

The theory of cognitive map psychology essay



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In this paper, I will discuss and apply the following learning theories to explain how I learned to play piano: the social-learning theory, behavior modification, purposive behaviorism, and cognitive maps. The theory of cognitive map is established on the concepts of spatial memory and spatial thinking, but I will explain briefly how a person can use cognitive map to learn how to play an instrument such as piano. First, I will discuss who introduced or expanded specific learning theories, and I will explain the theories at the same time. In addition, I will explain how these theories applied to my piano learning process. After each theory, I will discuss how I applied that particular theory in my piano learning process along with an example of that particular theory. Then I will present my reasons and statements to explain in what way these learning theories are relevant to one particular instance of my piano learning process.

To begin with, the social learning theory is established by Albert Bandura (1925-) (Benjafield, 2010). The social learning theory states that the processes of social influences alter human behavior as in human thought, feeling and action (Benjafield, 2010). Modelling and observational learning are the two components of social learning theory. Bandura suggested that learning takes place through observing and copying people's behavior, and through observing external or internal rewards and punishments that others receive (Benjafield, 2010).

Modelling, a social learning process to alter and improve behavior, is the most vital aspect of social learning theory (Benjafield, 2010). It is different from the idea of learning by imitation (Benjafield, 2010). Observational learning theory, another important aspect of social learning theory, is based

on the notion of copying a behavior, and through the process of watching people's behavior, an individual would learn many forms of behavior (Benjafield, 2010).

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In relation to the social learning theory, my experience in learning how to play piano applies to the theory because first, I was motivated to play piano after years of watching my brother playing piano. This applies to observational learning. Second, I wanted to apply what I learned from observing my brother all these years by learning to play piano myself with the help of my former piano teachers.

I spent most of my time in the beginning not only learning to read musical notes to play piano and learning through repetition, but also observing my former piano teachers demonstrating how to play the piano and how to use the functions of the piano properly. I observed and followed the way their fingers ran on the piano, and the way their feet paddled on the piano pedals. The purpose of observing and following them was to ensure that I understood how to play piano properly and correctly.

Behavior modification is also one of Bandura's major contributions in the history of psychology. Bandura was not the first psychologist to introduce behavior modification (Benjafield, 2010). However, he applied the principles of operant conditioning on behavior modification (Benjafield, 2010). Behavior modification consists of techniques to improve human behavior, and an individual's behavior is altered through negative and positive reinforcement

(Benjafield, 2010). Behavior modification also changes undesirable behaviors to desirable behaviors (Benjafield, 2010).

Mary Cover Jones (1896-1987) was the one who was credited for employing the behavior modification methods that she adopted and expanded it from psychologists, Watson and Rayner

(Benjafield, 2010). She formulated a method called systematic desensitization, a type of behaviour therapy that is used to overcome fears and lessen anxiety (Benjafield, 2010). The purpose of

systematic desensitization is that an individual is being trained to relax first, then to be exposed to situations that provoke anxiety and/or other psychological symptoms (Benjafield, 2010). The idea of using systematic desensitization is that after an individual is trained to be relaxed in anxiety-provoking

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situations to decrease anxiety and/or other psychological symptoms, he or she should be able to inhibit these symptoms while being in the presence of anxiety-provoking situations (Benjafield, 2010). For instance, Jones conducted a study on an individual named Peter and his fear of things that resembled a fur or/and made of fur (Benjafield, 2010). She conditioned Peter to become less afraid so that he was able to endure being in the presence of the rabbit that she used in the study (Benjafield, 2010).

In my case, I used to get really anxious before and during playing piano on account of having a fear of not playing songs properly and perfectly. One of

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my former piano teachers helped me uncondition my fear of musical performance anxiety. She advised me to play piano when one or more people are around me more often. I found that my musical performance anxiety lessen a little bit over time when I played piano in my immediate family's presence. I started to become more comfortable over time, and worried less about the quality of my performance.

The purposive, or molar behaviorism is developed by Edward Chace Tolman (1886-1959), and this is one of his cognitive approaches to learning psychology (Benjafield, 2010). According to Tolman, purposive behaviorism means that a behavior is being regulated in conformance with achieving a purpose in the absence of subjectivity (Benjafield, 2010).

What led Tolman to propose this purposive behaviour theory was one of his studies that involved rats and complex mazes (Benjafield, 2010). Tolman examined how rats learned their way through complex mazes (Benjafield, 2010). Tolman suggested that rats and any other animals that are used in experimental studies can develop cognitive maps. This term is defined as mental images of

connections of an external environment to learn how to get to someplace new (Benjafield, 2010). Tolman also implied that humans, not just animals, develop cognitive maps as well by learning our way to someplace new, in our everyday lives.

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In relation to my case, I or anyone can apply the theory of cognitive map in learning how to play an instrument. I used techniques similar to the theory of the cognitive map to learn to play piano. While a piano itself is clearly not a physical environment, but it is a physical object. There were functions of a piano that I needed to become familiar with and I needed to know the inner workings of piano music; just as an individual who is learning to navigate a location needs to be familiar with and to get to know a place well. By applying the theory of cognitive map, I learned the functions of the piano and found ways to recall them so that I can play piano better and at ease over time. Also, by finding ways to recall them, I learned to recognize the scales, chords, and other musical patterns.

All of these learning theories I just discussed applied to one particular instance of my piano learning process. This particular instance is that I had to learn to play the piano correctly and simultaneously, and I had to not make many errors in order to avoid piano sounds or rhythms to be out of tune. I was advised that I should not stop for an error. I had to maintain the required or chosen speed steadily, at all costs. I had to learn to listen very carefully to the sounds and rhythms. If I did not, I would most likely made many mistakes repeatedly and easily. I would also not be able learn to properly recognize the musical patterns at sight. Learning to become familiar with the musical patterns is similar to Tolman's theory of cognitive maps as cognitive map is based on remembering physical features of an environment to find way around it (Benjafeld, 2010). Lastly, the social learning theory applied to my case as it was my decision to learn to play piano. I needed to learn to play piano properly by watching how my brother, and my former

piano teachers played. By doing so, it helped me to learn and understand the fundamentals of piano theory, and not just through concentration and daily practice.

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