SOCIAL LEARNING/OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING

In social learning theory Albert Bandura (1977) states behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning.  Children observe the people around them behaving in various ways. This is illustrated during the famous [bobo doll experiment](http://www.simplypsychology.org/bobo-doll.html) (Bandura, 1961). This type of learning can theoretically have both pro-social and anti-social effects.

Individuals that are observed are called models. In society children are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, characters on children’s TV, friends within their peer group and teachers at school.  Theses models provide examples of masculine and feminine behavior to observe and imitate. (**Modeling** is the process of observing and imitating a specific behavior)

They pay attention to some of these people (models) and [encode](http://www.simplypsychology.org/memory.html) their behavior.  At a later time they may imitate (i.e. copy) the behavior they have observed.  They may do this regardless of whether the behavior is ‘gender appropriate’ or not but there are a number of processes that make it more likely that a child will reproduce the behavior that its society deems appropriate for its sex.

Some scientists believe that some neurons in our frontal lobe fire when performing certain actions or when observing another doing so. The brain’s mirroring of another’s actions may enable imitation and empathy. These neurons are called **mirror neurons.**

**Reflecting on Classical and Operant Conditioning**

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|  | Applications (school, sports, work, home, self-improvement) | Limits, Concerns, Connections |
| Classical Conditioning |  |  |
| Operant Conditioning |  |  |