



SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

PRESENTED BY ANNA NEWELL



SURVEY

The following survey is intended to assess marijuana use and purchasing on college campuses. If you are 18 years of age or older and a current undergraduate student you are eligible to participate in this survey. The researchers are particularly interested in the role of increasing access to Delta-8 products and decriminalization of marijuana in many states. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes and you may stop at any time. Thank you for your participation!

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

- Behaviors are learned often through observation and imitation
- Previous theory had focused on internal factors, such as needs, drives, and impulses
 - Subconscious mind
- Lack of conceptual and empirical support for psychodynamic theories
 - Difficult to measure
 - Not falsifiable
- Emphasis on responsiveness and role models (Bandura, 1969)



BANDURA'S BOBO DOLL EXPERIMENT

- Series of psychological experiments testing social learning theory
- 1961-1963
- Role model exhibited aggressive or non-aggressive behavior towards bobo doll
- Children who observed aggressive behavior exhibited aggressive behavior
- Boys were more likely to imitate same-sex models
- Boys exhibited more aggression



IMPORTANT LITERATURE IN CRIMINOLOGY

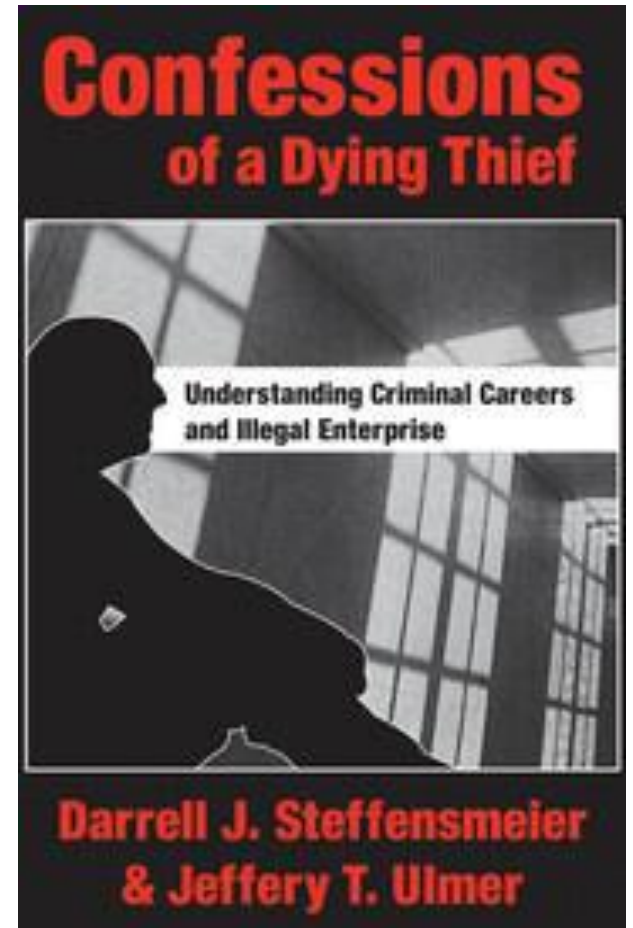
- Akers (2002) argued criminal behavior is learned the same way any behavior is learned
- Concepts of differential association (Sutherland, 1972)
 - Developing definitions favorable or unfavorable to crime
- Akers and Lee (1996) tested social learning theory using data on adolescent smoking
 - Support for the theory based on concepts of differential association, differential reinforcement, definitions, and modeling

QUESTION FOR THE CLASS

What are examples of crimes that require learning?

CONFESSIONS OF A DYING THIEF


- Written by Jeffrey Ulmer and Darrell Steffensmeier (Penn State faculty)
- Interviews with Sam Goodman
 - Thief, fence, and semi-legitimate businessman
- Interviews with Sam's network
- Integrative learning-opportunity-commitment framework



HOWARD BECKER'S RESEARCH

- Sociologist and professional jazz pianist
- Argued that marijuana is pleasurable when one
 - Learns to smoke in a way that produces effects
 - Learns to recognize effects and connect them with drug use
 - Learns to enjoy sensations (Becker, 1953)
- Conducted ethnographic research in the Chicago jazz scene
- Published *Outsiders* in 1963
 - Focus on labeling theory
 - Concepts of learning and reinforcement





"The typical experience is one in which the [marijuana] user finds himself in a position where he must do something while he is high that he is quite sure he cannot do in that condition. To his surprise, he finds he can do it and can hide from others the fact that he is under the drug's influence. One or more occurrences of this kind allow the user to conclude that he can remain a secret deviant, that his caution has been excessive and based on a false premise. If he desires to use the drug regularly he is no longer deterred by this fear, for he can use such an experience to justify the belief that nonusers need never know"

MY RESEARCH

- Exploratory research on marijuana use at Penn State
- Specific interest in delta-8 use
- Preliminary findings
 - Few students use delta-8
 - Report having or hearing about negative experiences
 - Many students report using
 - Most students use with friends and have marijuana supplied by friends
- Majority of respondents who use marijuana reported using the illegal option over the legal option. Why?

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- 64.55% of respondents had used marijuana in the past six months
- Most common way of obtaining was through a friend or acquaintance in a social setting (44.16% indicated obtaining this way and 56.75% said this was how they most frequently obtained marijuana)
- 59.6% of respondents were aware that delta-8 is legal in Pennsylvania
- 8.7% of people who have used marijuana in the last six months purchased delta-8

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND MY RESEARCH

- Using marijuana is *learned* (Becker, 1963)
- Most commonly obtained marijuana through friends
- People who reported not using delta-8 or using it infrequently cited
 - Having friends who have had a bad experience
 - Knowing that it is not federally regulated
 - Not trusting it
 - Preferring regular cannabis
- *Not* using delta-8 is also learned behavior

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND SUBSTANCE USE

- Ford (2008) finds support for social learning mechanisms in nonmedical prescription drug use among adolescents
- Social bonds with deviant peers consistently related to substance use (Erickson, Crosnoe, & Dornbusch, 2000)
- Becker's research
- Ethnographic research on heroin use among homeless populations (Bourgois & Schonberg, 2009)

QUESTIONS FOR THE CLASS

How well-suited do you think social learning theory is for explaining substance use?

What crimes do you think social learning is well-suited to answer?

What crimes do you think social learning is not well-suited to answer?

CONCLUSION

- Important to consider what knowledge is necessary for certain crimes and behaviors and how that knowledge is acquired
- Peer networks influence the behavior of individuals
 - Stigma and stereotypes about crime and criminals
- Importance of definitions and reinforcements
- How do we measure learning? What methodological improvements and advancements can be made in the future?

REFERENCES

- Akers, R. L. (2002). A social learning theory of crime. *Criminological theories: Bridging the past to the future*, 135-143.
- Akers, R. L., & Lee, G. (1996). A longitudinal test of social learning theory: Adolescent smoking. *Journal of drug issues*, 26(2), 317-343.
- Bandura, A., & Walters, R. H. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Vol. 1). Prentice Hall: Englewood cliffs.
- Bandura, A. (1969). Social-learning theory of identificatory processes. *Handbook of socialization theory and research*, 213, 262.
- Becker, H. S. (1953). Becoming a marihuana user. *American journal of Sociology*, 59(3), 235-242.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders*.
- Bourgois, P. I., & Schonberg, J. (2009). *Righteous dopefiend* (Vol. 21). Univ of California Press.
- Erickson, K. G., Crosnoe, R., & Dornbusch, S. M. (2000). A social process model of adolescent deviance: Combining social control and differential association perspectives. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 29(4), 395-425.
- Ford, J. A. (2008). Social learning theory and nonmedical prescription drug use among adolescents. *Sociological Spectrum*, 28(3), 299-316.
- Sutherland, E. H. (1972). The theory of differential association. In *Readings in criminology and penology* (pp. 365-371). Columbia University Press.

THANK YOU FOR
LISTENING!

REACH OUT TO
AKN5535@PSU.EDU WITH
ANY ADDITIONAL
QUESTIONS.