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| **The Learning Approach: Social Learning Theory** | | | |
| **Assumptions** | | **Vicarious Reinforcement** | |
| * Bandura agreed with behaviourists that our behaviour is learned from experience * However, SLT proposes that we learn through the ***observation*** and ***imitation*** of others * So learning can occur both directly (conditioning) but also indirectly | | * Indirect learning means an individual observes the behaviour of others * Imitation is more likely if the behaviour being is observed is rewarded i.e. reinforced rather than punished * Vicarious reinforcement is therefore when the individual does not directly experience the reward, but they do observe somebody else being rewarded for the behaviour | |
| **The Role of Meditational Processes** | | **Identification** | |
| SLT focuses on how mental (cognitive) factors are involved in learning. It states that these mental factors mediate in the learning process to determine whether a new response is required. Bandura identified 4 mediational processes:   1. Attention – extent to which we notice certain behaviours 2. Retention – how well the behaviour is remembered 3. Motor reproduction – ability of observer to perform the behaviour 4. Motivation – the will to perform the behaviour, which is often determined by whether the behaviour was rewarded or punished | | * People (especially children) are much more likely to imitate the behaviour of people with whom they identify with i.e. ***role models*** * This process is called ***modelling*** * A person becomes a role model if they possess similar characteristics to the observer (e.g. age, gender) and/or are attractive and have high status * Role models may not necessarily be physically present in the environment – this has led to implications for the influence of the media on behaviour e.g. being influenced by violence seen on TV and in video games etc. | |
| **Evaluation Of Social Learning Theory** | | | |
| **The Importance of Cognitive Factors in Learning**  P: One strength of Social Learning Theory is that it offers a more adequate account of learning than other behaviourist perspectives  E: For example it considers that humans and other animals do store information about the behaviour of others (by observing) and then use this to make their own judgements about when it is appropriate to perform certain actions (imitation).  E: This is a strength because SLT provides a more comprehensive explanation of learning by recognising these meditational processes. Neither classical nor operant conditioning can offer an adequate account of learning on their own.  L: Consequently, this strengthens the credibility of SLT as an explanation for the learning behaviour of humans and animals. | **Over-reliance on evidence from lab studies**  P: One weakness of SLT is that research supporting SLT has low ecological validity.  E: For example, Bandura’s Bobo doll study was conducted in a highly controlled lab setting where it did not mirror a real-life setting.  E: This is an issue because if lab studies are not reflective of real-life settings, then demand characteristics may occur. For example, in the Bobo doll study, because the main purpose of the doll is to strike it, the children were simply behaving in a way that they thought was expected. This therefore tells us very little about how children may actually learn behaviours in everyday life.  L: As a result, because the research into SLT has low ecological validity, the credibility of SLT as a theory for how humans learn behaviour is weakened. | | **Reductionism**  P: One issue with SLT as an explanation for human behaviour is that it is reductionist.  E: For example, SLT states that we simply learn all behaviours from observation of others and then imitating this behaviour in the appropriate social setting.  E: This is an issue because Bandura makes little reference to the impact of biological factors on social learning. One consistent finding in the Bobo doll experiment was that the boys were often more aggressive than girls regardless of the experimental situation. This may be explained by biological, specifically hormonal, factors. Biologically, boys have higher levels of testosterone than girls which is linked to more aggressive behaviour. This biological factor is completely ignored in SLT.  L: Therefore, the credibility of SLT as an explanation for the learning behaviour of humans is reduced. |