, and by the environment, through external social stimulus events.

### **Triadic reciprocal causation**

Triadic reciprocal causation is a term introduced by Albert Bandura to refer to the mutual influence between three sets of factors:

personal factors (e.g., cognitive, affective and biological events),  
the environment, and  
behavior

### **The interaction of genes and environment**

Behavioral genetics is a relatively new field of study attempting to make sense of both genetic and environmental contributions to individual variations in human behavior. Genes can be turned on and off. Multiple genes are factors in forming behavior traits.

### **The interaction of genes and environment: aggression in abused boys**

Researchers believe there is a genetic link to impulsive aggression through the impact of a gene on the production of an enzyme called Monoamine oxidase A (MAOA). The MAOA gene reduces

the production of MAOA, leading to increased incidents of impulsive aggression. A 26-year-study in New Zealand found strong correlation between experience of childhood abuse and criminal or violent behavior in males with the MAOA gene. In that study, impulsive aggression was found to be nine times more likely to manifest in males with the gene who were abused than in abused males without the gene or males with the gene who had not been abused.

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