

An Overview of Social Learning Theory (SLT)

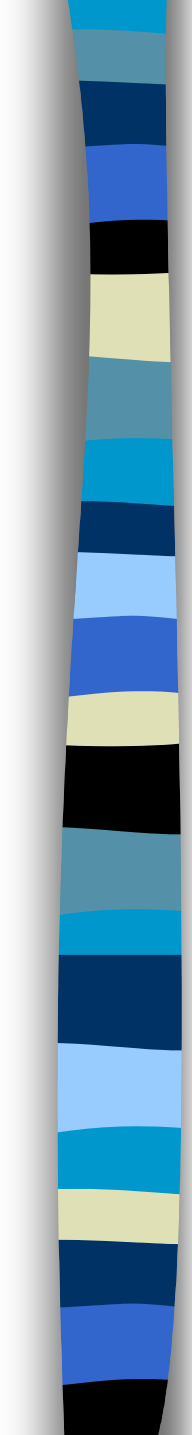


Karen J. Bachar MA
University of Arizona
College of Public Health



Social Learning Theory -Goals

- Present a historical review of SLT & identify key terms
- Examine how SLT has been applied to the study of aggression & sexual aggression
- Review a study that applies SLT to rape prevention education
- Conclusions & Recommendations

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- Social Learning Theory (SLT) has a rich historical background dating back to the late 1800's



I. Social Learning Theory - Review

- Research leading to development of SLT:
 - William James (1890)
 - Laid foundation for the study of person & environment interactions - “the social self”
 - Alfred Adler (early 1900’s)
 - Behavior is purposeful and motivated by pursuit of goals
 - Individual perception and attitude towards social environment significant influences on behavior
 - A person’s thoughts, feelings, & behaviors are transactions with one’s physical and social environments.



I. Social Learning Theory - Review

■ E.C. Tolman (1930's)

- Promoted the idea that cognitions are driving force behind behavior

■ Miller & Dollard (1941)

- Social Learning Theory officially launched with the publication of *Social Learning and Imitation*
 - Humans model observed behaviors which are either reinforced or extinguished through environmental reinforcement
 - Human behavior motivated by internal drives



I. Social Learning Theory - Review

- (1941+) Many SLT theories expanded Miller & Dollard's work
- All versions of SLT share 3 basic themes
 - People learn by experience & observation
 - Vicarious learning
 - People model behavior based on identification
 - Similarity and emotional attachment
 - Consequences influence whether a person will repeat a behavior
 - Reward vs.punishment contingencies



I. Social Learning Theory - Review

■ Major SLT Theorists

– Julian Rotter

- Internal vs. external control, internal/external change influence,
- Health outcomes / Personal Control

– Robert Sears

- Socialization processes
- How children internalize values attitudes and behaviors of a culture



I. Social Learning Theory - Review

- Walter Mischel

- Cognitive social learning
- How new experiences affect the individual

- Ronald Akers

- Social behavior shaped by
 - Differential association (relative influence)
 - Differential reinforcement (punishment)
 - Cognitive definitions (self schema)



I. Social Learning Theory - Review

- Albert Bandura
- How cognitions influence behavior & development
- First to study modeling (vicarious learning) as a form of social learning
- Introduced the idea that there can be a significant time lapse between cause and effect
- SLT Social Cognitive Theory - Bandura (1986)



II. Social Learning & Aggression

- SLT has been applied to the study of deviant, criminal, & aggressive behaviors
- Aggression (and sexual aggression) is learned through the frequency, relative importance, duration, & intensity of:
 - Social interactions (learning by association)
 - Observations (behaviors & consequences)
 - Vicarious learning (ex. media influence)
 - Modeling (imitation)
 - Reinforcement (negative & positive)



II. Social Learning & Sexual Aggression

- SLT does not view sexual aggression as inevitable, instead aggression is:
 - Learned
 - Shaped by consequences
 - Continues if reinforced



II. Social Learning & Sexual Aggression

- According to SLT male violence against women endures because:
 - It is modeled at the individual & societal levels
 - It often achieves its purpose by cutting off arguments
 - It is deemed to have positive results (for perpetrator)
 - Relieves tension
 - Leaves the perpetrator feeling better
- It is rarely associated with serious punishment to the perpetrator



II. Social Learning & Sexual Aggression

- One way social learning occurs is through social information processing
- Decode – Decide/Respond – Judge effect
- Violent men may be deficient in in skill needed to decode messages from women



III. Social Learning Theory & Rape Prevention Education

- Lanier et al., (1998). Evaluation of an intervention to change attitudes toward date rape.
 - Used modeling with theatrical production to enhance rape prevention awareness with high and low rape tolerant students
 - 436 college students responded to a College Date Rape Attitude Survey before & after watching “*Scruples*”



IV. Social Learning Theory & Rape Prevention Education

Scripts scenes:

- Addressed role of alcohol in date rape situations
- Importance of communication in relationships
- Addressed rape myths
- Portrayed men’s “limitation-testing” behaviors
- Presented interaction between survivor of sexual assault & social need for supporting her legal decisions
- Depicted men as positive role models for each other



IV. Social Learning Theory & Rape Prevention Education

Results:

- students with highest rape-tolerant attitude lowered their tolerance after viewing the play but were still higher on average than other students
- Limitation
- Posttest was administered immediately after the play



V. Conclusions

- SLT has implications for interventions at individual and societal levels
- SLT may be particularly effective with interventions aimed at youth.
- SLT /Peer Influence models
- Need to develop creative approaches beyond classroom interventions



Conclusions

- Rape continues because there are no real consequences to perpetrators/must work to change societal response to rape
- Important to develop realistic expectations about any intervention and to address both short and long term outcomes.