

# Instructional Design

 Search

Home ► Learning Theories ► Social Learning Theory

## Social Learning Theory (A. Bandura)

The social learning theory of Bandura emphasizes the importance of **observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others**.

Bandura (1977) states: "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action." (p22). Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of **continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences**. The component processes underlying observational learning are: (1) **Attention**, including **modeled events** (distinctiveness, affective valence, complexity, prevalence, functional value) and **observer characteristics** (sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement), (2) **Retention**, including symbolic coding, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, motor rehearsal), (3) Motor **Reproduction**, including physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, accuracy of feedback, and (4) **Motivation**, including external, vicarious and self reinforcement.

Because it encompasses attention, memory and motivation, social learning theory **spans both cognitive and behavioral frameworks**. Bandura's theory improves upon the strictly behavioral interpretation of modeling provided by Miller & Dollard (1941). Bandura's work is related to the theories of **Vygotsky** and **Lave** which also emphasize the central role of social learning.

### Application

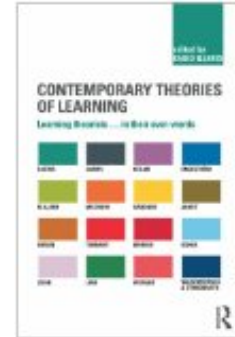
Social learning theory has been applied extensively to the understanding of **aggression** (Bandura, 1973) and **psychological disorders**, particularly in the context of **behavior modification** (Bandura, 1969). It is also the theoretical foundation for the technique of behavior modeling which is widely used in training programs. In recent years, Bandura has focused his work on the concept of **self-efficacy** in a variety of contexts (e.g., Bandura, 1997).

### Example

The most common (and pervasive) examples of social learning situations are **television commercials**. Commercials suggest that drinking a certain beverage or using a particular hair shampoo will make us popular and win the admiration of attractive people. Depending upon the component processes involved (such as attention or motivation), we may model the behavior shown in the commercial and buy the product being advertised.

### Principles

### Recommended Books



Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists in Their Own Words

### Teacher Certification

[ChooseRedlands.com/Ed...](http://ChooseRedlands.com/Ed...)

Night Classes, 4 So Cal Locations! Rated A+ by US News & World Report.



AdChoices ►

## Principles

---

1. The highest level of observational learning is achieved by first **organizing and rehearsing the modeled behavior symbolically** and then **enacting it overtly**. Coding modeled behavior into words, labels or images results in **better retention** than simply observing.
2. Individuals are **more likely** to adopt a modeled behavior if it results in **outcomes they value**.
3. Individuals are **more likely** to adopt a modeled behavior if the **model is similar to the observer** and has **admired status** and the behavior has **functional value**.

## References

---

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. New York: W.H. Freeman.

Bandura, A. (1986). Social Foundations of Thought and Action. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1973). Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1977). Social Learning Theory. New York: General Learning Press.

Bandura, A. (1969). Principles of Behavior Modification. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Bandura, A. & Walters, R. (1963). Social Learning and Personality Development. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Miller, N. & Dollard, J. (1941). Social Learning and Imitation. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press.

## Related Websites

---

<http://fates.cns.muskingum.edu/~psych/psycweb/history/bandura.htm>

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/bandura.html>

[\[ INTRO \]](#) [\[ THEORIES \]](#) [\[ CONCEPTS \]](#) [\[ DOMAINS \]](#)

---

