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A Social Learning Approach to Organizational Behavior

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After first reviewing the existing theoretical frameworks for human behavior, we present a social learning theory approach that incorporates the interactive nature of all the variables of organizational behavior — the behavior itself, the environment, and the person (internal cognitions). We differentiate social learning theory from operant theory, highlighting the processes of modeling, cognitions, and self-control. We suggest self-management techniques as a way to apply the social learning framework in order to enhance managerial effectiveness.

Just as the management field in general has been depicted as a theory jungle [Koontz, 1961, 1980; Luthans, 1973], the emerging field of organizational behavior has seemed to reach the same point. There is today a jungle of theories that attempt to explain human behavior in organizations. Unfortunately, many of the theoretical explanations have seemed to stray from behavior as the unit of analysis in organizational *behavior*. There is a widespread tendency for both scholars and practitioners to treat such hypothetical constructs as motivation, satisfaction, and leadership as ends in themselves. We think it is time to re-emphasize the point that *behaviors* are the empirical reality, not the labels attached to the attempted explanations of the behaviors.

If behavior is given its rightful place as the focus of attention in the theoretical development of organizational behavior, three major approaches can be readily identified. Briefly summarized, they are:

1. $B = f(P)$. According to this theoretical position, behavior is explained as a function of the person. In particular, internal psychological constructs such as motivation, perception, attitudes, expectancies, and personality characteristics are used to explain why people behave the way they do. Most of the motivational theories [e.g., Maslow, 1954; Vroom, 1964; Adams, 1965;

Locke, 1968] that are popular in the field of organizational behavior today are closely associated with this theoretical base.

2. $B = f(E)$. According to this theoretical position, behavior is explained as a function of the environment. Most closely associated with Skinner's [1953] operant conditioning, this position is externally oriented and, in particular, is concerned with the role that reinforcing contingencies play in maintaining and changing behavior. The recent attention given to an operant [Nord, 1969] and a general learning approach [Luthans & Ottemann, 1973] to organizational behavior and, more specifically, to organizational behavior modification [Luthans & Kreitner, 1975] and behavioral management [Miller, 1978] is representative of this theoretical position.

3. $B = f(P, E)$. The third major theoretical base that has been widely adopted by the organizational behavior field is a compromise position that says organizational behavior is a function of the person *and* the environment. Usually attributed to the work of Kurt Lewin, this theoretical framework recognizes that both the person (internal constructs) and the environment (external contingencies) must be taken into account in order to explain behavior. The traditional definition of organizational behavior (i.e., the study of human behavior in organizations) recognizes this theoretical position. The vast majority of organizational behavior scholars today stress the importance of both the person and the environ-

ment. For example, the widely recognized Porter and Lawler [1968] model contains both internal cognitive variables and external environmental variables.

Our purpose in this paper is to point out still another, often overlooked, theoretical base for organizational behavior. This fourth alternative base for organizational behavior is best embodied in the term *social learning theory*. Although traditionally there have been implicit assumptions of the interactive nature between the participant and the organizational environment, the behavior itself, as an interacting variable, has been ignored. In addition, there have been some recent applications of modeling to employee training [Burnaska, 1976; Kraut, 1976; Latham & Saari, 1979], but a social learning approach — which is becoming an increasingly important theoretical base for psychology — has been largely ignored by organizational behavior researchers. In fact, to our knowledge there has been no direct attempt to include social learning in the conceptual framework of organizational behavior.

Fortunately, a social learning theory base for organizational behavior is complementary rather than competitive with previous approaches. We contend that the existing theoretical bases [i.e., $B = f(P)$, $B = f(E)$, and $B = f(P,E)$] are not wrong, but instead are too limiting and, at best, provide only a partial explanation of the complexities of organizational behavior. What seems to be needed is a comprehensive theory that is able to incorporate the *interactive* nature of *all* the variables of organizational behavior — the behavior itself, the environment (especially other organizational participants and the organization), and the organizational participant (including internal cognitions). Social learning theory seems to best fill in some of the existing deficiencies.

What is Meant by Social Learning Theory?

From the outset it should be recognized that social learning theory is a behavioral theory. It utilizes the principles of classical and operant conditioning. But it deviates from a strict, Skinnerian approach to behavior. Over the years, the failure to account for the development of complex social behavior through S-R bonds or selective reinforcement of each discrete response (R-S) has gradually

led to a less restricted theory that recognizes the role of social learning and imitation. Recent expositions of this social learning approach have been provided by Mischel [1973, 1976], Mahoney [1974], Meichenbaum [1974, 1977], Staats [1975], and Bandura [1968, 1976, 1977b]. The various interpretations of social learning theory are complex and difficult to integrate. However, the work of Albert Bandura provides a complete, yet parsimonious, interpretation of social learning.

Bandura [1977b] takes the position that the best explanation of behavior is in terms of a continuous, reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants. In a unidirectional conception of interaction [e.g., the Lewin formula that $B = f(P,E)$], the person and the environment are considered to be independent entities that somehow combine to determine behavior. Social learning posits that the person and the environment do not function as independent units but instead determine each other in a reciprocal manner. In other words, under social learning theory the conception that $B = f(P,E)$ is rejected as being too limiting and not accounting for the interactive effect between the person, the environment, and the behavior itself.

The same is true of more one-sided cognitive views of behavior [i.e., $B = f(P)$] which suggest that internal cognitions be considered as causal determinants irrespective of their behaviors and the environment. The social learning theory approach would explain that it is largely through their actions that people produce the environmental conditions that affect their behavior in a reciprocal fashion. The experiences generated by behavior also partly determine what a person becomes and can do which, in turn, affects subsequent behavior [Bandura, 1977b, p. 9].

Even those organizational behavior theorists who argue that they are taking a bi-directional or reciprocal approach (either in an exchange sense between superior and subordinate or between organizational participant and situation) still retain a unidirectional view toward the behavior itself. The causal input into the organizational participant's behavior is the result of the interdependent exchange between the person and the environment (including other persons), but the behavior itself is ignored as an interacting determinant. In other words, under social learning theory the conception

that $B \neq f(PE)$ is also rejected.

In summary, a social learning theory of organizational behavior can best be depicted by the model in Figure 1 [adapted from Bandura, 1977b]:

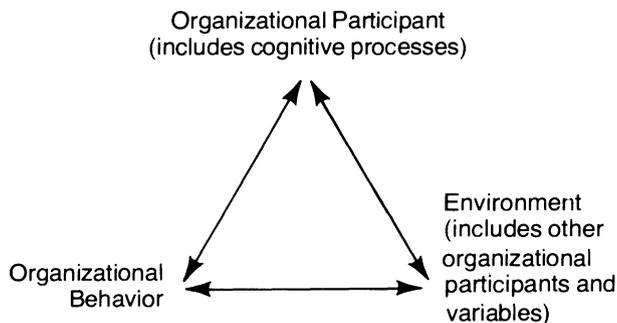


Figure 1
Model of Social Learning Theory
Of Organizational Behavior

It can be seen that in a social learning theory approach, organizational behavior is in reciprocal interaction with cognitive processes and the environment. Organizational behavior is viewed as affecting and being affected by the participant's cognitions, the environment, and the person-situation interactions.

How Does Social Learning Theory Differ from Operant Theory?

So far the discussion has emphasized that a social learning approach considers the person-behavior-environment interaction as a theoretical base for organizational behavior. There may be lingering doubts or confusion as to how this really differs from an operant learning approach. Like operant learning, social learning is viewed as deriving from the consequences of behavior. In other words, the person learns from the effects that a particular behavior has on the environment. How, then, does social learning differ from operant learning? According to Bandura [1969, 1977b], the major differences between the two revolve around three major factors: (1) the role of vicarious processes (i.e., modeling), (2) the effects of covert cognitive processes, and (3) the part played by self-control processes. A brief review of each of these will give us a better understanding of social learning theory and of how these factors can be applied to the study of organizational behavior.

The Role of Vicarious Processes

Social learning theory derives its name from the emphasis it places on learning from other people — that is, *social* learning. While social learning theory agrees with the operant view that learning takes place as a result of directly experienced response consequences, it also emphasizes that learning can take place vicariously through observing the effects on the social environment of other people's behavior. The operant view is therefore considered as incomplete rather than incorrect. According to social learning theory, vicarious observational learning accounts for the acquisition of complex patterns of social behavior more readily than does the isolated reinforcement of discrete behavioral responses:

Although behavior can be shaped into new patterns to some extent by rewarding and punishing consequences, learning would be exceedingly laborious and hazardous if it proceeded solely on this basis . . . it is difficult to imagine a socialization process in which the language, mores, vocational activities, familial customs, and the educational, religious, and political practices of a culture are taught to each new member by selective reinforcement of fortuitous behaviors, without benefit of models who exemplify the cultural patterns in their own behavior. Most of the behaviors that people display are learned either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example [Bandura, 1976, p. 5].

Considerable research has demonstrated how people quickly reproduce the actions, attitudes, and emotional responses exhibited by models [Bandura & Walters, 1963; Bandura, 1969; Flanders, 1968]. Vicarious, imitative learning seems to better explain the rapid transference of behavior than does the tedious selective reinforcement of each discriminable response. The operant and social learning views do converge in treating the maintenance of behavior as being ultimately dependent on the reinforcing effects of the environment. However, social learning theory extends this view by showing that learning also takes place through observing or modeling the reinforcing or punishing outcomes of other people's behavior.

According to Bandura [1969, 1976, 1977b], modeling is regulated by interrelated subprocesses such as attention, retention, motoric reproduction, and reinforcement. These processes account for the acquisition and maintenance of observational

learning or modeling. On the other hand, the operant learning approach accounts for the *acquisition* of behavior by a process of natural selection and reinforcement. Similarly, reinforcement and the notion of the organism “operating” on the environment are used to explain the *maintenance* of behavior. Social learning theory posits a fuller explanation of the process affecting both the acquisition and maintenance of new behavior.

Vicarious learning has important implications for training [Sorcher & Goldstein, 1972] and the development of general behavior patterns at work [Limiting models, 1978]. According to the social learning theory view, organizational participants learn how to behave from observing those around them. The dictum “Do as I say, not as I do” seems unlikely to be followed. Job descriptions, rules, and policies are more likely to be interpreted from watching what others do than following written directives. The example by behavior that managers provide for their people may be more important than the instructions they provide.

The Effects of Cognitive Processes

A second major difference between social and operant learning theory concerns the mediating effects of covert cognitive processes. Virtually all aspects of social learning are considered to be affected by cognitive processes. Staats [1968], Bandura [1969], and Kanfer [1970] were among the first behaviorists to demonstrate the importance of covert cognitions (feelings, images, and symbolic processes) in the regulation of human behavior. Before their work, the majority of behavioral psychologists (starting with Watson [1913] and continuing with Skinner [1953]) had dismissed cognitive processes as being largely metaphysical and having no rightful place in the scientific study of behavior.

An ever-increasing research literature reports on the important role that cognitive processes play in human behavior [Bandura, 1968, 1969, 1977a; Jacobs & Sachs, 1971; McGuigan & Schoonhover, 1973; Meichenbaum, 1974, 1977]. Bandura holds that:

[If] human behavior could be fully explained in terms of antecedent inducements and response consequences, there would be no need to postulate any additional regulatory mechanisms. However, most external influences affect behavior

through intermediary cognitive processes. Cognitive factors partly determine which external events will be observed, how they will be perceived, whether they leave any lasting effects, what valence and efficacy they have, and how the information they convey will be organized for future use [1977b, p. 160].

An implicit assumption of the operant approach is that all behavior is controlled by the immediate environmental consequences. The ability to re-evoked situations in the imagination and represent them verbally in symbolic form liberates human action from the stimulus effects of the immediate situation. This self-reflective capability is responsible for self-regulatory activity and sustained goal-oriented behavior.

Skinnerian behaviorism has often been criticized on the grounds of strict environmental determinism. This view of one-way causality has been a major reason why cognitive theorists have rejected the operant model. The operant approach depicts the organism as “operating” on the environment but both the acquisition and maintenance of behavior are considered to be controlled by the environmental consequences. Social learning theorists [Bandura, 1977b, 1978; Mahoney, 1977; Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974], with their recognition of cognitive processes, view the person, environment, and behavior as operating in an interactive state of reciprocal determinism (as depicted in Figure 1). From an individual learning perspective, Mahoney describes this relationship as follows:

Our actions — and particularly their consequences — help to shape our cognitive representations. . . . Cognitions influence behaviors, which influence environments which influence cognitions. . . .and so on. The circularity here is not one of logical tautology, however. It is a causal circularity that is far more comprehensive and defensible than traditional unilateral views [1977, p. 8].

Mahoney points out that in the social learning view each person responds not only to the environment per se but also to a cognitive representation of the environment. This means that the same physical environment can take on vastly different meaning for those who share it.

At this point we should emphasize that there are some major differences between the social learning approach to explaining and studying cognitive processes and the more traditional [i.e., $B = f(P)$] cognitive theories. Social learning theory examines

both behavioral and cognitive processes in the environmental context in which they take place [Mash & Terdal, 1976]. In other words, in a social learning approach, reliance solely on indirect questionnaire methods of measuring behavior is inadequate. In addition, the behavior and its interactive elements should be directly observed in specific situations.

A social learning approach requires an analysis technique that allows for both overt and covert variables. Although usually accused otherwise, Skinner [1953] does give recognition to the place of cognitive processes in his discussion of covert operants, but his suggested technique for the scientific study of behavior that he called functional analysis is not designed to account for the role of cognitive processes. The recognition of covert processes is not included in the operant functional analysis of antecedent-behavior-consequence, or A-B-C [Skinner, 1969]. Social learning theorists stress that the variables in this three-term contingency — i.e., the antecedent stimulus conditions, the behavior, and the consequences — may be overt or covert. As Mahoney [1974, p. 77] points out, this gives rise to eight possible combinations. Thus, there is a possibility that the three-term contingency may be completely covert and thus unobservable and undetectable to anyone but the affected party. Meichenbaum [1974], for example, has drawn attention to situational antecedents, behaviors, and consequences created entirely in the imagination of the person. It is this capability that allows a person to think through the possibilities of alternative courses of action without having to experience them directly. However, from a philosophy of science perspective that stresses operationalism, the study of behavior must focus as closely as

possible on observable, verifiable behavioral events. Thus, the main focus of social learning theory is to investigate the mediating effects that covert cognitive processes may have on an otherwise observable sequence of events.

To account for cognitive mediating processes and covert variables in a social learning approach to organizational behavior, we employ an expanded four-term contingency framework. This framework can be used to analyze the functional relationships. We use S-O-B-C to represent the four interacting variables. It is intended to portray the interactive, reciprocal nature of environmental events [both antecedent discriminative stimuli (S) and consequences (C)], intrapersonal, cognitive processes (O), and behavioral (B) variables. Figure 2 shows the S-O-B-C model. Note that there are implicit interactions and feedback loops between the environmental (S and C), cognitive (O), and behavioral (B) variables.

One could argue what letters to use in representing the variables, but we chose these based on their use in our earlier writings [Luthans, 1977, 1979; Luthans & Davis, 1979; Davis & Luthans, 1979], in which we tried to combine the established, widely recognized cognitively based S-O-R model (stimulus-organism-response) and the operant-based A-B-C model (antecedent-behavior-consequence). In other words, the S-O-B-C framework permits functional analysis of environmental-cognitive-behavioral events (both antecedent and consequent environment). It represents a departure from the operant A-B-C functional analysis by inserting the O to recognize the role of cognitive mediating processes and also to recognize that both environmental events (both S and C) and the behavior itself

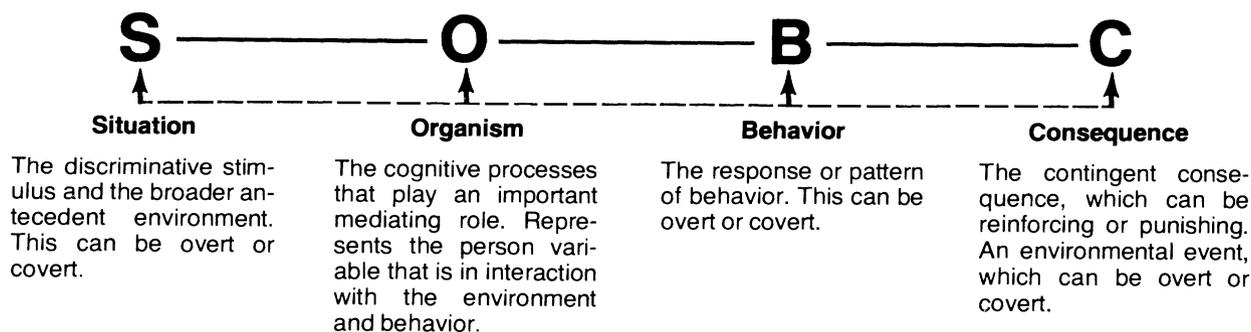


Figure 2
Functional Analysis Framework for a Social Learning Approach to Organizational Behavior

can be covert as well as overt. Just as the A-B-C model serves as a technique for functional analysis in the operant approach to organizational behavior [Luthans & Kreitner, 1975; Luthans, 1980], so does the S-O-B-C model serve as a technique for functional analysis in the social learning approach to organizational behavior. This S-O-B-C framework is especially important to the explanation and application of the third major factor in social learning theory — self-control processes.

Self-Control Processes

Although Skinner [1953] should probably be credited with laying the foundations of a behavioral approach to self-control, the operant approach, with its almost total emphasis on the controlling role of the environment, may be considered inimical to theories of “self” regulation. Thus, the emphasis given to self-control processes in social learning theory marks a significant departure from operant theory. A fuller understanding of the processes of behavioral self-control has important implications for organizational behavior and managerial effectiveness [Luthans & Davis, 1979].

The recognition given to the mediating role that cognitive processes play in the individual’s relationship with the environment establishes the important influence that self-regulatory functions can have on the control of behavior. Research by social learning theorists [Bandura, 1968, 1977a; Kanfer & Karoly, 1972; Mahoney & Thoresen, 1974] reveals that a given action typically produces two outcomes — an external environmental consequence and an internal self-evaluative consequence. In other words, people are affected not only by the external consequences of their behavior but also by the consequences they create for themselves. Bandura explains this interpretation as follows:

The notion that behavior is controlled by its consequence is unfortunately interpreted by most people to mean that actions are at the mercy of situational influences. In fact, behavior can, and is, extensively self-regulated by self-produced consequences for one’s own actions. In writing a term paper or preparing a manuscript for publication, for example, authors do not require someone sitting at their sides differentially reinforcing each written statement until a satisfactory version is produced. Rather, authors possess a standard of what constitutes an acceptable work and they engage in repeated self-editing of their own writing performance until they are satisfied with what they have

written. . . . Because of their great representational and self-reactive capacities, humans are less dependent upon immediate external supports for their behavior. The inclusion of self-reinforcement phenomena in learning theory thus greatly increases the explanatory power of reinforcement principles as applied to human functioning [1976, p. 28].

Self-evaluative reactions to self-created consequences may be considered the underlying self-controlling processes. This suggests that people learn to modify their behavior when their own self-created consequences or standards are not fulfilled. The self-reinforcement consequence is particularly important to virtually all sustained goal-oriented behavior and explains how behavior persists despite the lack of immediately compelling external support.

Kanfer and Karoly [1974, p. 209] note that self-controlling responses come into being when a choice point is reached, or an external event interrupts and refocuses attention, or if the activation level suddenly changes. In effect, behavioral control switches from automated, environmental control (habitual responding) to a state of cognitive awareness in which a self-evaluative judgment is made about the appropriateness of behavior. This does not mean that a clearcut distinction can be made between environmental control and self-control. Kanfer and Karoly view self-control as the introduction by the individual of *supplementary* cognitive contingencies that are overlaid on the existing environmental contingencies and allow the person to analyze and alter the external regulatory relationship. Cognitive awareness alone, however, is not enough to allow self-controlling behavior to take place. In Kanfer and Karoly’s words, “The degree to which internal stimulation and self-generated reinforcing events take on importance depends on the magnitude and specificity of these variables, and on the richness and complexity of the person’s available covert behaviors as they moderate and interact with the effects and directions of external controlling events” [p. 208]. Thus, in this view, the cognitively based contingencies regulating behavior must be accurately identified if they are to play an instrumental role in the systematic control of behavior.

Social Learning Theory in Perspective

So far we have seen that social learning extends operant theory by recognizing the role of vicarious,

cognitive, and self-control processes. Obviously, there is more to social learning theory than these three dimensions. In a social learning approach to organizational behavior, there is a shift away from metaphoric constructs such as motivation and leadership. The unit of analysis becomes behavior patterns studied in relation to antecedent and consequent environmental situations and cognitively mediated processes. As Mischel [1973, p. 265] points out, in the social learning approach the focus shifts (1) from attempting to compare and generalize about what different individuals “are like” to an assessment of what they *do* behaviorally and cognitively — in relation to the psychological conditions in which they do it; and (2) from describing situation-free people with broad trait adjectives to analyzing the specific interactions between conditions and the cognitions and behaviors of interest.

Mischel’s last point is at the very heart of a social learning approach to organizational behavior. We must begin to study an organizational participant’s behavior in *specific interaction* with particular *in situ* organizational conditions. In other words, as posited in a social learning approach, we must begin to study and analyze the dynamics of organization member-behavior-environment interaction. For too long we have tended to concentrate only on the organization member (e.g., what motivates him or her) or only on the organization environment (e.g., what is the appropriate structure) or, in a few cases, the organization member/environment interaction (e.g., contingency models of leadership or task design). What the social learning approach calls for is an ecological analysis of the interaction between the organization member, behavior, and environment (i.e., the study of real people in real situations; see Gibbs [1979]).

A Social Learning Application: Behavioral Self-Management

One way of demonstrating how social learning theory can be specifically applied to organizational behavior analysis, especially an ecologically oriented analysis, is through a behavioral self-management strategy in real-world organizations. Because the field of organizational behavior is eventually grounded in the actual practice of management, such a demonstration seems appropriate. As mentioned before, a modeling approach to employee

training (which, of course, is grounded in social learning theory) is already well established. Just beginning, but what we feel has considerable potential for managerial effectiveness, is behavioral self-management.

To implement a self-management approach, awareness of the contingencies regulating behavior is acquired mainly through self-observation and self-monitoring. This requires that the person not only attend to a particular target behavior but also carefully record its occurrence. Generally, 4” × 5” cards, wrist counters, behavioral diaries, and wall charts are used for this purpose. Self-monitoring provides information on the frequency of the behavior and helps define the contingencies [antecedent cues (A), cognitions (O), response consequences (C)] when they take place. Self-monitoring also provides an objective basis for evaluating behavior and designing an intervention strategy. Generally, the goal is to establish a new behavior, increase or maintain an existing behavior, or reduce or eliminate a behavior [Mahoney & Thoresen, 1974; Watson & Tharp, 1977].

Following the lead of Mahoney and Thoreson, we can identify two major strategies for behavioral self-management: (1) stimulus management and (2) consequence management. *Stimulus management* refers to methods of overt or covert stimulus control such as antecedent stimulus modification, self-regulated stimulus exposure, preprogramming of response consequences, or the use of self-instructions. The individual plans and implements changes in these relevant situational factors before emitting the target behavior. For instance, a manager who is trying to cut down on her paperwork may have her secretary keep all incoming mail (antecedent stimulus modification); permit handling correspondence only during certain times of the day (self-regulated stimulus exposure); ask others to stop sending her correspondence (preprogramming of response consequences); and continually re-evoke certain self-instructions — “I must cut down on my paperwork; I want a clean desk when I go home every evening!” A number of studies in clinical and educational psychology [Upper & Meredith, 1971; Bernard & Efram, 1972; Stunkard, 1972; Beneke & Harris, 1972] have shown how managing the stimulus conditions can aid in successful self-modification programs. In some of our preliminary research with managers in real organi-

zations, we have been able to demonstrate that stimulus management can lead to increased effectiveness [Luthans & Davis, 1979].

The *consequence management* method of self-management administers the consequences that follow a given behavior. This includes the act of self-monitoring as well as the use of self-administered rewards and punishments. After engaging in a behavior, certain cognitive self-evaluations occur. The act of self-monitoring provides the individual with performance feedback that may serve to increase or decrease future behavioral responses, depending on whether the individual's own self-created consequences or standards are fulfilled. Alternatively, the individual may introduce an added consequence — a reward or punishment — contingent on satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance of a target response. For instance, the manager may give himself an extra coffee break for having a clean desk the preceding day or stay after work for a half hour for each day that the paperwork is not taken care of. A number of studies in educational and clinical psychology have clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of self-recording, self-reward, and self-punishment [Bucher & Fabricatore, 1970; Broden, Hall, & Mitts, 1971; Johnson & White, 1971; Bolstad & Johnson, 1972; Flannery, 1972; Sobell & Sobell, 1973; Axelrod, Hall, Weiss, & Rohrer, 1974] and our own work has shown that it works in a managerial setting [Luthans & Davis, 1979].

The stimulus and consequence management strategies of self-management involve manipulating the stimulus conditions or response consequences that regulate behavior. These methods may be used separately or in combination to bring about a desired behavior change. To date, research on this approach to behavioral change has dealt with a relatively narrow range of behavior problems (e.g., obesity, smoking, alcoholism, psychiatric disorders, study habits, or marital difficulties). The number of studies using a variety of measures (not just self-reports), employing adequate controls, and focusing on issues of accuracy and reliability, is very small. Most of the studies have been carried out in limited (clinical, laboratory, and classroom) settings. Thus, to date, the majority of the support for self-control techniques stems from clinical evidence from behavior therapy. Our own preliminary research on self-management in organizational settings indicates the potential value that this

approach may have for managerial effectiveness. However, before any generalizations can be made, more research needs to be done.

Summary and Conclusions

Social learning is proposed as a theoretical base for organizational behavior. If researchers in this field concentrate on the behavior part of organizational behavior, then the prevailing theoretical explanations (i.e., that behavior is a function of the person, behavior is a function of the environment, or behavior is a function of the environment and the person) will be seen to be too limiting. Social learning theory suggests that organizational behavior can be best understood in terms of an interacting, reciprocal determinism between the behavior itself, the organizational participant, and the environment. Even though many organizational behavior theorists would claim that they have always given attention to the person-organizational environment interface, its interactive, reciprocal deterministic nature has not been stressed, and the role that the behavior itself plays has been almost completely ignored. We believe it is time to recognize that all three interacting components play a vital role in organizational behavior. Perhaps even more important is the *interactive* tenant of a social learning approach. It must be recognized that organizational behavior does not occur in isolation or in the response sets of researchers' questionnaires. Instead, organizational behavior occurs in interactive, unique, real-world situations. There is a definite need to study organizational behavior *in situ* or from an ecological perspective and get away from reliance on indirect questionnaire measures of behavior, which are too limiting and fail to analyze the organization member-behavior-situation interaction.

One way to a better understanding of social learning theory is to differentiate it from the more established operant theory. In particular, the key social learning processes of modeling, cognition, and self-control emerge as important factors that can contribute to a better understanding of organizational behavior. Both the operant and social learning theories treat behavior as a function of its response consequences. The major difference between the two concerns the role of cognitive processes. Research by social learning theorists has clearly shown that both vicarious learning and self-

control processes are influenced by cognitive processes. The operant approach provides a more parsimonious interpretation of organizational behavior and certainly has pragmatic advantages for diagnosing, predicting, and controlling employee behaviors in the workplace [Luthans, 1980], but the notion of the organism "operating" on the environment provides too limited an *explanation* of how behavior is actively acquired and maintained. The lack of attention given to covert cognitive processes by the operant approach implicitly suggests that individual reasoning and other cognitions play no important role in organizational behavior. The social learning theory concepts of modeling, cognitive processes, and self-control provide a more comprehensive view of organizational behavior.

They help explain that an organizational participant's behavior may be grounded in the environment but is also partly socially derived and partly a product of conscious self-regulation and choice.

The ultimate usefulness of social learning theory depends on whether it can be effectively applied. The modeling process has already proved its worth as a training application, and we suggest that the self-control process has potentially significant implications for overall managerial effectiveness. In the final analysis, however, ecologically based research that carefully examines the interaction of the person-behavior-environment dynamic is needed to establish social learning as a viable theoretical base for studying organizational behavior.

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