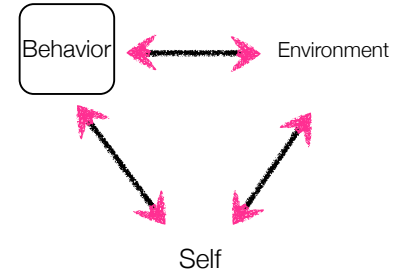


Social Cognitive Theory



Social Cognitive Theory: 3 Major Innovations

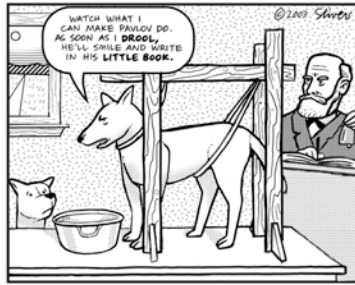
- Triadic
 - Behavior
 - Personal Factors
 - Environment
- Dynamic
 - Constantly changing
- Reciprocal
 - Influences are bidirectional



Theoretical Origins of SCT

Operant Learning Theory (Behaviorism)

- Learning occurs through directly applied reinforcements
- Reinforcements work through an unknown mechanism



Operant Learning Theory

- Positive Reinforcement: increases the likelihood that a behavior will be repeated
 - Through the application of a positive stimulus
 - Eating ice cream leads to blissful relaxation
- Negative Reinforcement: Increases the likelihood that a behavior will be repeated
 - Through the withdrawal of a negative stimulus
 - Withdrawal leads to smoking

How SCT advanced the principles of operant learning theory

- Reinforcements do NOT have to be applied directly
- Vicarious Reinforcement: reinforcement received indirectly by observing another person's behavior being reinforced
- Self-Reinforcement: reinforcing one's own behaviors through cognitive processing and internal motivation



Reciprocal Determinism: a fundamental principle

- Self, Behavior, and Environment are constantly changing each other
- This differentiates SCT from earlier models that were linear and unidirectional - leading to the behavior change and stopping there
- Behavior affects the person and the environment - and the cycle continues
- Interventions can be directed to any one of the three components and one should be able to expect change in the others

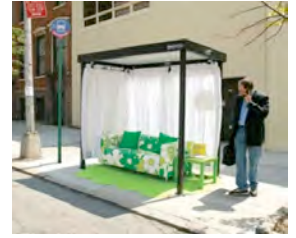
Personal Factors that affect Behavior and Environment

- Ability to symbolize behavior
- Ability to anticipate outcomes of behavior
- Ability to learn by observing others
- Confidence in performance of behavior
- Ability to self-determine behavior
- Ability to reflect on (analyze) experience



Environmental Factors that affect the person and his/her behavior

- People: peer pressure, social influence, etc.
- Places: built and natural environments
 - Accessibility, safety, resources, stressors, etc.
- Objects
 - Cars, food, computers, cigarettes, etc.



SCT Construct: Observational Learning

- Watching the actions of another person and the reinforcements the person receives
 - Can be conscious or unconscious
- More efficient than operant learning
 - Operant learning occurs by trial & error



SCT Construct: Behavioral Capability

- The person must know, as specifically as possible, what the target behavior is
- They also have to know how to perform it
- Example: most parents claim to use car seats but a recent police survey found that 78% of them had installed them incorrectly

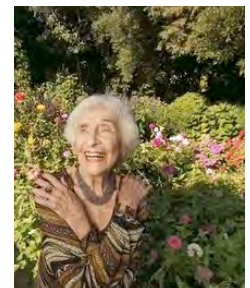


SCT Construct: Reinforcement

- Internal Reinforcement
 - The amount of value you place on an event or reinforcement that you received
 - More powerful than external reinforcement in some studies of smoking cessation
- External Reinforcement
 - Something happens that you can predict as a result of your behavior

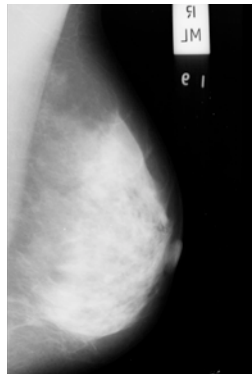
SCT Construct: Expectancies

- Expectations about a situation and outcomes of the behavior before is performed AND the value placed on them
- Based on the Hedonic Principle
 - All other things being equal, a person will choose to do something that maximizes positive and minimizes negative outcomes - as they perceive them



SCT Construct: Expectancies

- Example: mammogram
- Negative expectancies: getting a cancer diagnosis, which is scary, and to be avoided
- Positive expectancies: knowing that early detection of cancer can be life-saving



Where do expectancies come from?

- Previous experience
 - Performance attainment
- Observing others
 - Vicarious experience
- Hearing about others' experiences
 - Social persuasion
- Emotional or physical responses to behaviors



Bandura's famous Bobo experiment



SCT Constructs: Locus of control

- Works on a continuum from internal to external
- Internally controlled people believe most of what happens to them is a result of their own decisions and behaviors
- Externally controlled people believe that forces outside their control, such as fate, God, will, or important or powerful others, control all aspects of their lives



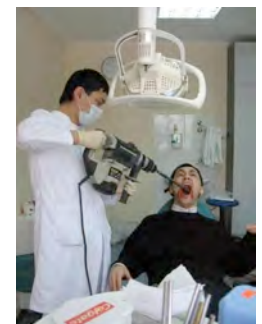
"Lightning bolt."

Locus of control and health behaviors

- Externally controlled people frequently won't engage in protective behaviors unless instructed to by their physician or other authority figure
- Internally controlled people tend to adopt protective behaviors without being instructed to do so
- Steptoe & Wardle (2001) correlated internal LOC with higher rates of exercising and healthy diet consumption in young adults
- LOC tends to be situational (i.e. very internalized with respect to some health behaviors but not others)

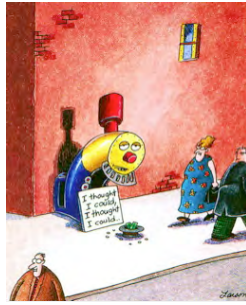
SCT Construct: Emotional arousal

- The emotional reaction to a situation and the resulting behavior
- Fear tends to evoke defensive behavior
 - This can encourage safer behavior - after a night of unprotected sex, the fear of HIV may result in the use of condoms in future encounters
 - This can also discourage protective behaviors - dental phobia can keep a person from regular tooth cleanings for years



SCT Construct: Self efficacy

- The most important prerequisite for behavior change!
- Predicts
 - Effort invested (Persistence)
 - Level of performance (Endurance)
 - Intention to engage (Initiation)

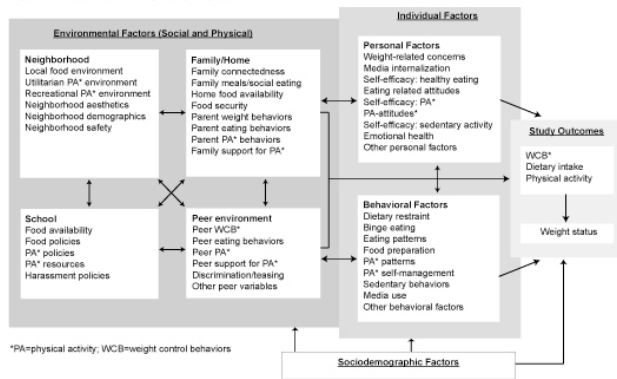


SCT Weaknesses and Strengths

- Too comprehensive: a dazzling array of constructs that don't fit together in any consistent way
 - Many of the constructs are hard to measure, or at least haven't been measured effectively
- A good tool for creating a conceptual map of an issue
 - Looking for leverage points
 - Understanding the multiple levels of influence on a particular behavior
 - Foreseeing stumbling blocks in an intervention plan

Project EAT at the University of Minnesota

Figure 2: Theoretical model guiding Project EAT-III



The Fun Theory: BRILLIANT! (Link to Website)

