
DISCUSSION TOPICS

**BANDURA'S SOCIAL
COGNITIVE THEORY:
AN INTRODUCTION**

With

ALBERT BANDURA, Ph.D.

(38 minutes)



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We hope that you will send us topics for discussion that we may share with other instructors. Some of the topics can be used as essay questions, others as leads to discussion in class and still others are musings by the producer about what did not get into the videos. PLEASE email us reactions and suggestions so we can make them more useful. Our email is dfi@davidsonfilms.com.

1. This video includes footage from many parts of the world and historical times reflecting the far-reaching aspects of Bandura's theories and books. The best on-line source of information about Albert Bandura's work and other scholars who are using his theories is Dr. Frank Pajare's at Emory University. It is at www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/effpage.html
2. Dr. Bandura was cited as the fourth most eminent psychologist of the 20th century from a study that combined journal citations, textbook citations and a survey of 1725 members of the American Psychological Society. B.F. Skinner was at the top of the list, followed by Jean Piaget, Sigmund Freud, and Albert Bandura. Numbers five to ten were Festinger, Rogers, Schachter, Miller, Thorndike, and Maslow. Sadly, there was not a woman until number 58, Elizabeth Loftus.
3. **The Triadic Model.** Our graphic was inspired by a conversation with Frank Pajares and a Power Point presentation he created. All six possible directions for interactions are illustrated in this video:
P to B is illustrated with cuts of various people ending with basketball players
B to E and E to B are illustrated with a office vignette with a mentor and younger worker
E to P shows people being instructed and experiencing modeled behavior
B to P Shows a jogger checking his own performance
P to E is illustrated with a jaywalking sequence
You might want your students to make up their own examples to better understand the model. As filmmakers, we did have some difficulty with the wide definition of "personal" which includes the usual demographic aspects such as age, race, and gender with the more fluid ones such as beliefs, values, and knowledge. Is this a problem for you and your students? "Environmental factors" too are very broad to include social modeling and persuasion as well as the more typical ones of culture and location.
4. **Fortuity.** Everyone loves their own personal history and your students will enjoy thinking about the role of fortuity, which they will probably call "chance" or "fate," in

their own lives. Dr. Bandura recounted a story that we were unable to include in the video about a man who came to his lecture on fortuity at a conference a while back. The man hurriedly grabbed a seat in the crowded room and chatted with the stranger next to him. They ended up getting married, having met at a lecture about fortuity. We are sure you have favorite stories on the subject as well.

5. **Modeling and observational learning.** The Bobo doll experiment was published in the early 1960's and is probably is the most cited Bandura study in basic textbooks. In a survey of 1500 members of the Society for Research in Child Development, the Bobo doll study was ranked as the 9th "most revolutionary" study published since 1950. The top four honors went to Piaget, Vygotsky, Bowlby and Ainsworth in that order.

As Dr. Bandura points out, he and his colleagues used a doll to study aggression, not actual interpersonal aggression, just as the military uses desert firing ranges to study bombers' skills, not expecting them to practice on San Francisco.

A compelling result of the studies with the Bobo doll was the lack of difference in results between three experimental conditions. In one, the children directly observed an adult model, in another, the children watched a film of the adult model, and in the third they watched an animated cartoon. There were "equivalent increases in overall aggressive behavior, on a variety of measures of both imitative and non-imitative aggression". (Albert Bandura "The Role of Modeling Processes in Personality Development" in Hartup and Smothergill, eds, *The Young Child*, 1968) Dr. Bandura continues to speak out about the potential harm of violent media.

However, the media can be used in positive ways as well. Dr. Bandura is very much involved with the Mexican television producer, Miguel Sabido and the Hollywood celebrity, Sonny Fox, in support of long running dramas with that carry positive social messages. The organization involved is called Population Communications International and their website is www.population.org. Mr. Fox is a principal organizer of the Soap Summit, an annual USA event in which writers meet with professionals to discuss how to treat subjects like teen suicide in American soap operas. The Population Communications International people consider Bandura as the source for the theory behind their work and he serves on their advisory board.

The snake phobia footage is very much condensed from the completely filmed sessions Dr. Bandura provided us. He also has footage showing similar treatments for spider phobias. He labeled these sessions "Guided Mastery Treatments." These studies took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Your students can find many examples of learning through observation in their own lives. It would be interesting to discuss a particular episode of observational learning and see if they can identify the four processes Dr. Bandura cites. It is also interesting to think about observed events in which we do not take in the information sufficiently to use it. I am thinking of my repeated failure to master some computer maintenance activities like defragging despite watching several demonstrations. I suspect I have not sufficiently gone through the second process of "symbolic representation" despite my real "motivational incentives" to use the knowledge. Have your students analyze some of their learning failures; they will probably be more useful to analyze than their successes.

6. **Efficacy.** Dr. Bandura's 1997 book, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, has almost fifty pages of references reflecting the wide application of this construct. There are chapters on cognitive, health, clinical, athletic and organizational functioning and the visuals in this video hopefully indicate the breadth of this concept.

Dr. Pajare's website again is the best on-line source of materials and contacts for this subject. He includes information on obtaining *Bandura's Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales*. It is important to emphasize that efficacy is not a consistent trait within an individual. Individuals can be efficacious in one aspect of their lives, say writing skills, but inefficacious in another, say small motor coordination. Even within a particular domain, efficacy is not a fixed trait; with mastery experiences, social persuasion, social modeling, and practice monitoring their own reactions, people can raise their level of efficacy towards activities that are important to them. This has enormous implications for education obviously, where, according to studies that Bandura cites, a student's level of academic efficacy very much influences the effort he or she puts forward.

"Academic performances are the products of cognitive capabilities implemented through motivational and other self-regulatory skills. The efficacy beliefs that children form affect how consistently and effectively they apply what they know. Perceived self-efficacy, therefore, is a better predictor of intellectual performance than skills alone." Bandura, *SELF-EFFICACY: THE EXERCISE OF CONTROL* p. 216.

7. **Moral disengagement.** This section rests firmly on Bandura's belief that aggressive behavior is largely learned from compelling models and is not a biological imperative. This premise will probably give rise to some healthy debate by your students. As well as his notion that moral behavior is regulated by social sanctions and internalized self-sanctions. A good overview of Bandura's position on morality is his chapter in Kurtines, William and Gewirtz, Jacob, eds., *HANDBOOK OF MORAL BEHAVIOR AND DEVELOPMENT*, Volume I, 1991.

Current national and international news items can certainly be discussed in light of Bandura's theories of how moral disengagement occurs. A fuller treatment is his chapter "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement" in Reich, William, ed, *Origins of Terrorism* published in 1990.

8. And who is Gilbert Hay our Inuit artist? We at Davidson Films spent much time looking for footage of an Inuit artist with which to open the video. Finally a rather random email put us in contact with a producer from the Canadian Broadcasting Company who had recently done a story on the artists of Nain, far north in Labrador. He generously made the footage available to us and we feel that Mr Hay's statement in the end credit wonderfully epitomizes much of what Dr. Bandura has discussed about self-regulation. Gilbert Hay's sculptures are very much valued by prestigious galleries. You can find other examples of his work by searching the Internet under his name.

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