

or *ego-involvement*, one has in the issue at hand. People may or may not have opinions regarding the communicated information, and this will affect whether or not the persuasive message is accepted or rejected. These same opinions (or their lack) also affect the size of latitudes. The higher the level of ego-involvement, the larger the latitude of rejection becomes. For instance, an individual who is solicited for a donation to a cancer society will have a smaller latitude of acceptance if his or her mother suffers from cancer, as compared to someone who has no personal connection to the malady. For that individual, contributing to the charity is imperative, and any other response is unacceptable. Therefore, the latitude of acceptance and noncommitment will be small compared to the latitude of rejection.

Principle four states that people distort incoming information to fit their categories of judgment. When presented with a persuasive message that falls within the latitude of acceptance, and is close to the individual's anchor, people will *assimilate* the new position. That is, they will perceive the new position to be closer to their attitude than it actually is. When the persuasive message is relatively far from the anchor, however, people tend to *contrast* the new position to their own, making it seem even more different than it actually is. In both cases, individuals distort incoming information relative to their anchor.

These distortions influence the persuasiveness of the incoming message. If the message is too close to the anchor, assimilation will occur and it will be construed to be no different than the original position. If contrast occurs, the message will be construed to be unacceptable and subsequently rejected. In both cases, social judgment theory would predict that attitude change is unlikely to occur.

The fifth principle asserts that optimal persuasion occurs when the discrepancies between the anchor and the advocated position are small to moderate. In such cases, assimilation or contrasting will not occur, allowing for consideration of the communicated message. Under these conditions, attitude change is possible.

A major implication of social judgment theory is that persuasion is difficult to accomplish. Successful persuasive messages are those that are targeted to the receiver's latitude of acceptance and discrepant from the anchor position, so that the incoming information cannot be assimilated or contrasted. The receiver's ego-involvement must also be taken into consideration. This suggests that even successful attempts at persuasion will yield small changes in attitude.

**SEE ALSO** *Attitudes, Behavioral; Cognitive Dissonance; Persuasion; Psychology; Sherif, Muzafer; Social Psychology*

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## SOCIAL JUSTICE

**SEE** *Justice, Social*.

## SOCIAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

From the 1930s through the 1950s the behavioral theory of operant conditioning, with its emphasis on the application of consequences to influence behavioral change, was the dominant perspective in U.S. psychology. With the reintroduction of a cognitive perspective in the 1950s (e.g., Miller 1956; Miller, Galanter, and Pribram 1960), researchers began to look for ways to integrate the behavioral and cognitive perspectives. Social learning theory, as developed by Neal Miller and John Dollard (1941), Robert Sears (1951), and Albert Bandura (1977), contributed to connecting behavioral and cognitive approaches to learning and is an important step toward modern versions of learning theory.

Bandura (1962), building on the earlier work of Miller and Dollard (1941), proposed that learning first occurs cognitively through imitation and then is modified through the application of consequences. In contrast to a purely behavioral approach, social cognitive theorists propose that individuals are active participants in their own learning. Based on a series of studies during the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Bandura 1963, 1965a), Bandura in 1977 proposed a four-step process for how individuals learn through observing others' behavior. This process has been referred to as observational learning, or modeling, and involves:

- attention—the individual notices something in the environment;
- retention—the individual remembers what was noticed;

reproduction—the individual produces an action that is a copy of what was noticed;

motivation—the environment delivers a consequence that changes the probability that the behavior will occur again (reinforcement and punishment).

Through the careful observation of others, individuals learn numerous new behaviors such as emotional reactions and how to use tools in their environments. Bandura (1965b) demonstrated that individuals modify their own behaviors based on the consequences (e.g., reinforcement or punishment) that others receive. He called this phenomenon *vicarious learning*. Individuals tend to model their behavior on persons who are similar to themselves, persons who are of higher status than themselves, and persons who are either reinforced for their behavior or not punished for it. One example of the power of imitation is found in the results of the infamous “Bobo doll study” (Bandura, Ross, and Ross 1961). In this study preschool children who observed adults mistreating a Bobo doll were more likely to engage in similar aggressive behavior than children who had not observed the adults’ aggressive behavior.

In more recent years, Bandura turned his attention to the importance of self-efficacy, self-regulation, and the desire of individuals to develop agency over their lives (Bandura 1986, 1989, 2001). To describe the learning process from this perspective, Bandura developed a concept called *reciprocal determinism*, which details a three-way relationship between a person, his or her behavior, and the environment. In the social-cognitive model each of the three elements are equally important and influence the other elements. Thus, an individual’s unique characteristics interact with overt behaviors and environmental models and feedback.

**SEE ALSO** *Bandura, Albert; Behaviorism; Determinism, Reciprocal; Motivation; Psychology, Agency in; Self-Efficacy; Social Cognition; Social Cognitive Map*

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## SOCIAL MEMORY

**SEE** *Collective Memory*.

## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

A *social movement* can be defined as a collectivity with mutual awareness in sustained interaction with economic and political elites seeking to forward or halt social change. Social movements are usually comprised of groups outside of institutional power that use nonconventional strategies (e.g., street marches, sit-ins, dramatic media events) along with more conventional ones (e.g., petitions, letter-writing campaigns, etc.) to pursue their aims (Tarrow 1998; Snow et al. 2004). The outsider status and nonconventional tactics of social movements distinguish them from other political entities such as lobbying organizations and political parties (though these more formal organizations may originate from social movements). Most people participate in movements as volunteers and offer their time, skills, and other human resources to maintaining movement survival or achieving goals. Examples of social movements range from community-based environmental movements to transnationally organized economic-justice movements