

## **Social Cognitive Theory Research: Bandura**

**Aim:** Investigate whether aggression can be learned simply by observing others

### **Procedure**

- This experiment was performed on three groups of UK nursery children. The children were rated according to how aggressive they tended to be, and each group was matched to have the same average aggression rating
- The children in group 1 observed an adult behave aggressively towards a "Bobo doll" - for instance, kicking, hitting and using objects to smash the doll
- The children in group 2 observed an adult assemble toys, and group 3 was the control group (they did not observe an adult model)
- Afterwards, the children were taken into a room (one at a time) with a bobo doll and their behavior was observed

### **Findings**

- Children in group 1 (who had seen the aggressive model) were more likely to behave aggressively towards the bobo doll, imitating the adult model they had observed
- Boys were more likely to be aggressive towards the Bobo doll if the adult model they observed was male, rather than female

### **Conclusion**

- This study supports social cognitive theory, in the sense that behavior can be learned simply observing and imitating others
- This study supports the prediction of social cognitive theory that behavior will be imitated when there is identification with the model - and that's why boys were more likely to imitate aggression when the model was male

### **Evaluation**

- This study utilized an experimental design, which allows for a causal relationship to be established between the independent variable (the behavior of the model) and the dependent variable (the behavior of the child)
- This study may have had demand characteristics - children may have imitated the model by beating up the doll because that's what they thought they were supposed to do
- This study may have low ecological validity - it is questionable whether hitting a doll is equivalent to actual aggression which causes harm to another person
- All participants in this study were nursery-aged, so there is limited generalizability - it is uncertain whether older children, teenagers, or adults would behave the same way