Social Learning Theory

One of the most influential learning theories, the Social Learning Theory (SLT), was formulated by Albert Bandura. It encompasses concepts of traditional learning theory and the operant conditioning of B.F. Skinner.

However, the theory strongly implies that there are types of learning wherein direct reinforcement is not the causal mechanism; rather, the so called social element can result to the development of new learning among individuals. Social Learning Theory has been useful in explaining how people can learn new things and develop new behaviors by observing other people. It is to assume, therefore, that Social Learning Theory is concerned on observational learning process among people.

A. Basic Concepts

1. Observational Learning: The Social Learning Theory says that people can learn by watching other people perform the behavior. Observational learning explains the nature of children to learn behaviors by watching the behavior of the people around them, and eventually, imitating them. With the "Bobo Doll" experiment(s) [1], Bandura included an adult who is tasked to act aggressively toward a Bobo Doll while the children observe him. Later, Bandura let the children play inside a room with the Bobo Doll. He affirmed that these children imitated the aggressive behavior toward the doll, which they had observed earlier.

2.
    After his studies, Bandura was able to determine 3 basic models of observational learning, which include:

    a. A Live Model, which includes an actual person performing a behavior.
    b. A Verbal Instruction Model, which involves telling of details and descriptions of a behavior.
    c. A Symbolic Model, which includes either a real or fictional character demonstrating the behavior via movies, books, television, radio, online media and other media sources.

3. The state of mind (mental states) is crucial to learning.In this concept, Bandura stated that not only external reinforcement or factors can affect learning and behavior. There is also what he called intrinsic reinforcement, which is in a form of internal reward or a better feeling after performing the behavior (e.g. sense of accomplishment, confidence, satisfaction, etc.)
4. Learning does not mean that there will be a change in the behavior of an individual.

B. Modeling Process

The Modeling Process developed by Bandura helps us understand that not all observed behaviors could be learned effectively, nor learning can necessarily result to behavioral changes. The modeling process includes the following steps in order for us to determine whether social learning is successful or not:

Step 1: Attention

Social Cognitive Theory implies that you must pay attention for you to learn. If you want to learn from the behavior of the model (the person that demonstrates the behavior), then you should eliminate anything that catches your attention other than him. Also, the more interesting the model is, the more likely you are to pay full attention to him and learn.

Step 2: Retention

Retention of the newly learned behavior is necessary. Without it, learning of the behavior would not be established, and you might need to get back to observing the model again since you were not able to store information about the behavior.

Step 3: Reproduction

When you are successful in paying attention and retaining relevant information, this step requires you to demonstrate the behavior. In this phase, practice of the behavior by repeatedly doing it is important for improvement.

Step 4: Motivation

Feeling motivated to repeat the behavior is what you need in order to keep on performing it. This is where reinforcement and punishment come in. You can be rewarded by demonstrating the behavior properly, and punished by displaying it inappropriately.

Links

[1] https://explorable.com/bobo-doll-experiment