New directions in research on well-being: psychological process in everyday contexts

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Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Albert Bandura
Behaviorist Orientation

• Theories on behaviorism are derived from several different theorists
  • Edward L. Thorndike, B.F. Skinner, and others.

• Assumptions include:
  • Environment shapes behavior
  • Reinforcement increases probability of desired action being repeated
Social Learning Theory

Examples of social learning situations include television commercials.
Bobo Doll Experiment

In 1963 Bandura conducted the Bobo Doll experiment.

This experiment showed that people will model what they see. The children viewed aggressive actions in a video and when left in the room with the Bobo doll, the exhibited the same aggressive behaviors.

According to Bandura, the behaviors were repeated 88% of the time.

The behavior of the children is a result of modeling a behavior. Two groups of children watched the adult beat the bobo doll. One group saw the lady rewarded and the second saw her punished.
The Reciprocal Concept

Bandura's theory of learning takes into account three things

- The person
- The person's environment
- The person's psychological processes
Self-Efficacy
SELF-EFFICACY

“Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the sources of action required to manage prospective situations.”

Bandura, 1986
Learning Styles

There are many different learning styles

Observational learning and enactive learning.
Learning Styles

- Observational learning
  - Attention
  - Retention (memory)
  - Behavioral reversal
  - Motivation

- Enactive learning
  Learning from the outcomes of a person’s personal actions
Motivators
Motivators

- Incentive motivators
  - A trip to the park if a task or assignment is completed

- Vicarious motivators
  - Observed positive outcomes
Teaching and Learning

Can we think of ways that Bandura’s theory can be applied to teaching and learning?
Opposing Views

• One problem with social learning is that it is difficult to predict what all individuals will perceive as positive.
Self-Esteem Motivation

- Self-esteem maintenance
  - *What level is best to have? Hi/med/lo?*

- Self-esteem threats occur among friends whose successes can be more threatening than that of strangers (*remember social comparison theory?*)
  - Referent others

- Terror Management Theory states humans must find ways to manage their fear of death.
The “Dark Side” of Self-Esteem

• Narcissism
  • Delroy and Williams (2002)
    • “The Dark Triad” of negative traits
      • Narcissism
      • Machiavellianism (manipulativeness)
  • Over time: college students’ (Twenge, ‘06)
    • Narcissism
    • Empathy
      • Hi Narcissims > more “hooking up”, gambling, cheating
      • Me generation
    • Need for autonomy/ competence/relationships (E. Deci)
Perceived Self-Control

• Effortful self-control depletes our limited willpower reserves... controlling emotions during upsetting film resulted in
  • Showing more aggression and fighting with their partner
  • Became less restrained in sexual thoughts and behaviors
    • DeWall et al., ‘07 Finkel & Campbell, ‘01)

• Our brain’s “central executive” consumes available blood sugar when engaged in self-control
Self-Efficacy (Albert Bandura)

- *What’s the difference between self-esteem and self-efficacy?*
- How competent we feel on a task
  - Leads us to set challenging goals and to persist
  - Competency + persistence = accomplishment / self confidence
    - ...if you have control over the outcome!
Locus of Control  (Julien Rotter)

Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they have control over the outcome of events in their lives, as opposed to external forces beyond their control. Understanding of the concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954, and has since become an aspect of personality studies.

A person's "locus" (plural "loci", Latin for "place" or "location") is conceptualized as internal (a belief that one can control one's own life) or external (a belief that life is controlled by outside factors which the person cannot influence, or that chance or fate controls their lives).

Individuals with a strong internal locus of control believe events in their life derive primarily from their own actions: for example, when receiving exam results, people with an internal locus of control tend to praise or blame themselves and their abilities. People with a strong external locus of control tend to praise or blame external factors such as the teacher or the exam.
Learned Helplessness versus Self-Determination

• Learned Helplessness
  • Hopelessness and resignation learned when a human or animal perceives no control over repeated bad events
    • Martin Seligman

• Self-Determination
  • Development of self-discipline in one area of your life may cause self-control in other areas as well
    • Edward Deci
Triadic Reciprocal Determinism
Self-efficacy & human agency

• The self-efficacy mechanism plays a central role in human agency (Bandura, 1982; 1986).

• Self-judgments of operative capabilities function as one set of proximal determinants of how people behave, their thought patterns, and the emotional reactions they experience in taxing situations.
Self-Efficacy Appraisal

• Among the types of thoughts that affect action, none is more central or pervasive than people's judgments of their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives.

• The self-efficacy mechanism plays a central role in human agency (Bandura, 1982; 1986).

• Self-judgments of operative capabilities function as one set of proximal determinants of how people behave, their thought patterns, and the emotional reactions they experience in taxing situations.

• In their daily lives, people continuously have to make decisions about what courses of action to pursue and how long to continue those they have undertaken.

• Because acting on misjudgments of personal efficacy can produce adverse consequences, accurate appraisal of one's own capabilities has considerable functional value.
Self-regulation

• The self-regulation of conduct in not entirely an intrapsychic affair.
• Rather, it involves a reciprocity of influence between thought, conduct, and a network of social influences.
• Under social conditions in which transgressive behavior is not easily self-excusable, conduct is likely to be congruent with more standards.
• But self-regulation of moral conduct can be weakened or nullified by exonerative moral reasoning and social circumstances.
• -> mechanisms of moral disengagement
Selective Activation and Disengagement of Internal Control

Moral Justification
Palliative Comparison
Euphemistic Labeling

Minimizing, Ignoring, or Misconstruing The Consequences

Dehumanization
Attribution of Blame

Reprehensible Conduct

Detrimental Effects

Displacement of Responsibility
Diffusion of Responsibility

Victim
BANDURA: MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

• SELF-CRITICISM IS UNCOMFORTABLE

• RELAXED SELF-STANDARDS ARE USED
WEAK LINKS OF DEFENSIVENESS

• DETRIMENTAL CONDUCT
• INJURIOUS EFFECTS
• OPPONENTS, VICTIMS
TAKING THE “BAD” OUT OF BAD BEHAVIOR

• MORAL JUSTIFICATION
• EUPHEMISTIC LABELING
• ADVANTAGEOUS COMPARISON
DOWNPLAYING PROBLEMATIC CONSEQUENCES

• RESULTS MINIMIZED, IGNORED, MISCONSTRUED

• RESULTS DENIED, DISTORTED
DEMONIZING THE OPPOSITION

• VICTIM DE-HUMANIZATION

• DISPARAGING, DENIGRATING CRITICS
MINIMIZING ACCOUNTABILITY

• ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME
• DISPLACEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY
• DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

http://professoralbertbandura.com/albert-bandura-videos.html#moral-disengagement
The Milgram Experiment
Part 1 – What the experiment did?

- The Milgram Experiment – BBC Documentation 2009
  (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcvSNg0HZwk)

- 1961: conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram

- Measurement of willingness to obey an authority

- Conflict with participant’s personal conscience

- Follow orders despite violating moral beliefs

- Connection WWII / Holocaust
Part 1 – What the experiment did?

- 3 participants:
  - Teacher
  - Learner
  - Experimenter (Professor)

- Teacher & learner in separated rooms → were able to communicate, but could not see each other

- Teacher read word pairs, learner had to remember the correct pairs

- If answer incorrect → teacher had to administer electric shock to learner

- Teacher received real electric shock as proof
Part 1 – What the experiment did?

Procedure of the experiment (2)

- Teacher believed that learner received shocks

- BUT in reality:
  - No shocks
  - Not the learner who responded
  - a tape recorder integrated in the electro-shock generator

- Various reactions of the teachers:
  - From “Desire to stop” to laughing

- Experiment only stopped if:
  - Teacher wished to stop
  - After giving 450 V three times

- The Milgram Experiment – BBC Documentation 2009
  (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzTuz0mNIwU)
Part 1 – What the experiment did?

Results

• 65% of participants administered final 450 V shock

• Ordinary people can become agents in a terrible destructive process

• Even if teachers wanted to stop, only a few had resources to resist authority (experimenter)

• None of the teachers who wanted to stop:
  • Insisted that experiment should be terminated
  • Checked learner’s health
Part 1 – What the experiment did?

Explaining Results in short

• Theory of Conformism
  • Relationship between group of reference and individual person
  • In crisis: leaves decision to the group

• Agentic state theory:
  • Individual person acts only as agent for someone else
  • Sees himself no longer responsible for his actions
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

**Participants’ Reactions (1)**

- Some individuals were traumatized while participating
  - Profuse sweating and trembling
  - 10% left extremely upset
  - Some others broke into unexplained hysterical laughter

- Mentally stable, healthy individuals were emotionally distraught after only 20 minutes
  - believed they were causing another human to suffer

- Observed reactions:
  - Twitching
  - Stuttering
  - Twisting hands,
  - Pulling on earlobes
  - Nervous laughter
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

Participants’ Reactions (2)

• Subjects "debriefed" and told what had really happened immediately after

• If they were obedient, they were reassured that this was normal behaviour (true, of course)

• A few weeks later they were sent:
  • a write-up of the results of the research
  • an explanation of the rationale

• Questionnaire asked overall feelings about study:
  • 43% of former participants surveyed were “very glad” to have participated
  • 40% were “glad”
  • Only 1.3% were “sorry” or “very sorry” they participated

• Little difference between those who obeyed and those who didn't.
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

Participants’ Reactions (3)

• People seemed remarkably relaxed about what they had done, in retrospect
  • Milgram: "The same mechanisms that allow the subject to perform the act...continue to justify his behaviour for him."

• Subjects interviewed by psychiatrist 1 year after the experiment:
  • “No long-term distress was found.”

• Ethical considerations are abundant:
  • Subjects generally receptive; to what extent should we consider their frame of reference?
  • No long-term distress BUT trauma during experiment
  • Do the ends justify the means?
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

Reception & Follow-Up (1)

• Set off numerous follow-up studies
  • Tested if the findings were still true in different cultures;
  • in slightly varying situations;
  • with different genders (only men were in the original study); etc.

• Manipulated many experimental variables

• Some variation in results BUT by and large, people still remarkably obedient
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

**Reception & Follow-Up (2)**

- Received high praise
  - 1964 American Association for the Advancement of Science's (AAAS) prize for research
  - Congratulatory letters from social scientists around the country
  - Media evidenced immediate interest
    - Milgram attempted to discourage this
    - Did not wish to have the experiment generally publicized as “the experiment only works if the subject does not know what it is about.”
    - **Deception in research is one area where balancing the needs for statistical accuracy and validity against ethics is always a very difficult process**

- Milgram also highly criticized for being unethical
  - Ethics and method were attacked in American Psychologist
    - Polarization of opinion / controversy leads to engaging and potentially instructive discussion, which many instructors have come to appreciate
    - **While the experiment and method may not have been entirely moral or ethical, do benefits outweigh costs?**
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

Reception & Follow-Up (3)

• Diana Baumrind’s (1964) criticism based on 3 ethical considerations:
  1. He was wrong in deceiving his subjects as to the true purpose of the experiment
  2. As a part of this deception, he was wrong in letting them believe they really were inflicting pain on another human being
  3. Worst of all, he was wrong to put them in a conflict situation that some of them found stressful

• Baumrind further argued:
  • Milgram's experiment did not provide adequate measures to protect participants from the stress and realization that they were capable of brutal actions
  • The entire experiment should have been terminated at the first indication of discomfort in the participants
  • Because of the intensity of the experience, participants might be alienated from future participation in psychological research

• H. C. Kelman argued that use of deception in this experiment was not necessary because other, non-deceptive methods could have obtained similar results
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

Reception & Follow-Up (4)

• Milgram defended his work:
  • He argued that adequate measures were indeed taken to protect participants
  • Participants could withdraw from the study at any time
  • The deception was explained at the conclusion of the experiment
  • His subjects volunteered to take part in the experiment
  • Apart from what appeared to be their inborn urge to obey an ‘authority’ figure, nothing stopped them refusing to comply with the instruction
  • After the experiment all subjects were fully debriefed and assured that they had not in fact hurt anybody and had nothing to be ashamed of – that their behaviour was normal and understandable
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

Reception & Follow-Up (5)

• Milgram defended his work:
  • Deception was necessary as evidenced by the mistaken predictions of the results
    • Neither Milgram nor any of the psychologists whom he consulted before the investigation believed that these volunteers would behave in the way they did
  • No indications that stress undertaken by participants had any lasting or injurious effects
  • Follow-up questionnaires and interviews, several months and a year after the experiment, showed participants were not alienated from future research
    • The experience was worthwhile, even positively life-altering for them
    • Far from criticising Milgram, his subjects maintained that, though stressed, they were glad to have taken part and discovered important aspects of their own psychology
Part 2 – Immediate Impact & Implications

Impact on Academia (1)

- Permanently changed our understanding of the Holocaust
  - In early explanations, Nazi leaders were demonized as pathological sadists and monsters
  - Milgram observed ordinary people submit to authority in his experiments
  - Concluded "the most fundamental lesson" of findings was that "ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process."

- Profound impact within academic social psychology, altering the central message of the discipline
  - Social psychology at the time was caught up in "the trait/situation controversy"
    - questioned whether behavior is more strongly determined by personality or by situation
  - Showed how powerful subtle, even invisible features of the situation could be
    - That we tend to underestimate the "power of the situation" has become the field's guiding thesis
  - Milgram wrote "The social psychology of this century reveals a major lesson: often, it is not so much the kind of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he finds himself that determines how he will act"