

One or more social learning approach to the development of personality.

There are 2 explanations for social learning approach to the development of personality by Bandura and Mischel.

Bandura's personality theory is based on the principles of social learning theory. He suggests that all aspects of personality are learned. A child may learn behaviour through direct and indirect reinforcement and through punishment. Direct reinforcement is when the child does something good then they will be rewarded by their mother by giving money or sweets, as a result they are likely to repeat that behaviour again in the future. Indirect reinforcement is when a child sees someone else being rewarded; they are likely to imitate that behaviour. Punishment reduces the probability that behaviour will be repeated.

This means that personality characteristics in child's may be strengthened or weakened depending on whether the child is directly or indirectly rewarded or punished. Bandura's Bobo doll studies are evidence, which suggests behaviours through observation and reinforcement. He found that child repeated the model's behaviour when they were rewarded. This suggests that what is learned is the expectation of reward or punishment. The concepts of Bandura's are reciprocal determinism and self-efficacy. Reciprocal determinism gives the idea that both learning and social theory shows the individual as being controlled by their environment. He believes that as the individual acts, this changes environment, thus affecting subsequent behaviour. Individuals are reinforced by themselves and they are capable of making their own choices and this affects what they imitate. And self-efficacy gives the idea that person's sense of their own effectiveness influences what they ultimately achieve.

Mischel theory is quite different from Bandura as he suggests that personality is not consistent at all. He believed that people are only consistent in the same situations, and their behaviour varies from one situation to another. Behavioural differences are due more to situational rather than individual dispositional differences. The notion of consistency gives the perception about others and ourselves, and predictions about subsequent behaviour. However, Mischel suggests that this is a 'personality paradox', because we think that others and we have consistent personalities but this is not true. Mischel used the term behaviour specificity to describe how the choice of how to behave is determined by the specific situation in which people find themselves. Some behaviour is rewarded in one situation and not the other, so the probabilities are altered from situation to situation. Mischel's theory is an example of the social learning approach because it suggests that we learn through selective reinforcements. We learn that certain behaviours are most successful in certain situations. This leads us to behave in the same way in those situations, but not in the same way in other situations.

Mischel's further concept on personal variables that determines how person will respond to a situation and explain individual differences and they are learned. Personal variables such as competencies (skills), Encoding strategies and personal constructs (what we pay attention to), expectancies, subjective values (personal value), self-regulatory systems and plans (using past idea to determine future goals).

There is study done by Fleeson who rated students on 5 personality factors 'OCEAN'. Fleeson found very high correlations for the aggregation scores over 0.87 and lower rates for moment-to-moment scores. This suggests high cross-situational consistency. This is consistent with the definition of traits as tendencies that influence behaviour in many situations but not all the time. Findings like these challenges Mischel's claim 'personality does not exist'.

Both Bandura's and Mischel's theories has strengths and limitations which should be considered.

Firstly, theory is focused on behaviour, which can be directly observed and measured. As a result, it can be tested in laboratory situations. Supporters see this as one of its strengths. However, laboratory settings are a long way from everyday situations. There is a problem on generalising these findings to the wider society. Bandura's Bobo doll experiments have been criticised as artificial, which means it cannot be generalise with the real life. Bandura responded to such criticisms by showing children a film of a live clown being beaten by a model; when given the opportunity, these children did then imitate the behaviour with a real clown. Even so, such behaviour may be the effect of demand characteristics in experimental situations. In real life, our behaviour is affected by a variety of factors. Such studies also focus on short-term effects and may not demonstrate how longer-term behaviours are learned. Secondly, his theory can be applied in our real life. Because it is a powerful explanation of behaviour and has generated useful applications. For e.g. the concept of self-efficacy is widely used in health psychology to provide a means to improve the likelihood that people will follow doctor's orders.

Thirdly, his theory provides an explanation for how new behaviours is learned by an observation. However, it has little to say about personality as such, or about the development of personality. This is an important thing to criticize.

There is other study, which is biological perspective, which is omitted from the social learning account. Thomas and chess demonstrated that babies are born with certain characteristic patterns of emotional response or temperament, which develop in childhood, and these traits tend to endure throughout life. Temperate interacts with life experience to produce adult personality.

Mischel theory suggests that we are controlled by situations, though subsequent formulations indicate that there are other factors, which affect our future behaviour such as personal variable. He has not much thing to say about personality. Situationism relies on correlations of consistency of behaviour, which Mischel finds to be low (around 0.3). This is very low but subsequent research, such as Epstein's and Fleeson's described above, suggests that people are actually more consistent in their behaviour than Mischel had original proposed. This suggests that personality traits do influence behaviour.

Mischel and shoda suggest that it is possible to combine situationalism with consistency. People are consistent in their situational differences, e.g. if we shy in a large group of strangers but not with our freinds

