

Objectives:

- To be able to explain and apply the principles of social learning theory
- To be able to outline the work of Bandura
- To be able to explain strengths and limitations of SLT.
- To be able to explain how SLT compares with and overlaps with behaviourism.

Approaches to Psychology

Social Learning Theory



Behaviourism had many supporters, for its scientific approach. However, it gained plenty of critics for its use of animals and for oversimplifying behaviours: it was 'missing something'.

Julian Rotter (1954) was among the first to move away from strict behaviourism, and focus on the holistic interaction between individual and environment. He believed that behaviourism was too reductionist, and that **internal functioning**, **personality** and **social context** affected our behaviour.

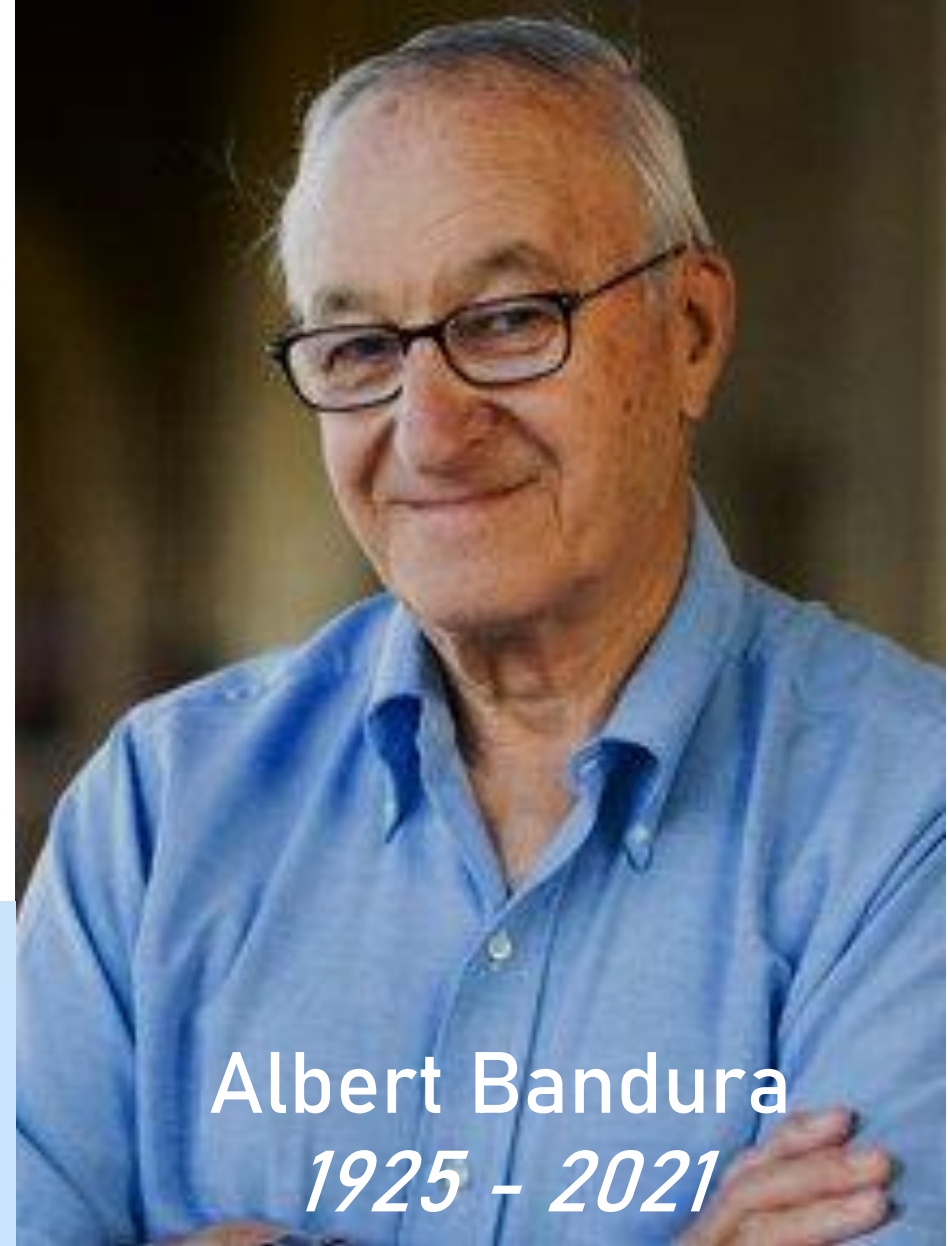
Through the late 1950s and 1960s, Albert Bandura (1963) developed this further, arguing that both **imitation** and **thinking** are key factors in 'real life' learning.

Discuss:

Do you agree that behaviourism was 'missing something'?

What does SLT appear to share with behaviourism?

What appears to set it apart from behaviourism?



Albert Bandura
1925 - 2021

SLT: Historical Context

Key Assumptions and Features of SLT:

- Behaviour is learned **directly** (CC/OC) or **indirectly** (socially).
- Indirect learning is in a **social context**, from **role models**, through **observation** of the behaviour and its consequences.
- **Information processing** mediates between stimulus and response and **decisions** are made about whether to **imitate**.
- The individual is not a passive receiver of learning: cognition, behaviour and environment all influence one another (**reciprocal determinism**).

Task:

Read the SLT box on p.128 and then explain the key terms: **modelling**, **imitation**, **identification**, **vicarious reinforcement**, **mediational processes**.



Albert Bandura (1977): Social Learning Theory

Model displays behaviour



Not
learned

No

Attention paid to model, behaviour and consequence?

Y
e
s

Not
learned

No

Mental representation of behaviour formed?

Y
e
s

Learned
but not
imitated

No

Motivation to reproduce behaviour?

Y
e
s

IMITATION

Mediational
Processes

The Process of Social Learning: A Visualisation

‘Key Study’ – you will be expected to know the procedure and findings of Bandura’s work, but it’s not a ‘key study’ in the same way as Milgram/Zimbardo/Asch are.

Watch this clip containing footage from one of Bandura’s studies.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=zerCK0lRjp8&feature=emb_title

Summary on the next slide.



Task

Using the video and box at the bottom of p.128, write procedure and findings notes on Bandura et al. (1961)

The Bobo Doll Experiment

Sample

- Bandura, Ross and Ross (1961) tested 36 boys and 36 girls aged 3 to 6 years old.
- Pre-tested children by observing the children in the nursery and judging their aggressive behaviour.
- To test the inter-rater reliability of the observers, 51 of the children were rated by two observers independently and their ratings compared. These ratings showed a very correlation ($r = 0.89$).

Method

- Lab experiment with independent groups design:
 - Aggressive model shown to 24 children
 - Non-aggressive model shown to 24 children
 - No model shown to 24 children
- The children were then put in a room for 20 mins and their behaviour was observed through a one-way mirror.

Findings

- Children who observed the aggressive model made significantly more aggressive responses than those who were in the non-aggressive or control groups. Boys imitated more physically aggressive acts than girls.



RM Link

1. What is the IV in this study?
2. Explain what a 'control condition' is and why they used one here.
3.
 - a) Explain what is meant by inter-rater reliability.
 - b) What does the 0.89 correlation suggest about this study?

Bandura et al (1961)



This behaviour was never modelled; what does this mean for Bandura's study?

Is there a risk of demand characteristics in this study? So?

It looks like the boy is copying something he's seen in a film.

Consider... if he is copying something from a film instead, does this undermine SLT? Explain.

Task

Write an evaluation paragraph on Bandura's study, focusing on validity and demand characteristics.

Use evidence (an example from the study).

What is the impact of this on his conclusions?

Evaluating the Bobo Doll Study

One way to evaluate approaches: CARS

Comparison

- Does it **ignore** anything for which we know there is evidence?
- Is it better or worse than **alternative approaches**?

Applications

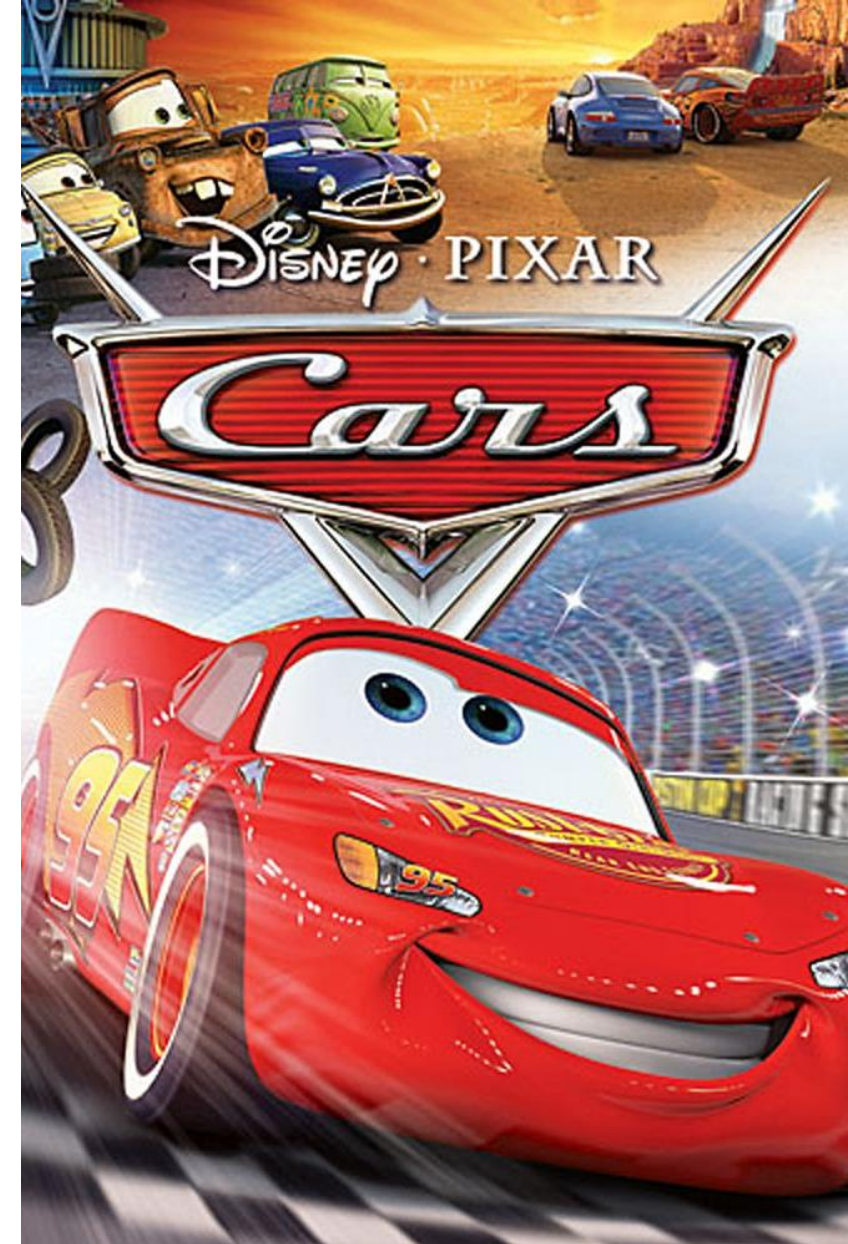
- Does it tell us anything about **real-world behaviour**?
- Can it be applied positively in real life? e.g. **Therapies**? **Economy**?

Reductionism

- Is it an **oversimplification**?
- Does it consider **multiple factors** and their role in behaviour (holism)?
- Is it **too reductionist**?

Scientific Method

- Is there **supporting research** for the key ideas and is this **evidence** high quality?
- Is there **causality**? Are there other interpretations for this evidence?
- Is it based on **objectivity** and **quantification**?



Evaluation of SLT as an Approach to Psychology

One limitation of SLT is that it is not a **complete explanation** for all behaviour. For example, it **ignores the role of biology**, which is a key determinant of many behaviours. This reduces the validity of SLT as a theory of behaviour. However, SLT **considers** both **environmental** (e.g. reinforcement) and **cognitive** (e.g. mental representation) factors. On balance, SLT is less **simplistic** than many other approaches, such as behaviourism, giving it greater **credibility**.

Supporters of SLT argue that it has impressive **application to real life**. For example, understanding modelling and identification has improved the success of campaigns that target **health behaviours**. This is evidenced by **Andsager et al (2006)**, who concluded that similarity to a model improved **anti-alcohol campaigns**. Furthermore, a review by **Ulrich (2003)** demonstrated the **value of SLT in explaining criminality**, in terms of modelling and reinforcing violence. In conclusion, SLT has **excellent applicability**, making it a **useful and valuable approach** to psychology.



Example Critical Evaluation

CrashCoursePsychology: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=128Ts5r9NRE>

SimplyPsychology article: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>

A nice little video covering key terms and a bit of evaluation, from a criminology / GCSE psychology perspective:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADugkz4kpj0>

A good article that explores the scientific and wider value of Bandura's studies and SLT from a more modern perspective:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/checkpoints/202003/did-the-bobo-doll-studies-teach-us-about-aggression>

Links and Resources