

The Social Cognitive Approach: AKA Social Learning Theory

- Theorists look to conscious thoughts and emotions to describe how people differ
- And Explains why they behave the way they do
- Not created out of case studies
- Based on principles of animal and human learning
- “Personality consists mainly of the thoughts and actions we learn through observing and interacting with family and others in social situations.”

Roots in Behaviorism

J.B. Watson (1925)

- Classical Conditioning
- “All human behavior from mental disorder to scientific skill, is determined by learning”

BF Skinner

- Operant Conditioning
- Used Functional Analysis
- Saw behavior as a function it serves in obtaining rewards or avoiding punishment
- Functional Analysis summarizes
 - What people find rewarding
 - What they are capable of doing
 - What skills they lack

Social Learning

- Classical/Operant Conditioning
- Focused on observation/observable behavior
- Do not explore the role of thoughts in guiding behavior

Social-Cognitive Approach

- Incorporates learning theory
- Goes beyond learning to include mental processes
- “Approach to personality seeks to assess and understand how learned patterns of thoughts and feelings contribute to behavior and how behavior and its consequences alter cognitive activity and future actions.”

Social-Cognitive Theorists:

- J. Rotter
- Bandura
- Mischel

J. Rotter= expectancy Theory (1982)

- Learning creates cognition + Expectancies that guide behavior
- Behavior is determined not only by positive reinforcers but also by expectancy
- An expectation that a particular behavior will result in the consequence
- Focused on expectation- said expectations shape behavior
- Found implications of behavior Locus of Control
- **Locus of Control**
 - Internal –expect events to be controlled by their own efforts
 - What we achieve, what reinforcements they receive are due to their efforts
 - External- Expect event to be determined by external forces they have no control

Albert Bandura + Reciprocal Determinism

- Personality as a shaped by the ways in which thoughts behavior and Environment interact and influence one another
- People learn rewards and punishment/observational...
- Behavior changes in environment
- Observing changes in environment □ affects how they think □ then effects behavior
- **Reciprocal determinism** is the concept that observant, changes thinking and affects behavior
- A constant web of influence on behavior
- Key Element is Self-Efficacy- the learned expectation of success
 - What we do and what we try to do is largely controlled by our perceptions about our chances for success
 - Higher self-efficacy = higher success

Mischel = “if then theory”

The **person** (personality characteristics) + **situation** (environment) interacts to produce behavior
If people encounter a particular situation then they will engage in characteristic behavior”

Basis of personality: learned beliefs, feelings and expectancies characterize each individual and make that person different.

Behavior can be predicted when variables, **Cognitive Person Variables** are and the features of the situation are known.

Cognitive Person Variables:

Encodings: beliefs a person has about the environment and other people

Expectancies: what a person expects to follow a behavior
Also what a person believes he is capable of

Affects: feelings emotions and affective responses

Goals and Values: the things that a person believes in and wants to achieve

Competencies and self-regulatory: Thoughts actions a person is capable of
Also the ability to engage in planned, self-controlled and goal directed behavior

