CHAPTER 10

THE SOCIAL COGNITIVE LEARNING APPROACH

part 2

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The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

• All behaviour is acquired through learning

• Important differences between social cognitive views of learning and those of standard behaviourism (Skinner):
  - **Skinner**: Individuals learn passively on the basis of environmental reinforcement/punishment / **SCLT**: Individuals are active participants who influence their own learning process (via self-regulation)
  - **Skinner**: Conditioning is the only form of learning / **SCLT**: Learning takes place via direct experience, observation, self-regulation
  - **Skinner**: Learning is always linked to reinforcement by an external agent / **SCLT**: Learning is linked to direct, vicarious, and self-reinforcement

The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

• Direct reinforcement/punishment: individual receives reward/punishment for their behaviour from an external agent

• Vicarious reinforcement/punishment: individual observes another being rewarded/punished for a particular behaviour

• Self-reinforcement/punishment: an individual rewards/punishes themselves for engaging in a particular behaviour

• An individual’s subjective acceptance of reward and punishment is the most important element in learning

The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

• Learning through direct experience
  - Behaviour changes as a result of performing a behaviour (i.e., as a result of being rewarded or punished by someone else for performing the behaviour)
  - **Skinner**: occurs via operant conditioning or respondent condition
  - **SCLT**: Observational learning through self-regulation is more important than learning through direct experience
### The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

- **Cognitive processes play an important role in learning through direct experience (Skinner would not agree with this)**
  - People do not simply produce behaviour – they consciously perceive and evaluate the consequences of the behaviour
  - Self-reinforcement is as important (if not more important) than direct (environmental) reinforcement

### The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

- **Observational Learning**
  - This is the most important form of learning
  - People only learn a few behaviours from direct experience alone
  - **Social Learning** – all learning phenomena in which social and cognitive factors play a role
  - **The Model**: the person, book, film character etc whose behaviour is being observed
  - **The Observer**: the person observing the model's behaviour
  - **The Reinforcement Agent**: the person who rewards or punishes the model's behaviour

### The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

- The behaviour of the observer changes as a result of observing the behaviour of the model
- **Vicarious reinforcement**: when the model's behaviour is reinforced and this is observed by the observer, resulting in the observing acquiring the model's behaviour
- **Modelling**: the model's behaviour
- **Imitation**: when the observer copies the model's behaviour
- **Counter-imitation**: when the observer engages in the opposite behaviour to that which they observed the model performing

### The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

- For observational learning to take place:
  - Observer must pay **attention** to the model's behaviour
  - The observer must **retain** (remember) the model's behaviour (**retention**) – depends on the observer’s attention
  - The observer must **reproduce** the model's behaviour at some point in the future (**reproduction**)
## The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

### Factors influencing Observational Learning

- **The nature of the modelled behaviour**
  - The nature of the behaviour influences attention, retention, and reproduction of behaviour.
  - New, unknown, active, captivating behaviour attracts attention of observers and such behaviour is more easily acquired.

- **The characteristics of the model**
  - The behaviour of a high status model, or a model that is perceived as similar to the observer, is more likely to be reproduced by the observer than that of a low-status or dissimilar model.

- **The characteristics of the observer**
  - Motivation, interests, values, self-confidence, opinions, intelligence, and perceptions.
  - Personality influences the choice of models, which behaviour will hold the observer’s attention, which behaviours will be retained and which behaviours will be reproduced.
  - Expectations about the outcome of behaviour strongly influence the reproduction of behaviour.

### The results of the model's behaviour

- **Vicarious outcomes** (reinforcement or punishment of model's behaviour)
  - Vicarious rewards usually leads to behaviour imitation.
  - Vicarious punishment usually leads to counter-imitation.

- **Vicarious consequences**
  - Highlight factors the observer needs to take into account in planning their behaviour.
  - Influence the observer’s motivation.
  - Influence observer’s emotional reaction and values (in response to the reaction of the model).
  - Influence the observer’s perceptions of the model and the reinforcing agent.
The Dynamics of the Personality: SCLT View of Learning

- Vicarious punishment and reward have a similar effect on the acquisition of new behaviour – vicarious reward leads to reproduction of behaviour more often than vicarious punishment.
- Vicarious punishment and reward both lead to the acquisition of new behaviour more than when there are no consequences for the model.
- The observer judges the outcome of model’s behaviour in comparison to previous experience – this ‘relative outcome’ of the model’s behaviour is an important determinant of whether the observer will reproduce a model’s behaviour.
- Observers can imitate a model’s behaviour indirectly via similar behaviours.

- Self-efficacy
  - Observational learning is influenced by the degree to which an individual has confidence in their ability to reproduce the behaviour.

The Development of the Personality

- Development, via the learning of new behaviour (and the modification of existing behaviour), occurs across the entire lifespan.
- Development is an ongoing process of change resulting from the interaction between genetic and environmental factors.

Learning through Self-regulation

- Includes self-reinforcement and self-punishment.
- Two types of self-regulation:
  - External Self-regulation: arranging a situation and the outcome of behaviour so that the individual is able to reward or punish themselves in a concrete way.
- Regarded as the most important form of learning.
- The effect of rewards or punishment from external agents depends on the individual’s interpretation.
**The Optimal Development of the Personality**

- Optimal development is characterized by:
  - the ability to recognize factors that are relevant to effective functioning in a given situation
  - the ability to succeed in producing behaviour that meets the individual’s standards
- ‘Optimal’ development is dependent upon the individual’s cultural context

**Views on Psychopathology**

- Pathological behaviour is learnt via observational learning
- Do not need to look for underlying dynamic causes of psychopathological behaviour
- A lack of self-efficacy is important for the development of undesirable pathological behaviour

**Implications and Applications:**
**Interpretation and handling of Aggression**

- 9.1, 9.2, & 9.3 for self-study
- Aggressive behaviours form part of each individual’s behaviour repertoire and are more likely to be repeated if they lead to rewarding consequences
- New aggressive behaviours can be learnt through observing aggressive models
- The likelihood of acquired aggressive responses being reproduced depend on factors such as outcome expectancies, self-efficacy perceptions, individual interpretation, self-regulating strategies and values

- Aggressive responses can be provoked by unpleasant stimuli and by the expectations of rewarding outcomes
- Persistence in aggressive behaviour is regulated by its results
- The regulation of aggressive behaviour is a function of the interaction between the individual, the situation, and behaviour (reciprocal determinism)
Evaluation of the Theory

• SCLT is a very popular personality theory
• Large volumes of research that support its assumptions
• Criticism: New terms are regularly developed for existing phenomena, making it difficult to develop a simple, logical structure to the theory