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...
Behavior is due to the interactions of these three determinants
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
4 Observational Learning Processes (cont.)

- **Motor Production Processes**
  - The process of translating internal representations into the appropriate actions
  - A reciprocal process of trial and error

- **Motivational Processes**
  - 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)
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
So, do you buy this?

- Violent Images
- Violent Behavior
- Aggressive Predisposition