**Learning Theories: Social Cognitivism**
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Overview

Social Cognitivism is a learning theory developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960's in response to the extremist behaviorist views and psychoanalytic views of learning. Human behavior and other theories about learning have been explained in terms of unidirectional causation (e.g. performing a behavior allows us to learn). However, in a social cognitivist view, a behavior is shaped either by personal characteristics, environmental factors or both. According to Bandura (1977), "...man is neither driven by inner forces nor buffeted helplessly by environmental influences. Rather, psychological functioning is best understood in term of a continuous reciprocal interaction between behavior and its controlling conditions." Bandura's social-cognitive learning theory is modeled by reciprocal determinism, which is a triadic relationship of personal, behavioral, and environmental determinants (Bandura, 1986).
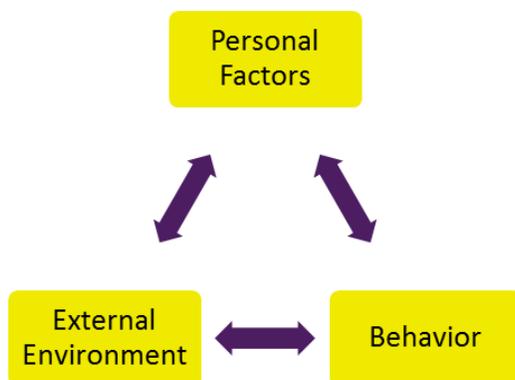
Behavior and Environment: People are both products and producers of their environment. They affect the way they experience the environment by selecting or creating the situations into which they enter. People will select activities that reflect their acquired preferences and competencies (Bandura & Walters, 1959). Conversely, once a person is in an environment, the environment will affect their behaviors.

Environment and Personal Factors: Based on known or perceived social status as well as observable characteristics, people can affect their social environment before they do or say anything. However, social expectations within the environment also shape the way one feels they should be or what they should aim to be like (Bandura, 2011).

Personal Factors and Behavior: Beliefs, expectations, and self-perceptions affect the way people

behave (Bandura, 1986). In the opposite direction, behaviors can also modify sensory systems and brain structures that influence personal factors such as preferences and personality (Greenough, Black & Wallace, 1987).

Social learning theory places an emphasis on vicarious, symbolic, and self-regulatory processes (Bandura, 1977).

- Vicarious processes occur when learning happens by observation of another person's behavior and the consequences that they receive for that behavior. Our capability to observe and picture ourselves doing similar tasks allows us to conceptualize behaviors without actually doing them.
- Because of our higher mental processing capabilities, we are able to develop symbolic representations of external influences or situations. Issues can also be solved symbolically without having to enact various situations to foresee the outcomes.
- People are capable of self-organizing information, self-reflecting about ideas, and self-regulating their study habits and time allocation. Adaptation and change to these actions of the self are embedded in social system. By setting up consequences for their own actions, people are able to modify their behavior to a degree. For example, a student could say that the consequence of getting their homework done early will be to go to a movie later with friends.

Implications for the Classroom

Modeling is one form of a vicarious process, and it can be used by teachers to help students learn a task. The teacher models while the student observes in order to learn. However, in this more digital age, symbolic modeling is central to full understanding. According to Bandura and Bryant (2002), observational learning of these symbolic models is governed by four sub-functions, each with their own factors:

1. Attentional processes
   - The events that are being modeled have varying degrees of ability to be picked up by attention, including: salience, complexity, prevalence, accessibility, and functional value.Teachers and lecturers would benefit from creating more attention-grabbing materials for the important concepts.
2. Retention processes
   - Information from events is cognitively constructed based on how well the information can be symbolically coded and how well it can be cognitively organized. Having a well thought out lesson plan and organized lectures/notes is extremely facilitative to the overall learning process.
3. Production processes
   - The ability of a learner to "replay" what has been modeled to them is affected by whether or not their enactment is guided, how much they are monitored, and level of feedback.
4. Motivational processes

○ Both external and internal incentives to utilize what has been learned depend on the attributes of the student, such as what types of incentives they prefer, how much they engage in social comparison, and their own standards for themselves.

Since environment and social interaction are both integral pieces of social learning theory, it is important to understand how a change in environment to a more digital location is shaping the social interaction of the classroom. Teachers and lecturers can benefit from making their classroom more technologically oriented. Hull, Scott and Higgs (2014) provide some statistics on how technology has changed the learning environment.

- 29% of high schoolers use the internet daily for help with homework, with 68% of them saying that their primary internet access is through a 3G/4G device
- 60% of students believe that a flipped classroom would be a good way for them to learn
- 29% of students have used an online video to help them with their homework
- 30% of students say that being able to text their teacher during class (and getting a response from them later) would help them be more successful in science
- 38% of students say they regularly use Facebook to collaborate on projects

Teaching Strategies that support this Learning Theory

- Teaching with Social Media
- Authentic Assessment
- Flipped Instruction

Technology Tools that support this Learning Theory

1. D2L Brightspace: This is a good way to add more organization to class content within a digital realm.
2. HD Recording Studio: Some concepts may be symbolically modeled to students via a pre-recorded lecture that they may access to study or to further their own learning interests.
3. Smart Board: This can be used to facilitate modeling (literal or symbolic) during a lecture.

On the Web

- Origins of Social Cognitive Theory

- [Implementing Social Cognitive Theory in the classroom](#)
- [Core Concepts from Bandura on Social Cognitive Theory (video](#))

In the Library/ References

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