

Observational Learning

Learning that occurs through observing the actions of others ([page 196](#)).

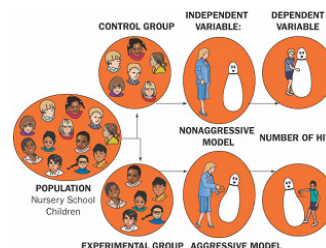


Observational learning

Many behaviors are not learned through classical conditioning or operant conditioning. Learning that occurs through observing the actions of others.

Albert Bandura wanted to illustrate that people learn by watching others and that expectations are relevant for performing a behavior. In his experiment, he had three different groups of children watch an adult aggressive play with a Bobo doll.

	<u>Behavior</u>	<u>Consequence</u>
<u>Group 1:</u>	Adults hit the Bobo doll	The adults were <u>reinforced</u> for their aggressive behavior
<u>Group 2:</u>	Adults hit the Bobo doll	The adults were <u>punished</u> for their aggressive behavior
<u>Group 3:</u>	Adults hit the Bobo doll	There were <u>no consequences</u> for aggressive behavior.



Observational Learning

After watching the adult interact with the Bobo doll, the children were allowed to play with the Bobo doll.



	Behavior	Consequence	Children's behavior	Learned to hit the Bobo doll?
<u>Group 1</u>	Adults hit the Bobo doll	The adults were <u>reinforced</u> for their aggressive behavior	Displayed aggression toward Bobo doll	Yes
<u>Group 2</u>	Adults hit the Bobo doll	The adults were <u>punished</u> for their aggressive behavior	Did NOT Display aggression toward Bobo doll	Yes
<u>Group 3</u>	Adults hit the Bobo doll	There were <u>no consequences</u> for aggressive behavior.	Displayed aggression toward Bobo doll	Yes

Observational Learning

What are other bad behaviors that are demonstrated through observation that are reinforced or unpunished?

- Prejudicial attitudes and racist behavior
- Sexual assault (e.g. Brock Turner)

What are bad behaviors that are not demonstrated through punishment?

What are other good behaviors that are demonstrated through observation that are reinforced or unpunished?

What are good behaviors that are not demonstrated through punishment?

Examples of observational learning

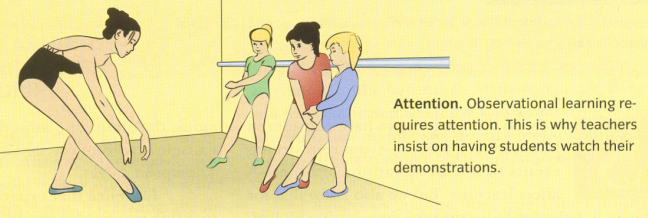
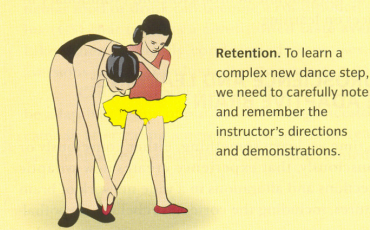
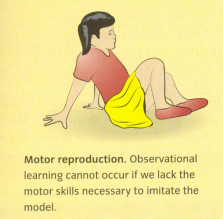
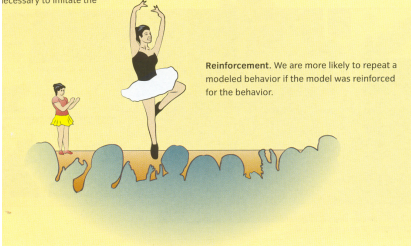
Newton is very aggressive and greedy when it comes to food. Another one of our dogs, Tuffy is a very good and obedient dog (of course he is mine). My sister taught Tuffy to give us a hug. He understood this as a gesture of love and friendship (if the word applies to dogs). One day, Newton saw Tuffy give a hug and received a treat. Newton quickly learned this trick because food was involved. However, it was unclear that he learned that that this was a gesture of love and friendship. Newton imitated the behavior, but didn't understand the reasons for this behavior.



Likewise, Kris's German shepherd (Xena, Warrior Princess) learned how to open doors by moving her paws up and down next to the doorknob. I joke that we need to quarantine his dog or else she will teach other dogs how to open doors by watching her.

Cognitive Processes that Influence Imitation

Four cognitive processes interact to determine whether imitation of behavior will occur:

 <p>Attention. Observational learning requires attention. This is why teachers insist on having students watch their demonstrations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Paying attention</u> to another's behavior.
 <p>Retention. To learn a complex new dance step, we need to carefully note and remember the instructor's directions and demonstrations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Remembering the behavior</u> to be imitated.
 <p>Motor reproduction. Observational learning cannot occur if we lack the motor skills necessary to imitate the model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Transforming</u> the mental representation of the observed behavior into actions you can reproduce. (can't imitate Jackie Chan)
 <p>Reinforcement. We are more likely to repeat a modeled behavior if the model was reinforced for the behavior.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Motivation</u> to imitate the behavior.

Observational Learning

If you observe your parents, friends or coworker lie, what factors influence whether or not you are going to imitate their behavior?

Table 5.6: Factors that increase the likelihood of imitation

1. People who are rewarded for their behavior.
 2. Warm, nurturing people.
 3. People who have control over you or have the power to influence your life (such as supervisors and parents).
 4. People who are similar to you in terms of age, gender, and interests.
 5. People you perceive as having higher social status.
 6. When the task to be imitated is not extremely difficult or easy.
 7. If you lack the confidence in your own abilities in a particular situation.
 8. If the situation is ambiguous or unfamiliar.
 9. If you've been reinforced for imitating the same behavior in the past.
-

Applying your knowledge

What are some social issues that can be addressed with the psychology of learning such as:

- littering of highways and beaches,
- panhandling,
- taxes,
- wearing seatbelts or lifejackets, etc.
- treating alcohol abuse with antabuse (page 612)
- prison reform

Why is it important for managers, leaders, and parents to illustrate what behavior is appropriate and not follow the motto “do as I say, not as I do”?

Various citizens are concerned about children learning particular behaviors by watching television. Most common ones are:

- Violence and aggression
- Crude language
- Sexual behavior

But what about...

Psychology of Learning

- Classical conditioning
- Operant conditioning
- Observational learning

How can all of these principles of learning explain phobias—an intense fear that is triggered by a specific object or situation (Chapter 14: Psychological Disorders, p. 559).

- Classical conditioning: Phobias may be learned by a traumatic event that could range from surviving an airplane crash to being bitten by a German shepherd when you were young. You may generalize the experience from being bitten by one German shepherd to all dogs (stimulus generalization).
- Operant conditioning: The avoidant behavior characterized by phobic behavior may have been negatively reinforced. If you are afraid of dogs, you avoid them to reduce anxiety. This makes it much more likely you will avoid them in the future (_____).
- Observational learning: By seeing a fearful reaction of someone else, (such as a child seeing a parent panic at the sight of a spider) may imitate that behavior in the future.