

Observational Learning

Social Learning and Cognition. TED L. ROSENTHAL and BARRY J. ZIMMERMAN. Academic Press, New York, 1978. xiv, 338 pp. \$15.

This volume is a comprehensive, scholarly presentation of the social learning perspective on human development, particularly as it applies to the acquisition of cognitive skills. Although the term "social learning" is broadly interpreted in developmental psychology, the authors of the book have a specific meaning in mind. Their theoretical approach stresses the central role of modeling processes in children's learning. In their view most of the important learning for children occurs as they observe the actions of others (hence, observational learning or learning from models). In the particular theory of modeling that they propose, there are a number of intervening cognitive events, such as attention, symbolic coding, and memory. Basically, the treatment accomplishes two purposes. It elaborates and updates the theoretical writings of Albert Bandura. And it reviews the research literature, expanding upon the review the authors contributed to the *Psychological Bulletin* several years ago.

My judgment is that the volume will become a classic because it collects in one place all of the fundamental arguments showing why structural models cannot account for cognitive change and why simpler associationistic models of learning are also inadequate. Among the empirical topics surveyed are moral judgment, concept learning, the acquisition of language rules, and problem solving.

The authors are likely to be faulted for placing too much emphasis on the monolithic role of modeling as the only construct that has consistent utility for explaining social influence. Those experts with a cognitive bent would argue that other processes—role relations, social comparisons, and social attributions—also occupy pivotal positions.

On the cognitive side, the major difficulty is that the authors fail to consider the rich interdependencies among cognitive skills and the major sequences of their acquisition. The authors acknowledge this problem early in the volume and attribute it to the unique characteristics of the research tradition within which they operate. The "social learning" tradition offers powerful experimental demonstrations of how specific cognitive skills can readily be changed through modeling. Cognitive psycholo-

gists, however, are typically more concerned with the sequences of skills that develop and, from an "information-theoretic perspective," with the interrelatedness of component skills. To assess the development of sequences of skills it is necessary to have longitudinal data. To provide a richer account of how the different skills are related it is necessary to specify the logical or empirical underpinnings of each skill. Methodologies that take both these necessities into account are needed to replace the training study, which is the modal source of evidence relied upon in the volume.

On balance, one must recognize that any marriage between two fields in a social science inevitably occurs at the expense of glossing over details from each. Given this limitation, the authors have done a commendable job of outlining the compromise position and representing the two theoretical perspectives (behavioral and cognitive psychology) with clarity, subtlety, and accuracy.

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The Abuse of Power. The War between Downing Street and the Media from Lloyd George to Callaghan. James Margach. Allen, London, 1978 (U.S. distributor, Transatlantic Arts, Levittown, N.Y.). vi, 200 pp. + plates. \$11.50.

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