Social Learning Theories

Chapter 9

A Different Type of Learning...

Agentic Perspective
- Views people as agents, or originators, of experience (vs. principles of reinforcement)
- Causal influences operate in both directions
- People have cognitive, vicarious, self-regulative, and self-reflective capacities that influence behavior...

Triadic Reciprocal Causation

- Behavior is due to the interactions of these three determinants

Triadic Reciprocal Causation (cont.)
- Thus, any observed behavior is formed from these three influences
- Importantly, each of these three factors generates feedback, influencing the others
- Pizza for lunch
  - Availability (geographic location, menu)
  - Personal attitudes towards pizza (taste)
- At the same time, our behaviors alter the environment
  - Choice of pizza, at a lunch rush, may alter the availability of pizza for others

Learning Through Observation

- Most human behavior acquired through the observation of other people, models, not from classical or operant conditioning
- Limited reinforcement for day-to-day activities (speech)
- Intentional modeling
- Accidental modeling
- Process of extracting implicitly embedded rules and patterns

Bandura’s Experimental Paradigm

Observational Learning (Bobo Doll)
- Subject observes a modeled behavior
- Then, subject is observed to determine if the modeled behavior is emulated
- Subject’s behavior compared to a matched control group who did NOT observe the modeled behavior
- Mimicking (behavioral imitation)
- Modeling (matching the structure or style)
3 Factors Influencing Modeling

- Characteristics of the Model
  - We are more influenced by those people we perceive to be more like ourselves
  - Simple behaviors easier to learn than complex
  - We are predisposed to learn some behaviors more easily than others (Children: aggression)

- Attributes of the Observer
  - Those with poor self-esteem, incompetence, dependence, and those rewarded for being conforming more likely to follow a model
  - Motivated individuals emulate models to master desired behaviors

3 Factors Influencing Modeling (cont.)

- Reward Consequences Associated with a Behavior
  - Individuals more likely to emulate a model if they feel it will help them achieve short- or long-term goals
  - Bandura felt this characteristic of modeling is the most salient

Processes of Observational Learning

- Models influence learning through their informative function
- Learning is not simply imitation, but a judgmental and constructive process

4 Observational Learning Processes

- Attentional Processes
  - Some models are more charismatic, drawing more attention, than others → more readily copied
  - Geographical influences on attention (urban vs. rural)
  - Television increases the variety of models available
  - Personal interests, needs, wants, and wishes influence what we attend to

- Retention Processes
  - How we represent information internally for later use
  - Verbal (SQUIRREL) vs. Imaginal

Motor Production Processes (cont.)

- The process of translating internal representations into the appropriate actions
- A reciprocal process of trial and error
- Distinction between acquisition and performance of a behavior (robbing a store)
  - More likely to engage in a behavior if the consequences are favorable, less likely if they are punitive
  - Self-reinforcement (evaluative self-statements)

Rewforcement in Social Learning

- Bandura held that observational learning takes place while one is exposed to modeled activity and before any response is formulated
  - I am not reinforced for going to the gas station when my car needs to be refueled
  - Reinforcement is a facilitator, not a requirement
  - Informative, incentive
Types of Reinforcers
- Extrinsic
  - Effective in creating behavioral change, important in early development (encouragement) → verbal support, grades
- Intrinsic
  - Naturally related to the behavior → relaxation eases tense muscles, sex
- Vicarious
  - Learning from the experiences (successes/failures) of others (Basking in Reflected Glory)
- Self-reinforcement
  - Creation of self-standards/internal behavioral regulation (people are not simply reactive)

Psychotherapy
- Modeling as an aid to changing behaviors
  - Models illustrate appropriate ways to manage various situations
    - Person, therapist
    - Films
  - Anxiety, aggression, communication skills,
  - Well proven to reduce fears, support behavioral changes

Media Violence
- Bandura concluded that frequent exposure to violence on television promotes aggressive behavior in children
  - Saturation of violent images in the media
  - Movie: The Program
- Influences expressed violent behavior by
  - Teaching aggressive styles of behavior
  - Reduction of restraints to behave aggressively
  - Habituation to violent images
  - Shaping images of “reality”

Media Violence (cont.)
Moral Disengagement
- Permits individuals, institutions, and governments to engage in violent acts while justifying and exonerating their behaviors
  - Selective use of moral self-sanctions

Media Violence (cont.)
So, do you buy this?

Violent Images → Violent Behavior

Aggressive Predisposition