Albert Bandura (1925 - 2021)



- A 2002 survey ranked Bandura as the fourth most frequently cited psychologist of all time, behind B. F. Skinner, Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget.
- In April 2025, Bandura became the first psychologist with more than a million Google Scholar citations. During his lifetime, Bandura was widely described as the greatest living psychologist, and as one of the most influential psychologists of all time.

The following books have more than 5,000 citations in Google Scholar:

- Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: the exercise of control. New York: W.H. Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (1986). Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

- Self Efficacy: People who regard themselves as highly efficacious act, think, and feel differently from those who perceive themselves as inefficacious. They produce their own future, rather than simply foretell it. (Bandura)
- Reciprocal determinism: The world and a person's behavior cause each other. Person, Environment, and Behavior—triadic reciprocity
- Observational learning is a component of Albert
 Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that
 individuals can learn novel responses via observation of
 key others' behaviors.
- Attention— Retention— Reproduction— Motivation
- Self-regulation
- Self-observation— Judgment (compare with a standard)—— Self-response.

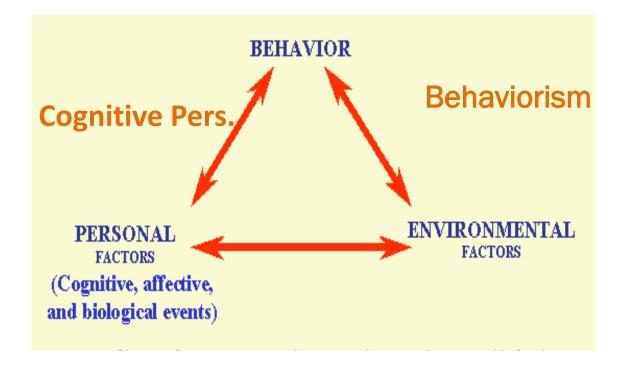
- Social Learning Theory: The initial phase of Bandura's research analyzed the foundations of human learning, and the willingness of children and adults to imitate behavior they observed in other people, in particular, the emotion of aggression. (in 1960s- 70s)
- During a period dominated by behaviorism in the mold of Skinner, Bandura believed the sole behavioral modifiers of reward and punishment in classical and operant conditioning were inadequate as a framework, and that many human behaviors were learned from other humans.
- By the mid-1980s, Bandura's research had taken a more holistic bent, and his analysis tended towards giving a more comprehensive overview of human cognition in the context of social learning. The theory he expanded from social learning theory soon became known as social cognitive theory.

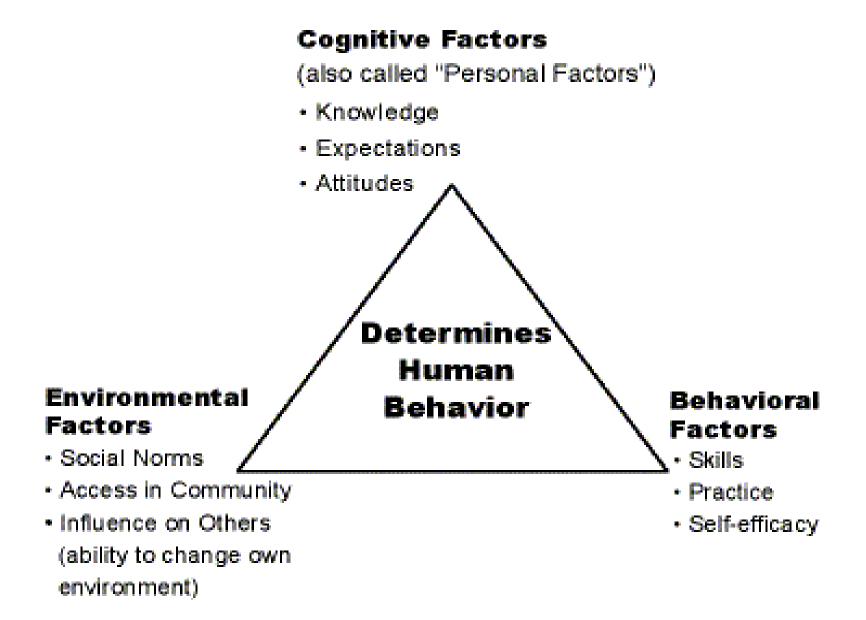
Social Cognition

Bandura developed the concept of reciprocal determinism to account for human behavior

Bandura's theory integrates a continuous interaction between: Behavior—Environment—Cognitions

Bandura's theory focuses on how we observe and imitate the world around us.

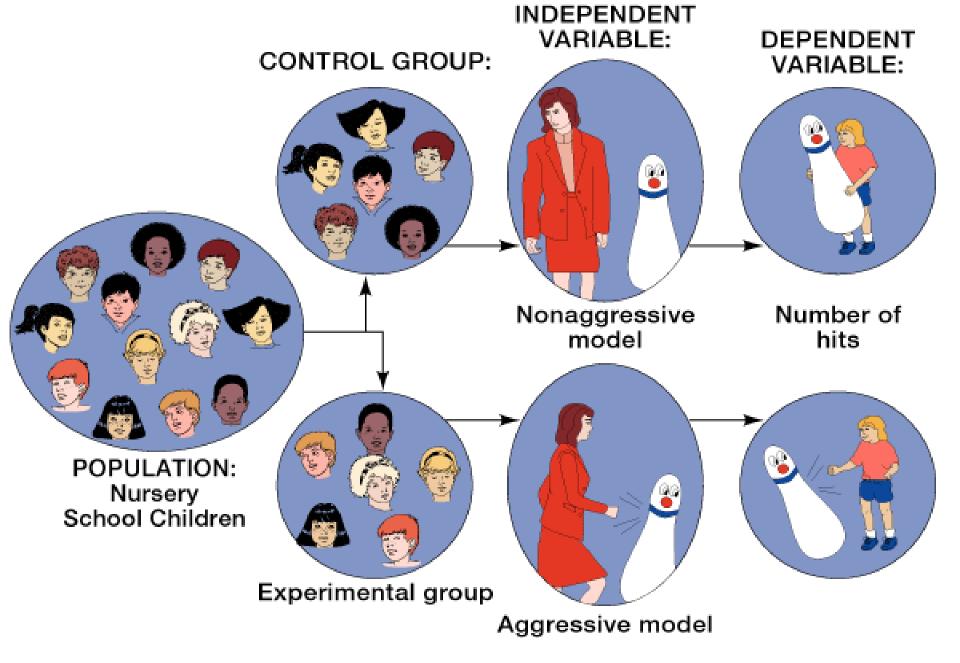




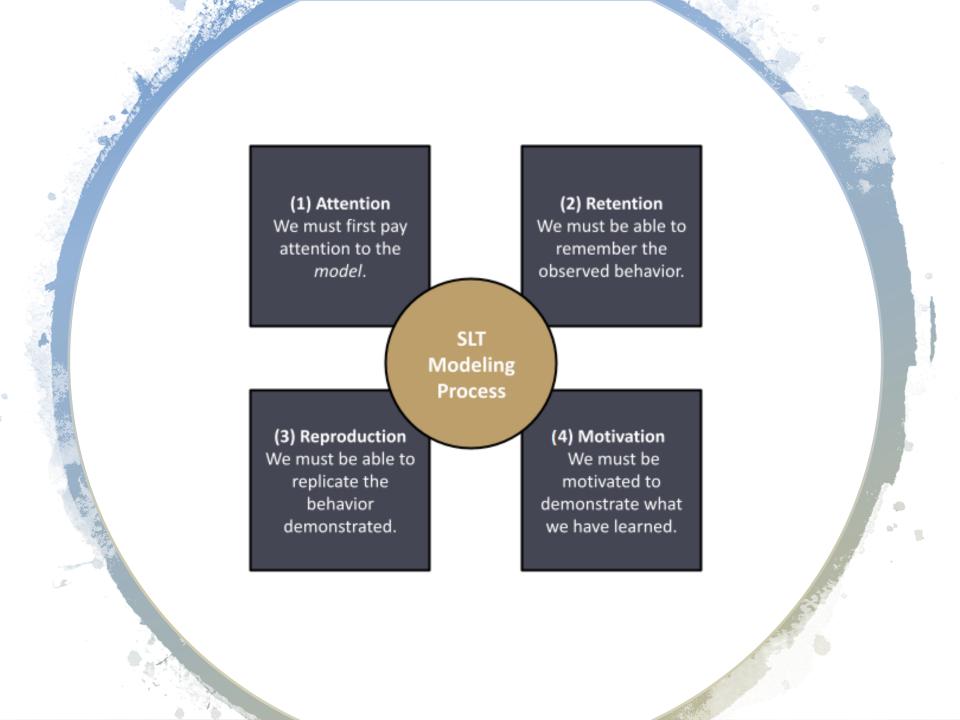
Source: https://theintactone.com/2019/03/13/td-u3-topic-3-social-learning-theories/

Bandura identified three basic model types involved in *observational learning* (Nabavi, 2012):

- Live model: An individual is observed acting out or showing the behavior.
- Verbal instruction model: The behavior is explained or described.
- Symbolic model: A real or fictional character displays the behavior online, on TV, in a book, etc.



Theories of Personality Prepared by: Jim Messina, Ph.D.



The Sub-processes of Observational Learning

Attentional Processes: What is selectively observed in the profusion of modeling influences and what information is extracted from ongoing modeled events.

Retention Processes: An active process of transforming and restructuring information about events for memory representation in the form of rules and conceptions

Production Processes: Conceptions are translated to appropriate courses of action—when deficits exist, the sub-skills required for complex performances must 1st be developed by modeling and guided enactment.

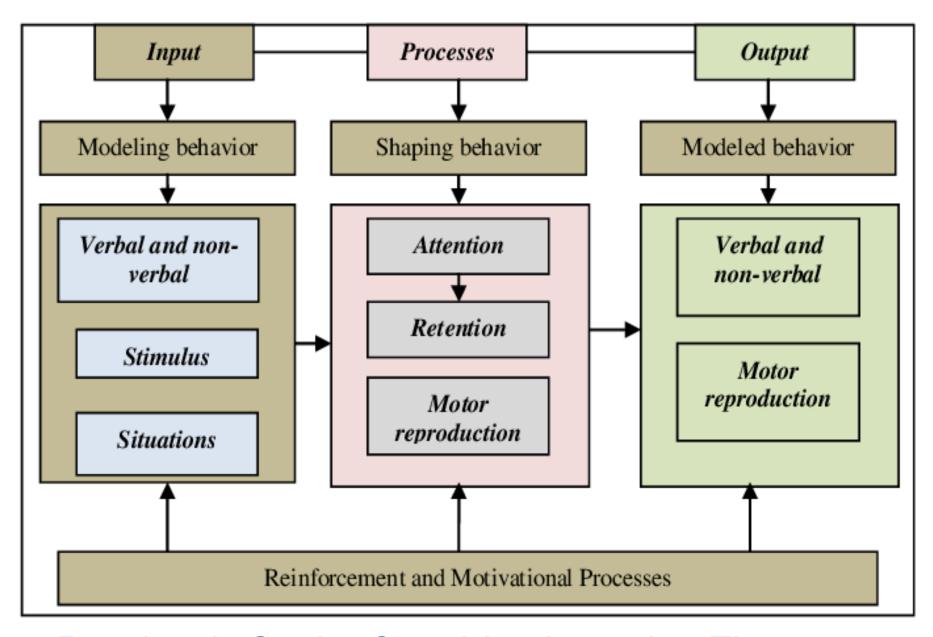
Motivation Processes: social cognitive theory distinguishes between acquisition and performance because people do not perform everything they learn—people are more likely to exhibit modeled behavior if it results in valued outcomes than if it has unrewarding or punishing effects.

Intrinsic Reinforcement

- Bandura noted that external, environmental reinforcement was not the only factor to influence learning and behavior. He described intrinsic reinforcement as a form of internal reward, such as pride, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment.
- This emphasis on internal thoughts and cognitions helps connect learning theories to cognitive developmental theories.
- While many textbooks place social learning theory with behavioral theories, Bandura himself describes his approach as a 'social cognitive theory.'

Basic Social Learning Concepts

- 1. People can learn through observation.
- 2. Mental states are important to learning.
- 3. Learning does not necessarily lead to a change in behavior.



Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory

Selected influential books from each decade:

- Adolescent aggression (1959, with R. Walters)
- Social learning and personality development (1963, with R. Walters)
- Aggression: Social learning analysis (1973)
- Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory (1986)
- Self-efficacy: The exercise of control (1997)

Real-Life Examples

Criminology and aggression:

- According to the SLT, "aggressive behaviors are learned through reinforcement and the imitation of aggressive models" (Gross, 2020, p. 489).
- Bandura showed that aggressive tendencies, especially in children, are vicariously reinforced by seeing others rewarded for or benefiting from their aggressive behavior.
- Are aggressive behaviors learned from violence on TV and in films? It depends on viewers' perceptions, including factors such as (Gross, 2020):
- Are the violent portrayals in realistic settings? Violence in news and documentary programs is typically more upsetting.
- Is the violence justified or rewarded?
- Does the viewer closely identify with the characters?
- Is there a graphic and realistic depiction of the victim's pain and suffering?
- The SLT is also valuable in understanding criminal and deviant behavior.
- Role of TV & social media

Social learning theory in social work

- The SLT has implications for social work. Indeed, "modeling is seen as one of the key factors in the development of prosocial behavior" and occurs in families, workplaces, and education (Davies, 2013, p. 74).
- The theory can help social workers better understand how specific behavior has developed and how to intervene, either to act as a role model or to encourage others.

Skill learning

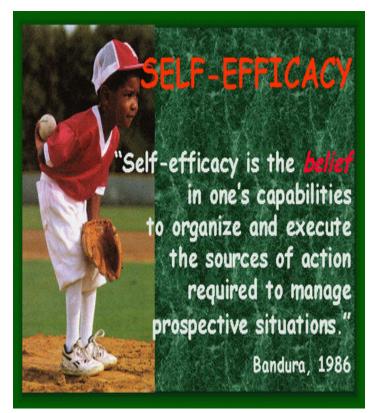
- A 2018 study studied the effect of role modeling in teaching and learning in medical students (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018). Students reported that learning from role models was "complex and haphazard," and the study recognized that the process of learning from role models was challenging, but could be helped by (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018):
- Ensuring proximity and repeated observation of role models' actions and their behavior.
- Providing insight into the hidden thought processes behind the observable behaviors.
- Being given the opportunity to reproduce and practice behavior accompanied by reflection.

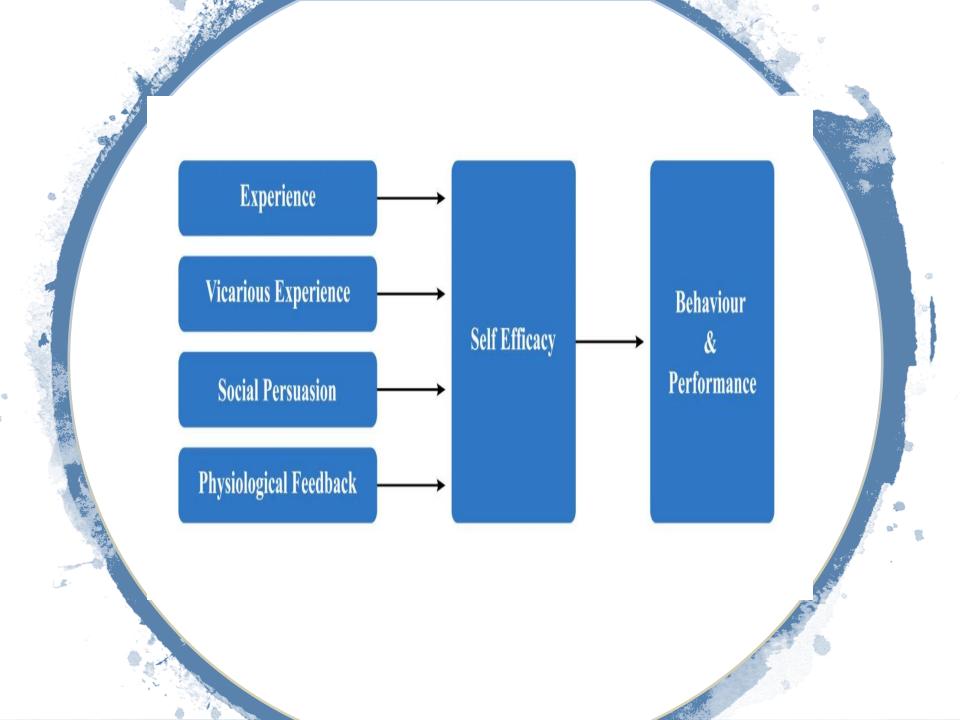
Self-Efficacy

- Self-reflection is a second human quality and is expressed in the concept of 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)

Bandura's Theory

- Human beings have specific abilities related to learning that sets them apart from other species.
- Social cognitive theory states that there are three characteristics that are unique to humans:
 - Vicarious consequences (Model and imitate others)
 - Self-efficacy (self reflection)
 - Performance standards and moral conduct (Ability to regulate one's own behavior)





Performance Outcomes

Determining Efficacy Judgments

Vicarious Experiences

Performance Outcomes

"Positive and negative experiences can influence the ability of an individual to perform a given task. If one has performed well at a task previously, he or she is more likely to feel competent and perform well at a similarly associated task" (Bandura, 1977).

Self-Efficacy Vicarious Experiences

Physiological

Feedback

"People can develop high or low self-efficacy vicariously through other people's performances. A person can watch another perform and then compare their own competence with the other individual's competence" (Bandura, 1977).

Verbal Persuasion

Verbal Persuasion

"Self-efficacy is influenced by encouragement and discouragement pertaining to an individual's performance or ability to perform" (Redmond, 2010).

Physiological Feedback

"People experience sensations from their body and how they perceive this emotional arousal influences their beliefs of efficacy" (Bandura, 1977).

Source: https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-efficacy.html

People who have a sense of self-efficacy bounce back from failure; they approach things in terms of how to handle them rather than worrying about what can go wrong (Bandura, 1977b).

- **1. Goal Setting:** Setting clear, challenging goals is essential for keeping us motivated and enhancing our performance. Goals not only guide our actions but also provide benchmarks for measuring progress and satisfaction.
- Long-term goals—such as getting a degree or starting a new career—are inspiring but can also feel
 overwhelming. Because they're so distant, Breaking down large goals into smaller, achievable
 subgoals —a sense of accomplishment—frequent successes build our confidence, increasing our selfefficacy the belief in our own ability to succeed.

2. Emphasize Peer Modeling

• Learning from examples set by those around you happens at any age (think of how a teacher is a role model for a student, but in a similar manner an employer is a model for an employee).

3. Seek Feedback

4. Encourage Participation

• Participation tends to be essential in any work environment – it encourages the person to be active and engaged, great qualities in someone that are usually influential in a person's levels of self-efficacy.

5. Allow People to Make Their Own Choices:

- **6. How to Use Emotions and Physical States to Boost Self-Efficacy:** So how can you shift your mindset and improve your self-efficacy, even when you're feeling anxious or stressed?
- Reframe Your Anxiety as Excitement: Recognize that feeling anxious can be a sign that something matters deeply to you. Reminding yourself that these emotions are normal—and even helpful—can transform anxiety into motivation.
- Manage Your Stress and Mood: Learning stress-management techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness, or relaxation exercises can calm your physical responses, making it easier to maintain confidence under pressure.
- Focus on Situational Factors, Not Personal Flaws: Instead of viewing physical reactions (like increased heart rate or tension) as evidence of personal inadequacy, try attributing them to external factors like the high-stakes nature of the situation. This perspective reduces negative self-judgments and maintains your self-confidence.
- Stay Physically Healthy: Improving your physical well-being through regular exercise, proper sleep, and balanced nutrition – helps reduce stress and anxiety, giving you a solid foundation for stronger self-efficacy.

The Difference Between Self-Efficacy & Self-Esteem

Often used interchangeably as though they represent the same phenomenon, when in fact they refer to entirely different things.

- Self-Efficacy: concerned with judgments of personal capabilities
- Example: "I'm going to make this free-throw shot."
- Self-Esteem: concerned with judgment of self-worth
- Example: "I'm a terrible person."
- "There is no fixed relationship between beliefs about one's capabilities and whether one likes or dislikes oneself." (Bandura, Self-Efficacy)

Self-Efficacy results from four types of information

- Our experiences trying to perform the behavior (failure or success)
- Watching others perform same or similar behavior (vicarious)
- Verbal persuasion (encouragement)
- How we feel about the behavior (emotional reactions)

Therapy

Self-control therapy

- 1. Behavioral charts or behavioral diaries
- 2. Environmental planning
- 3. Self-contracts: Finally, you arrange to reward yourself when you adhere to your plan and possibly punish yourself when you do not.

Modeling therapy

- (---- take home message--- who are your models??)
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWo7F5zcObM
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NbTU1EivJs
- http://des.emory.edu/mfp/self-efficacy.html#bandura
- http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/bandura.html

Evaluation of Bandura`s Theory

Weaknesses:

- Not heavily developmental
- Underplays role of genetic and maturational variables

Strengths

- Strong on science
- Important emphasis on cognitive & self processes.
- Important implications for day-to-day life.

Strengths of the SLT

- The SLT is incredibly flexible in explaining a person's various ways of behaving and learning. An environmental change can lead to a behavioral one.
- The SLT explains that learning can happen in various ways, including observation and direct, hands-on experiences.
- The SLT has been applied in many settings that have consistently shown strong relationships between social learning concepts and behavior.
- The degree, probability, and frequency of reinforcement impact imitation.
- Studies involving children observing aggression have shown that it impacts their subsequent behavior in controlled situations.

Criticism and limitations

- The SLT does not consider the aspect of accountability in actions. The theory suggests that how a person behaves is primarily down to context rather than how they process information.
- The SLT ignores developmental milestones. Such development stages typically occur irrespective of the environmental setting.
- The SLT does not account for behavior when there is no role model.
- Negative behavior such as criminal activities can occur without prior exposure to such behavior.
- The SLT can be difficult to test because of ethical issues. Indeed, experiments such as the 'Bobo' doll study would no longer be allowed.

Source: https://positivepsychology.com/social-learning-theory-bandura/

In Summary:

- Albert Bandura's most significant contribution is the Social Learning Theory, later refined into Social Cognitive Theory. Through his famous Bobo doll experiment, he showed that people can learn behaviors by observing others, not just through direct reinforcement.
- He emphasized the role of cognitive processes such as attention and motivation in learning.
- Bandura also introduced the concept of self-efficacy, highlighting how belief in one's abilities influences performance.
- His idea of reciprocal determinism explained how behavior, personal factors, and environment interact dynamically. Overall, his work bridged behaviorism and cognitive psychology, transforming modern psychology and education.

General Self-Efficacy Scale: The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) was developed by Matthias Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer – the scale is composed of only 8 items, rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- 1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.
- 2. When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
- 3. In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
- 4. I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.
- 5. I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.
- 6. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.
- 7. Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.
- 8. Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.