**SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**

* According to SLT **(Bandura),** aggression can be learned by modelling, i.e. observing and imitating the aggressive behaviour of other people.
* Aggression is learned through direct experience (i.e. direct reinforcement for aggressive behaviour) or by vicarious experience (we learn to be aggressive ourselves by observing others being rewarded for their aggressive behaviour).
* Individuals interact reciprocally with their environment, i.e. individuals influence their environment, which in turn influences them (reciprocal determinism)

**A number of factors make affect imitation:**

* Self efficacy – the belief that a behaviour is within an observer’s ability to perform – aggression is therefore likely to be performed only in situations where the learner is most likely to be successful
* Characteristics of the model – a model is more likely to be imitated if it has: status, power, similarity

**Four essential conditions for imitation:**

* Attention – the model must be attended to and this will be influenced by status, similarity , attractiveness
* Retention – what is observed must be remembered if it is to be imitated
* Reproduction – the observer has to be able to copy the behaviour
* Motivation – the observer must want to imitate the behaviour.

**Evaluation of Social Learning Theory**

**Johnny and Rocky study** – **Bandura et al (1961)** looked at the effects of observing a model being punished or rewarded. They found that children who had seen a character in a film (Rocky) being rewarded for aggressive behaviour used more aggressive behaviour whilst playing than those who had not witnessed this.

**Practical application** – **Patterson et al (1982)** studied the origins of children with problem behaviour including aggression and found that parents had both modelled aggressive behaviour and rewarded problem behaviour. Training parents to model more appropriate behaviour helped the children.

**Support from biology** – Mirror neurons are active not only when we perform an action but also when we observe it performed. This might be a biological basis for social learning.

**Bobo doll study –** children saw an adult behave aggressively towards a Bobo doll, a second group were exposed to a non-aggressive model, and a third saw no model. The children were then allowed to play in a room full of toys, including a Bobo doll. When frustrated by being prevented from playing with the toys those who had seen the aggressive model were more likely to imitate by hitting the doll. A later study that included film footage of an aggressive model also produced more aggression in the children. This is evidence of learning by observation.

***Criticisms of Bobo doll studies***

* Are the studies measuring aggression or play? Bobo dolls are meant to be played with in this way.
* Deliberately inducing aggression like this is unethical.
* These are artificial situations and the findings may not apply to real life.
* It is not clear if such changes in behaviour are long term.