

The Role of Social Learning in Understanding Deviance

Thanaseelen Rajasakran^{1*}, Santhidran Sinnappan² and
Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja³

¹*Faculty of Creative Industries, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia/Hong Kong
Baptist University, Hong Kong*

²*Faculty of Creative Industries, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia*

³*Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya*

KEYWORDS Social Behavior. Children. Women Divergent Thoughts. Mistreatment

ABSTRACT What is deviant behavior? From a sociological perspective it is behavior that goes against the grain of social norms in society. It can be argued that a child which has seen domestic violence at home, or may have been abused may result in the child's deviant behavior when the child develops into a youngster. In that sense the study of communication takes into account this individualistic approach that characterizes the socio-psychological customs people possess. Although theoretical approaches have their own views, what is more important is the notion that they share a similar concern for behavior and for the personality traits and thinking processes that produce those behaviors. It can then be argued unequivocally a popular part of socio-psychological approach in the study of communication is with regards to character traits, which identifies personality variables and communicator inclinations that affect how individuals act and react. This leads us to the development of social learning in explaining deviant behavior, violence.

INTRODUCTION

Deviant behavior is like throwing a brick into calm waters. Only upon throwing the brick or stone will one see the ripples that will appear on the water surface. The ripples are the victims, the witnesses of deviant acts. Deviant behavior has indeed become a scourge on a global platform (for example, Inderbitzin 2013; Crawford 2013; Siegel and Welsh 2013).

The study of deviant behavior in the field of social science has been going on for more than three decades now. But is this study going to be any different from a communication theory point of view?

The idiom 'to each is their own' rings a familiar bell to many. But an interesting twist to this saying revolves around the topic of communication. As stated in communication literature all of us think ourselves foremost as individuals – as we possess a body, a mind and skin to go with it – which results in a rather unique appearance and personality. But as different as we are, we also cannot operate in silos in this world. We

have to interact with one another, and bound by social mores.

Therefore the study of communication takes into account this individualistic approach that characterizes the socio-psychological customs people possess.

In essence it can be stated unequivocally a popular part of socio-psychological approach in the study of communication is with regards to character traits, which identifies personality variables and communicator inclinations that affect how individuals act and react.

Objectives

In reviewing this topic, some of the objectives of this review that need to be addressed are:

1. The causal relation between deviant behavior social learning.
2. The types of deviant behavior that can be attributed to social learning.
3. The antecedents of deviant behavior.
4. The evidence that support deviance is socially attributable.
5. The future research direction with regards to social learning and deviant behavior.

These questions lead us to the development of social learning theory, in particular to deviant behavior violence. So this study also goes on to analyze some theories closely associated with deviant behavior.

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Thanaseelen Rajasakran
Faculty of Creative Industries,
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman,
Malaysia/Hong Kong
Baptist University, Hong Kong
E-mail: thanak@utar.edu.my

This paper is organized as follows. The following section on literature is divided into three sub-sections. The first discusses the link between deviance behavior such as date rape, domestic violence and drug/alcohol abuse and social learning. The second sub-section discusses on the empirical validity that supports this link between deviant behavior and social learning, while the third sub-section discusses if this link is still relevant in today's modern society. The last two sections discuss the future direction of research that can be undertaken and concluding remarks, underscoring the importance of social learning in understanding deviant behaviors.

Literature Review

Deviant Behavior and Social Learning

"Abused minds are a devil's workshop." This statement goes on to illustrate that a child which has seen domestic violence at home, or may have been abused may result in the child's deviant behavior when the child develops into a youngster.

What is then deviant behavior? In a sociological perspective it is behavior that goes against the grain of social norms in society. Although theoretical references are traditionally referred to incidents in which an offender harms or takes hold of belongings (Miethe and Meier 1994) but does not take into account deviant behaviors such as drugs, reckless behavior or mutual violence arising from disputes, the relevance of predictable activities to a wider variety of illegal behavior is exemplified by Felson (1986).

In the last 40 years, research on the description of social learning theory has been used to any social behavioristic methodology setting (for example, Rotter 1982), and social learning viewpoints integrating procedures of behavioral modeling and reinforcement have been applied in many areas. In fact social learning theory is regarded many social scientists as a general theory that has been applied to a wide field of deviant behaviors (for example, Akers 2013; Inderbitzin 2013). Some examples would include drug abuse, drinking and date violence.

What social learning theory suggests in principle is that similar processes are involved in both deviant and conforming behavior. The difference though between both, is the path in which these

apparatuses operate in. The theory suggests that it is more often than not a balance of effects on behavior, rather than a simple either-or, or all-or-nothing method. This balance usually displays some form of steadiness as time passes, but this stability can become unbalanced and alter, by a situation or the process of time. Deviance and conforming is then considered a learnt process. What is central to this theory is differential association (or direct and indirect communication with somebody), differential reinforcement (learning via reward and punishment), imitation (learning via observation), and lastly definitions on thought (outlook), which could be conducive or non-conductive. These mechanisms could serve as discriminative inducements for the particular behavior (Akers and Lee 1996)

For the record, many authors have argued that the use of social learning theory as a universal viewpoint with regards to deviance is a greater inclination towards modern behaviorism within the framework of sociological theory (for example, Chadwick-Jones 1976) Therefore, social learning theory offers a good theoretical fit in explaining what is deviant behavior.

In that sense deviant behavior is defined as necessary or acceptable when the individual is in a situation discriminative for the particular behavior (Akers 1985).

Deviant behavior covered in this paper includes drinking and drug behavior, domestic violence, and date violence.

Are Women Not Socially Equal?

Violence against women by their close male companions has become an issue for some time now. From intermittent blows, shoves, grips, or jolts to recurrent and severe life-intimidating thrashings, close domestic violence in all its different types has considerable individual and social costs. Panic, hopelessness, extreme nervousness, and socially being segregated are shared among many abused women (Stephens et al. 2000). Worse still, children of abused women are at a high risk of being mistreated (Appel and Holden 1998), being anguished from major emotive and social problems (Jouriles et al. 2001) and propagating violence in their long term relations (O'Leary 1988).

Meanwhile at the societal level, this violence against women results in numerous associated problems such as reduced output and other

health costs for the victims and their families (National Research Council 1996).

Indeed the name domestic violence does sound frightful – but this illegal conduct is not due to some chemical imbalance in the brain, nor can we solely point the finger to alcohol consumption, drug use, depression of some sort, or even to a whole range of similar situations. The danger is that it affects life in later stages. In fact Akers (2000) mentions in his book that those who actually witness domestic violence over time are indeed likely to become involved in similar acts in the near or far future.

In the book on social learning theory Bandura (1977), the author posits that aggression is a learned function by observing the behavior of others. The author adds that because children who observe their parents closely will learn that behavior mode. So for instance, if parents regularly use violence in trying to reprimand the child they will pick up the entire script. It is also not just about observing the parents' violent disposition, but also what emotional triggers these bouts of violence, in what circumstances, and the associated results of those behaviors that occur. Essentially these observations result in violent behaviors.

Many authors (for example, Foshee et al. 1999) are of the opinion that violence is usually the end result because violence itself is a potent means of compulsion – children who are at the receiving end of it may notice the positive side of using violence in a later situation or their later lives. For instance, a child who watches his father slap his mother may observe the humble submission of his mother towards the father, quite a common trend in many parts of patriarchal Asian societies. In fact the Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence states that at least 41-60% of Asian women experience domestic violence in their lifetime (APIIDV 2011).

It does not seem far-fetched then that children who are constantly abused may recognize the governing effects that the abuse has on their behavior. If one were to compare with families where the child has never observed violence one can surely deduce that the child will not see the appropriateness of using domestic violence.

In that sense, Bandura's theory seems to allude to the fact that the children of violent parents will use violence as part of the socialization process in society because they have observed the seeming positive functional aspect of using

such kind of behavior. More often than not when domestic violence is used in a household, many other kinds of to resolve issues are absent: for instance oral reasoning, self-relaxing strategies, and even hearing out what the other person has to say. It would seem likely that these grown-ups do not possess constructive strategies for resolving family conflicts (for example, Gottman 1979). In that sense social learning theory notes that children with violent parents would not possess the positive methods of solving problems, as they never witnessed any; in comparison to children who had witnessed positive ways of conflict resolution at home—instead violence will be the preferred mode of conflict resolution in the former case (Foshee et al. 1999).

All this points to the perspective that domestic violence is a learned conduct and an accepted way of resolving conflicts that has been supported by numerous communities and cultures all over the world. This is especially true within the context of close and intimate relationships (Emery and Laumann-Billings 1998).

Authors such as Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) discovered that batterers had in fact had a violent father. However research on child development has indicated that early mediation with children from violent patterns of behavior in households may in fact reestablish the normal growth process in the child. This includes fundamental processes such as empathy, sympathy and self-control, and the associated risk reduction of further hurt caused by the interaction with parental abusive behavior (Wolfe 1989)

The Social Role in Drug and Alcohol Use

As way back as four decades ago, Akers et al. (1979) had reiterated the need for studying adolescent drinking and drug use, as it is considered a socially relevant topic. They had stated that current theories at that time were narrow in scope. They particularly pointed-out to prevalent studies with regards to socio-demographic and social psychological relations of teenage drug use and drinking (for example, O'Donnell et al. 1976). The authors had noted little had been conducted to test explanations from a general theory point of view; except for a few notable studies (Jessor 1976). Jessor's study in fact had constructed a social psychological theory regarding deviance, which actually included part of Rotter's (1954) learning theory on the locus of

control, and added variables from areas such as personality and social. Rotter's theory had three component variables: behavioral, personality and social. Rotter's findings mainly supported the social category of the social learning theory.

Reverting to Jessor's point of view, their results lent backing to existing social psychological research that drinking and drug use ties in to the variables tested in Aker's studies (Akers et al. 1979). For example, studies had indicated that those people who are holding positive outlooks towards substance use are much more probable to use them; rather than those having negative approaches towards it (for example, Kendal 1976). In addition, parental and peer pressures have been found to be crucial contributing factors in teenage drinking and drug attitudes. Users of such substance (drinking and drugs) are more often than not likely to associate with peer members who were also users themselves, as compared to non-users. This question that comes to mind is whether the friends' use, independent of the individual's observation of the friends' use of the substance (Akers 1977). Not surprisingly further studies undertaken on this topic obviously have resulted in support for the causal order of these social learning factors, that is, drinking and drugs.

Further, the research findings seem to be consistent with the causal order of these variables, as proposed by social learning. For instance the adolescent relates with peers who are also users, learns the definitions that encourages the use of the substance, and then uses it accordingly (Krohn 1974).

Meanwhile Akers et al. (1979) have reiterated in their paper that social behavior is indeed an acquired habit – either via direct conditioning or via imitation or modeling others' people's conduct. They posited that behavior is also reinforced via a positive and negative support system – through reward (positive reinforcement) and evasion of punishment (negative punishment) or declined by aversive stimuli (positive punishment) and loss of reward (negative punishment). The authors also stated for a particular deviant or compliant behavior to be learnt and persistent it is actually contingent on previous and current rewards or punishments for the particular behavior to take place. It is also dependent on the rewards and punishments attached to alternative behavior—known as differential reinforcement.

Is Date Violence a Social Norm?

Elsewhere there have been various studies that have shown the positive correlation between observing violence between parents, and future inflictions and or violence when dating (for example, Riggs et al. 1990). However there has also been contradicting studies as to the non-existence such a relationship (for example, Stets and Pirog-Good 1987). In addition to these mixed findings, the role of gender has also been found to play a mediating role with regards to the relationship of observing parents hitting each other and the use of aggression while dating. The relationship is shown as much stronger in males than in females (Foo and Margolin 1995).

In fact other studies that link observing violence within a family environment and causing hurt very much later, especially during dating have also produced ambiguous results. For instance while some studies have taken note of the positive correlation between mistreating a child and later causing hurt or being victimized during dating (for example, DeMaris 1987), other studies have shown that there is no such association (for example, Stets and Pirog-Good 1987).

Nevertheless, in spite of these differences in the findings what is interesting is that domestic violence is still investigated within literature on dating violence that states domestic violence can be used as a forecast for later day violence, especially within close and intimate relationships.

Quite obviously the rationale behind the theory stating that violence can be transmitted from one generation to the next generation is based on social learning theory. As espoused by this theory it can be achieved via direct behavioral conditioning and thus by replicating the behavior children eventually learn what they have seen rewarded in others or observed (Bandura 1977).

The fact that social learning theory also propose that females and males are put into sex-specific behaviors according to societal pressures, experiencing or witnessing domestic violence between parents may affect males and females quite contrarily (O'Keefe 1998). Because of these earlier findings, the role of gender was indeed considered a crucial variable and has been looked into by O'Keefe (1998). Further to this O'Keefe (1998) also stated that chances of imitating were more likely to occur when acquainted, same-sex models perform a particular sex-role behavior. Kalmus (1984) also included cognitive

variables in this process, which included the witnessing of violence in a family that could perhaps make the use of violence as justifiable and legitimate, especially in close associations. So the research undertaken by O'Keefe (1998) with regards to gender was consistent with social learning theory that the exposure to community and violence at school did differentiate between boys who committed violence and those who did not was actually dependent on witnessing high levels of domestic violence between parents at home. The author's research in fact suggested that the involvement in violence in a particular community did provide more occasions for the modeling of hostile behaviors.

The Empirical Link between Deviance and Social Learning

The elementary learning ideologies on which theory is behind deviant behavior has indeed received various empirical backing under laboratory and applied experimental conditions (for example, Staats 1975). In addition there was also earlier research on differential association theory (for example, Burkett and Jensen 1975). Akers himself had conducted a wide array of deviant behavior in close association with social learning theory (Akers 1977) – although his efforts were rather post-hoc applications of theoretical ideologies than actual research design.

Nevertheless other studies (Thomas et al. 1975; Jessor 1976) were supportive of Aker's approach. In fact Conger (1976) and Andersen (1973) had conducted a study using secondary data and found Aker to be correct. To go one step further a study by Aker et al. (1979) which used primary data within the community, quite obviously the findings indicated that social learning theory was justified when testing with the other forms of deviant behavior, as mentioned earlier in this review: drinking and drug behavior, domestic violence, and date violence.

Previous studies have also confirmed that empirical testing using the self-report questionnaire method is valid and dependable in gauging adolescent delinquencies, drinking, and drug use (for example, Hardt and Peterson-Hardt 1977).

Below is the analysis of the empirical evidence of the associated deviant behaviors.

Domestic Violence

In a study, Makar's (1998) results correlates with what Akers' social learning theory. The au-

thor's definition concepts described in the book explains the women's attitudes. It is stated that women who are abused reason out as to why they have been assaulted and provided rationalization about the batterer. It stated the woman generally has a belief system that surrounds her and the family, reasons such as "I deserve it" or even "It was my fault" are only too common justifications. And the fact that abuse against women is not demographic resistant was even surprising. Demographic variables such as educated and intelligent women (or at least more educated than the batterer), who were at the bulk of the receiving end was indeed in bad taste. The author suggested that most of these abused women had low self-esteem and held traditional views about their role in society and the household. What Makar found out was that even though the women had a career and also provided for the family, they felt accountable for the assaulter's behavior. What is indeed shocking is that these women felt no anger towards the perpetrator.

Despite Makar's findings being quite pertinent towards this discussion, Murphy and O'Farrell (1996) found through experimental research that there was a direct correlation between family violence and alcohol consumption. Both authors had found that three reasons could explain the correlation between alcohol consumption and family violence. The authors' first finding was alcohol's influence on thinking capability. What was interesting in their findings was the second and third reason: the pre-presence of anti-social behavior, and the impact of alcohol on matrimonial affection, anxiety and financial commitments. Both of these two findings fitted closely with Akers' social learning theory.

More recently in a study by Rahmatian (2009) it looked further into Akers' social learning theory by asking specific questions on demographic variables such as ethnicity, age, education, income and gender. Some of the questions included historical information such as pre-exposure to family violence within the family. Rahmatian found asking this question was of particular significance as the purpose was to find out if the victim or offender displayed any type of family violence among the parents and/or grandparents. As ascertained by Akers previously, Rahmatian's study also revealed that social learning theory played an important role in answering the question regarding domestic violence. Rahmatian

found out that domestic violence does occur at a higher rate in very close relationships, where the victim or the perpetrator has been exposed to previous domestic violence, in contrast to those who have not been exposed. Indeed demographics data such as income, ethnicity, social class and gender had provided an invaluable insight on the impact on adolescents and perpetrators.

This being the case, Rahmatian's findings supported previous research that showed batterers, especially males who had come from a background violence was present (Akers 2000). These perpetrators actually learned from their childhood and socialization process, and that it is indeed acceptable to use violence against women (Wilson 1997); and studies have verified that abusers originate from a childhood where violence was existent (Akers 2000)

In that sense also Murphy and O'Farrell's (1996) research is pertinent to social learning theory in that hostility against women especially spouses is caused by offenders and their incapacity to handle their individual negative feelings (Hines and Malley-Morrison 2005).

To delve further into the empirical evidence, Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1982) who used a social psychological model, and specifically applied tension and learning theory to domestic violence found that social learning theory can be applied to early childhood involvements, and the application to certain types of behavioral patterns in later life. The authors also opined that this actually formed the basis for inter-generational spread of violence.

Naturally these results were all quite in-line with the notion that the exposure to physical injury does lead to a child to theorize about the world from a rather deviant perspective. This will most definitely have a bearing on the child to plunge into "vicious cycle of violence" – and naturally susceptible to negative social interactions which can result in violence (Rahmatian 2001).

Date Violence

In the case of date violence there have been much research and debate in the last thirty years on numerous variables that have been associated with family violence. For instance Foshee et al. (1999) had found that compared with adolescents not exposed to family violence with those

adolescents exposed to family violence, the former had more positive expectations about the outcomes of using date violence. They also had fewer negative expectations about the outcomes of using dating violence, and had accepted the use of dating violence under more circumstances. In addition they also had a more generalized aggressive style of response to conflict, and possessed fewer constructive ways of resolving conflict.

In fact these variables had already been connected with the use of hostility by adolescence and date-violence in adults. It was also found violent children seemed to have perceptions of more positive consequences; and fewer negative costs (Slaby and Guerra 1988). They also tended to have poor communication aptitudes (Carlson et al. 1988) and as a result of this, poor problem-solving abilities (Slaby and Guerra 1988). In addition to that partner or date violence is considered an accepted norm, which has been indicated to have a strong correlation with adult partner violence (Tontodonato and Crew 1992).

Foshee et al. (1999) also showed the outcome expectation, acceptance of dating violence, in association with aggressive response style and conflict resolution abilities were indeed associated with juvenile enactment of date violence. Although these variables were connected with exposure to domestic violence and causing of date-violence, the authors proved that outcome expectations, date-violence acceptance, hostile response approach, and conflict solving abilities did indeed mediate the relationship between exposure to domestic violence, and the causing of date violence in adolescents. That said, the study by Foshee et al. (1999) also indicated that the mediators had different effects on boys and girls, and suggested that the issue of experiencing domestic violence differed amongst males and females – and that boys were more prone than girls to date violence in their later lives. Also espoused by Foshee et al. (1999) that witnessing a parent hit another parent and being hit by an adult was positively associated with the perpetration of dating violence by both females and males. However O'Keefe (1998) also found among females who had observed increased levels of violence between parents, two inclined factors came into play: getting involved in violence at school and in the community and suffering child abuse, which distinguished those girls who caused violence during dates, and those

who did not. Being abused as child was also found to discriminate girls who had experienced violence while dating, and those who did not. O'Keefe (1998) also noted that the exposure to violence at school and within the community effectively distinguished males and females who were described as high risk in terms of causing violence during dates, as compared to those who had not. According to the author this finding highlights the crucial role of peer associations, as well one's bigger role within the social environment in modeling of aggressive behaviors. O'Keefe (1998) noted these indicators were mostly overlooked in previous dating violence literature, and that looking at the exposure of violence in schools and communities is indeed important in trying to understand why violence in close relationships, i.e. dating is strengthened and approved.

Smoking, Drug Abuse and Drinking

Akers et al. (1979) tested social learning theory based on particular forms of adolescent deviance: drug and alcohol use and abuse. The results of the tests did support the theory. All of the dependent variables are strongly related to the social learning variables of differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement, and imitation.

The premise of peer group pressure on substance use comes as no shock to researchers; as it is well authenticated in many previous studies. In addition to that Akers et al. (1979) had also shown in their study how peer pressure was exerted, and, had concluded peer and group friendship as being very crucial to drug use or drinking. Their data among others, as forecasted by social learning theory, were – that friends do offer social reinforcement or penalty for self-restraint or use, provide normative definitions of use and self-restraint, and, to a lesser extent, serve as admired models to imitate.

Also as evident by research (for example, Akers et al. 1979) it can be ascertained that social learning theory has proven to be an influential explainer that juveniles refrain from or are indeed users of drugs and drinks. As forecasted by this theory, the youngsters in Akers' study had used alcohol or drugs to the degree that their attitudes had been remarkably strengthened via their friendship with primary groups and can be explained by terms such as "wanted than",

"or at least as warranted as", "abstaining from use".

What is interesting in Akers' findings was the likelihood of self-restraint and the bottom-most levels of use and abuse were found among youngsters who had reported that their parents had responded or would reply to their use with a mild negative retort such as an admonishment. The authors take on these findings was that parental reprimand was indeed a warning for future substance use and self-restraint. They also stated in line with social learning theory that even when parental punishment steps in when substance use had begun, the chances of increasing its usage or going towards an abuse mode will have an increased chance of stopping if reprimand comes in.

But they noted that once youngsters had gone to become heavy dependent users, then parental controls will have lost its impact. In turn the increased usage of these substances by the children will mete out with even more severer controls by the parents, as a frantic endeavor to stop the decay, so to speak.

Is there any Discrepancy in Attributing Social Learning towards Deviant Behavior?

Social learning theory is a well proven approach in studying deviant behavior over the last four decades. It has been well received by both academia and practitioners alike, and thus will be in the future.

In fact the power of empirical backing for the social learning theory seems to propose that this theory has the universal ability to explain the use and abuse of other substance by adolescents (Akers 1979).

As such, findings by many researchers also show that social learning theory will do well when tried with new forms of deviant attitudes in future undertakings. As Akers (1979) have suggested future studies should test the general utility of this theory in other specific situations. They believed that their study had established the main learning concepts through well-designed questionnaires and measurements, and that social learning theory can be effectively verified with survey data.

In fact, Strickland (1982) noted that social learning theory is a useful way of studying deviant behavior, which looks into the causal mechanisms outside the empirically validated learn-

ing methods of other attitudes. Strickland argued that the difference between attitudes reflected as deviant and conforming should not be founded on the notion that social science descriptions tend to be different for each kind of behavior. In related studies, Strickland mentioned that the general social learning method, and the specified formula used by Akers et al. (1979) have indeed indicated to be useful in the analysis of exposure to advertising, interaction within the family, and even adolescent substance abuse and in explaining the types of interpersonal impact created by parents and peer pressure on juvenile alcohol consumption trends (Strickland and Wilson 1980).

Despite Strickland's agreement on using the social learning theory approach, nevertheless both authors had their reservations on how Akers had analyzed the data – stating that the limitation of the data analyzed and conceptual/empirical redundancy of the measures may not have lent credence to their conclusion social learning theory could be used as a general approach to study deviant behaviors such as substance abuse in a specific sense.

Despite this reservation by Strickland (1982), a subsequent 5-year longitudinal study by Akers and Lee (1996) had shown the general conclusion was that social learning theory was supported, which in fact supplemented to the extensive body of research already undertaken approving a social learning approach to deviant behavior by that time. In fact in their study the authors had went past much of what had hitherto was professed by research in analyzing not only for the independent influence of the social learning variables on deviant behavior, but also for the more complicated successive learning process documented in earlier social learning theory findings. The findings were in support of the social learning model in terms of overall model fit, differential reinforcement, definitional, and differential association.

But Akers and Lee (1996) did mention in the case of smoking while social learning factors, as predicted, accounted for deviant behavior in both males and females, but the scale of the affiliation was slightly greater in juvenile boys than in juvenile girls. In addition, teenage girls tend to more influenced by their boyfriends in picking up the smoking habit than boys were by their girlfriends. Another matter concerned the earlier findings by Akers et al. (1987) with regards to relative

influence of parents and peers on the juvenile's deviant behavior. Theoretically, the authors stated that parents and peers reaction and attitudes concerning substance abuse should have a major impact on juvenile substance usage. However, the relative impact of peer and parent pressure should actually differ slightly by age and substance use.

So, it is only natural, as Akers and Lee (1996) stated that future studies should also test the contrasting models, taking into account the impacts of gender and the relative impact of peer and parental pressure. Both authors also noted that the model tried by Krohn et al. (1985) taking into account three years data should be modified, including increasing the years of data used to analyze and the chosen type of structural equation models.

Nevertheless, there still are more butts! Most of the literature that has been conducted thus far revolves around or pertains to traditional deviant behaviors of the past era such as criminal behavior, smoking drug use and drinking. But more research should be undertaken on the links between social learning theory and bullying or even cyber-bullying needs to be undertaken as we progress into a digital era.

Another major problem with regards to research on social learning theory and deviant behavior involves studies concerns actual child witnesses who have witnessed family violence. Most of the research thus far has involved adult victims or with children who have been victims of abuse. Therefore more studies need to be undertaken with children who have actually witnessed domestic violence – as they undergo similar negative issues.

Another issue surrounds around limited methodology and data collection – which warrants it a difficult task to actually provide a precise account of how far does domestic violence actually socially-cost families and society – as because financial effects cannot be so easily calculated, there are actual costs to it. What is so detrimental is these damages reach far beyond the common household; as family violence indeed generates an immense liability to the community as well (CDF-Ohio 2009).

Although this review looked at studies where the definition of dating was non-specific as to group dating or dyadic dating, future studies need to look more into this differentiation more specifically, as the findings may vary according to

both definitions. This will also make an interesting study in the Asian context, as there is a tendency for more group dating. In fact there is such a society in Malaysia (Facebook 2012).

DISCUSSION

Indeed social learning theory over time has evolved to become an integral part of communication and human studies. There is so far no evidence to indicate that this theory should be abandoned in trying to understand domestic violence. In fact

In fact its continued presence in main stream communication literature seems to suggest that it will continue to provide guidance for testing new data, as well as to aid other research findings with other forms of complementary theoretical methods. Even then there is still much to learn with regards to the building blocks of this theory such as reinforcement, punishment, reasoning and modeling.

Although the studies by authors (for example, Seigel and Welsh 2013; Foshee et al. 1999) had shown that in general social-learning-theory variables used (peers) were good predictors, this was perhaps due to the study sample size of young juveniles between the ages of twelve to thirteen. These youngsters are at an impressionable age, whereby peer group expectation does have an important effect. As Seigel and Welsh (2013) point out that *deviant behavior* patterns are a response to an earlier labeling experience; youths act out these social roles.

Another interesting note is that in the authors' studies (for example, Foshee et al. 1999; Akers 2013) had measured the impacts of being hit by both parents – which was quite unlike most studies which tested on the intergenerational transfer of violence (from grandparents to parents). The simple reasoning for this is fathers are more often than not are participative in a significant proportion of violent child-rearing (Simons et al. 1991). This seems to allure to the trend that fathers behaviors should also be included in further research with regards to transfer of violence. The point is those who are at highest risk should be reached out (Waltermauer and Akers 2013)

As for looking further into the abuse substance use, there are still many ways in testing social learning theory on the use of stronger present-day entertainment drugs. There are so

many of them in the market today. From stimulant to psychedelic drugs such amphetamines, known to users as “crystal” or “ice”, these drugs have become the second-most-used illicit drugs after cannabis in many parts of the world, including China and for instance (Worldcrunch 2013).

In fact a study using longitudinal data would allow for more empirical testing of the sequential order of variables involved in this theory, and learning from it. This also ties in with what Akers and Lee (1996) propose that thus far there has been a preponderance of research studies involving primarily youth. They argue that there is an urgent need to redress this imbalance, and more studies should be undertaken to test the explanatory of social learning theory (with regards to definitions, reinforcement, modeling, associations and other learning factors) on deviant behavior and drug abuse involving groups at all stages of their life cycle. In fact the people who help distribute these drugs are playing roles within society (Crawford 2013)

Social learning theory could also be tested along with social capital, a concept introduced by Coleman (1988), and revisited by Tlili and Obsiye (2013). What are the grounds for this? For one, his concept includes proving the usefulness of social capital within the family, and in the community helping the creation of human capital. As nations progress, human capital is indeed important, as countries move from a manufacturing environment into a knowledge economy. If countries do not possess the right human capital, one that is festering with deviant behavior, it will result in a chaotic situation.

Coleman had identified three forms of social capital, all being valid variables that could be used in testing within the context of social learning theory: obligations and expectations, which all are contingent on the credibility of the social setting; information-flow ability within the societal structure; and the standards supplemented by approvals.

As Coleman allures to the notion that social capital emanates from within the family and social capital outside this circle, and from within the adult community encircling the school system, research into this area may result in the prospect of less high school dropouts. For example, if substance abuse among adolescence is a learnt behavior (according to social learning theory via differentiation and imitation) within the social

circle – how can one ensure if the youngster can become a contributing member of human capital – if he or she has dropped-out of school.

As O’Keefe (1998) had reiterated that even though social learning theory predicts that the witnessing of violent acts at the domestic front may warrant or justify its use, in particular in close relationships, the research could not explain the observation how some males who had observed high levels of domestic violence but had seen violence while dating as something tolerable or permissible. However social control is needed as a form of deterrent (Inderbitzin 2013; Brinkerhoff and Weitz 2013).

More interestingly with the recent spate of violent shootings in the United States this has prompted more research on the use video games which promotes violent behavior. In fact many studies undertaken so far that have examined the impact of violent video are based on the hypothetical model called the general aggression model or GAM (Bushman and Anderson 2002). This theory partly borrows principles from social learning theory and other cognitive theories (Anderson and Dill 2000). It states aggression is a learnt behavior, which is stored in memory. Such learning can take place via happenstances within the social and physical realm.

In fact researchers such as Anderson and Dill (2000) had noted that the inclusive nature of violent video games may actually have far reaching impact on players, as compared to watching violence on television. Meanwhile, others such as Pinker (2002) has allured to the argument that violent video games and aggression is best clarified by a “third variable”, vis-à-vis family settings. This “third variable”, however is still overlooked, and remains unaddressed.

What is not surprising is that one of main theoretical thrusts for the possible impacts of violent video games is associated with social learning theory.

But what is interesting is Ferguson et al. (2008) and Gimpel (2013) have opined that video games may actually act as a “stylistic catalyst” – meaning that violence may still be present (and occur in any form) in an individual with violent tendency – so witnessing a video game may cause the person to imitate the style of its violence. So Ferguson et al. (2008) and Gimpel (2013) opine that video games do not actually cause the violent act, but rather may have an effect in the form of violence displayed – therefore alluring to social learning theory in their research. What was interesting in their study was the use of a com-

paratively new scale. Called the Family Conflict Scale (FCS), it is a 49-item questionnaire that was intended to look at detailed mechanism of domestic violence exposure, comprising subscales for direct bodily and sexual abuse, observing family violence, disregard and failure to provide the basic family needs, exposure to drug abuse, using spanking to discipline, abusing verbally and using insulting language, and the capacity for the family to value education in the family.

The authors closing explanations make the final comments for this paper worth mentioning. In the paper, it is argued that the passageway to violent criminal acts happens via a mixture of innate tendencies (for example, genetics or brain injury) and exposure to domestic violence. Therefore, media violence, in particular violent video games, may have a limited or no causal role in an individual’s eventual violence tendency. They argued that their results were significant because they suggest that preemptive measures with regards to deviant behavior should in fact emphasize on the family and in decreasing parental abuse in children – which may include witnessing a parent hitting another parent.

CONCLUSION

It is quite evident from this paper review that social learning theory is positively correlated, and plays a crucial role with respect to understanding how it affects deviant behavior.

It then becomes quite plausible that greater devotion should be directed towards education and awareness about this dynamic connection. Any kind of intervention initiatives to stop deviant behavior can be fruitful if undertaken at an early age in life. For instance studies can be undertaken at primary schools, especially to measure those who have been exposed to family violence.

Reason being, it has been duly taken note that the same learning process is hypothesized to function at any stage of the life cycle, but for obvious reasons the methods will differ with regards to age. For instance parental roles with regards to reinforcement would be more suited at a younger age, while peer pressure impacts are more applicable during adolescent years – with reference to friendships and reinforcement in a school setting and neighborhood groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst there has been much scholarly work on the topic of deviant behavior, there is still

much to be done concerning the topic of children witnessing domestic violence, as domestic violence and children witnessing such acts have deep-reaching social stigmata.

For instance future research on social learning theory could include urban rural schools in developing countries. Why is that? Next to parents and the home, schools are important places where primary prevention programs could be introduced with far reaching results. Research could be carried out so as to find out what could be effective ways in reaching out to these children as a lot of social learning takes effect in the school environment. Next to parents, primary school teachers play the second major role in a child's life. Therefore tests could be carried out as to understanding as to how social learning theory could include variables such as teachers, motivation to teach, and even children who have not encountered domestic violence at home. This is based on the notion that every child has the right to know what is considered domestic violence early on in his or her lives. In many developing Asian countries, this is not an important consideration, as domestic violence is considered a norm.

Another area where social learning theory research could be applied is in youth acquaintanceship projects in many of the developing Asian countries. Such research could aid youths at a high risk of committing date violence (and much later domestic violence) to comprehend in what ways abuse of power could lead to destructions in family life.

As most of the current studies have involved youth at a young age of less than seventeen, future studies should be undertaken between males and females at a slightly older age, for instance at colleges or universities.

More studies need to be undertaken in understanding cognitive discrepancy, and take a look at how cognitive evaluations of domestic violence actually impacts the viewpoint of the acceptability of using violence in close associations, and the probability of causing violence when dating.

LIMITATIONS

Parental violence and the propensity to become an aggressive person eventually is a learned behavior. However in this review only the social learning theory viewpoint was looked at.

In today's high complex digital economy smart phones and social media are also influencing deviant behavior. Smart phones have now transformed from communication tools to infotainment modes of communication, it has now started a revolution in terms of mediated social relations. This review did not consider this aspect of media and social theories. Including this component will offer an expansive explanation of deviant behavior.

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