

*LINDA LANIER-KEOSAIAN*

**CHAPTER OUTLINE**  
**ALBERT BANDURA'S SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**

Observational Learning

When new behavior is acquired through observation alone, the learning appears to be cognitive. Through observation alone, the Guatemalan girl learned a new skill well enough to follow through on it without practice.

*Vicarious reinforcement*: we notice what happens when someone else tries it.

*Symbolic modeling*: one form of this is verbal instruction.

**Four Components of Observational Learning:**

- 1) **Attentional Processes**: we pay attention, as in watching models on TV.
- 2) **Retention Processes**: visual stimuli associated with verbal codes: stimulus contiguity.
- 3) **Motor Reproduction Processes**: to reproduce behavior accurately, one must have the motor skills. The new *pattern of responses* requires physical growth and practice.
- 4) **Reinforcement and Motivational Processes**: Bandura distinguishes between the *acquisition* and the *performance* of new responses. One may observe a model and acquire knowledge but may or may not be able to perform the responses.

Performance is governed by vicarious reinforcements (see above), and by self-reinforcements, the evaluations we make of our own behavior.

**Socialization Studies:**

**Aggression**: models can influence the behavior of children, either inhibit, or disinhibit behavior depending on what consequences, if any, are suffered by the model.

**Gender Roles**: These are learned through observation, Bandura believes. Social reinforcements restrict the range of skills boys and girls practice, but not what they observe.

**Pro-Social behavior**: Children learn more by example than by preaching.

**Self-regulation**: As people become socialized, they depend less on external rewards and punishments and increasingly regulate their own behavior.(p. 201) We punish ourselves for moral transgressions unknown to anyone else because they violate our own standards.

We set high achievement goals for ourselves and keep our own feet to the fire until we achieve them even if no one else notices.

Standards may be created externally (by parents) and then internalized by the child.

Children tend to more readily adopt the behavior of peers rather than adults.

Bandura advocates a focus on subgoals rather than distant aims, a method of small steps, to avoid disappointment and depression.

**Self-Efficacy**: (p. 202) A central focus of Bandura's work. General judgements on our abilities, from self-observation, are called *self-efficacy appraisals*. These exert a powerful effect on our level of motivation. When we believe we are good at tasks (i.e. have self-confidence), we work vigorously despite temporary setbacks. The reverse is also true. Optimistic self-efficacy is beneficial.

### **Sources of Self-Efficacy Appraisals**

- 1) *Actual performance*: success engenders self-confidence.
- 2) *Vicarious experience*: seeing others succeed is influential.
- 3) *Verbal persuasion*: pep talk
- 4) *Physiological cues*: fatigue or anxiety can be interpreted positively or negatively.

**Quote:** Throughout life, a resilient sense of self-efficacy keeps one moving forward with energy and vitality. When self-efficacy is low, people are prone to depression, resignation, and painful self-doubts.

### **Abstract Modeling and Piaget's Stages**

Piagetians do not spend much time studying the modeling influences in children's lives. They study, instead, the child's cognitive behavior at each stage, *because the stage will determine the kind of models the child will seek out*.

Bandura is an environmentalist: he says children's minds are structured by the environment, by the models and social training practices the environment provides.

Bandura doubts that children learn much on their own, out of intrinsic interest in moderately novel events. He says we must motivate and assist them. He says intrinsic interest occurs *after* we meet our achievement standards and develop feeling of self-efficacy.

Bandura argues that Piagetian stages are false. Children do not learn primarily on their own.

**Practical Implications:** Bandura's work should do a good deal to increase our awareness of the importance of models in child-rearing and education.

**Evaluation:** Developmentalists place a high value on the kinds of growth that emerge from a child. Bandura has minimized this.

Piagetians believe children learn from *spontaneous interest in moderately novel events*. Bandura says children learn to obtain reinforcements, such as praise.

Developmentalists believe that children learn spontaneously and enthusiastically until adults intervene, with models and pressure to conform and to please them.

Bandura says the joy in learning takes place *after* we begin meeting our goals.

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**RESPONSE**

When Bandura uses the word *performance*, I do not interpret that to mean a performance as we know it in music, i.e. an event which represents a high level of achievement by an individual or group in a particular medium. Rather, I understand it to mean the small steps we take in learning, in class, at a lesson, in a rehearsal. When we receive modeling in the form of verbal instruction, if we are paying attention, we try to imitate it in order to experience it ourselves. This is merely practice, it is not a performance in the large sense, but an initial step in learning a new skill.

It will be clear when the initial imitation of a model leaves off and the music has become something new in the hands of the learner. After all, music is not what is on the page, but what it becomes to the player, the singer, and to the audience. The absolute test is the “chill factor.” It is what happens when you have experienced something extraordinary. While a small step in the beginning may have been an imitation (of a teacher, mentor), what it has become has taken on a life of its own and can never be mistaken for mere imitation.

It occurs to me that the *symbolic modeling* that Bandura speaks of, the verbal instruction of a teacher perhaps, might also include music notation. When we recreate what is on the printed page, we are, in effect, using it as a model. We all know, however, that if we merely reproduce the pitch and/or rhythm from the printed page, we do not necessarily make music. When we are able to play or sing a piece easily and have developed an understanding of the structure and development, then the notation can be seen as an entry-level gate into the musical experience. There are those who are able to do all of this at once. They may or may not reach the musical peak with each new piece, but

because all of the notes are in place, the public may never know. On the other hand, for those of us who are in the profession of *interpreting* music, the self-evaluation continues over a lifetime with some pieces. Think of the mature style of some of the players who lived into their eighties and nineties. Their repertoire expanded over the years but they kept core pieces which they came back to time and again. Each time those pieces were played, they were different. It is the same with us. The music notation, along with a teacher's verbal instructions (perhaps), created the initial model for us, but the music has become a part of us and, just as *we* are different everyday, so will be our music.

Understanding comes with maturity. Maturity does not mean becoming an adult. There is a maturity that comes when a child breaks like a mature seed from one stage to the next, having mastered many new skills with new-found self-confidence. This is what Bandura described as *self-efficacy*, though he would not agree that it had anything to do with Piagetian stages. Bandura said that our love of learning comes *after* we have achieved our goals and standards. I believe that the stages described by Piaget set the stage, in a dramatic sense, for modeling to take place, and for the higher levels of learning dependant upon it.