**Outline and Evaluate the Social Learning Theory of Behaviour [16 marks]**

**B-** Bandura proposed that children learn through observation and imitation of other people within a social context. Social Learning Theory was based on the behaviourist principles that assume that all behaviour is a consequence of our environment. Unlike the behaviourist approach, however, social learning theory accepts that people exert some influence over their environment and that people are able to make decisions about whether to imitate others’ behaviour. Social learning theory is therefore an improvement on the behaviourist approach as is less deterministic and assumes people have an element of free will.

Bandura (1961) investigated social learning theory in his study using a Bobo Doll. Children were shown either an adult being aggressive towards a doll or playing nicely with it. When allowed in the room children who had seen the aggressive role model were more likely to behave aggressively towards it, by hitting it with hammers and guns, than those in the non-aggressive or control groups. This demonstrated that children learn behaviour through observation and imitation of role models. In a follow up study, Bandura and Walters found that children were more likely to imitate an aggressive role model who was praised for their behaviour, rather than one who was punished for it. This demonstrates the concept of vicarious reinforcement; that we observe others being reinforced or punished for their behaviour and then choose whether to imitate that behaviour.

However Bandura’s study has been criticised in lacking external validity. The children were all from Stanford university nursery and therefore may have had a more privileged background than others. Similarly the children were all aged 3-5 years and therefore the results of this study may be unable to be generalised to people of all social classes and ages.

Bandura also proposed that there were 4 mediational processes that occurred between observation of a behaviour and imitation. These were; attention- the behaviour has to be noticed, retention- we must remember the behaviour well enough to replicate it later, motor reproduction- the physical ability of the observer to perform the behaviour and finally motivation- the will to perform the behaviour. Bandura explained that we are likely to be motivated if the behaviour was performed by a role model (such as peer or celebrity) and if the performer was rewarded or reinforced for it- this is called vicarious reinforcement.

Much of the evidence that supports social learning theory was conducted in laboratory settings. Lab studies are criticised for being contrived as people may show demand characteristics, for example the children may have been led by the hammer and guns to behave more aggressively than usual. This means it is difficult to generalise the studies to the real world, which limits the validity of social learning theory as an approach.

However social learning theory does explain changes in behaviour across different cultures; such as gender norms that vary greatly world-wide. As children learn through media, peers and adults SLT can explain how these norms are learned and passed on within a specific culture.

Finally social learning theory does not consider any biological factors that may influence behaviour. For example it was found that boys were more physically aggressive than girls, even with the same role model. This cannot be explained by SLT but can be explained by the fact that boys are likely to have higher testosterone levels than girls, which make them more prone to aggression. This means that SLT does not account for all factors that may influence behaviour, which makes it reductionist.

**Outline and Evaluate the Social Learning Theory of Behaviour [16 marks]**

**A-** Albert Bandura proposed the idea that children learn through observation of other people. This means that through watching other people’s behaviour and the consequences that follow the individual then decides whether to perform that same behaviour. This means that social learning theory builds on the behaviourist ideas of learning but also includes the idea that people make their own decisions.

In 1961 Bandura investigated social learning theory in his Bobo Doll Study where children were exposed to a large inflatable doll that bounces back when pushed or hit. There were 72 children who were divided into 3 groups, a group who saw an aggressive role model who attacked a Bobo doll using hammers, guns and other weapons, a non-aggressive condition who saw an adult playing nicely with the Bobo Doll and a control group who did not have a role model to watch. When allowed in the room children had a range of toys to play with ranging from hammers, guns, tea sets, cuddly toys and a toy dart board. The children who had seen the aggressive role model were more likely to behave aggressively towards the doll, by hitting it with hammers and guns, than those in the non-aggressive or control groups who played with the other toys and did not interact with the Bobo Doll as frequently. Bandura and Walters did another study in 1963 where there were two groups of children. Those who saw adults playing aggressively with a Bobo Doll and were praised for being aggressive, and a different group who also saw an adult being aggressive to the doll but were told off for their behaviour. Bandura and Walters found that children were more likely to copy the behaviour of an aggressive role model who was praised for their behaviour, rather than one who was punished for it.

Bandura explained that people are more likely to copy the behaviour of people that they see as role models. This is likely to be because the role model has similar characteristics to the person, for example being a similar age, or the same gender or ethnicity. It can also be because the role model has desirable traits such as being famous or attractive which makes the individual strive to be more like them. This explains why people in the media (like singers or football players) can have such an influence on the behaviour of others.

Bandura also proposed that there were 4 processes that determine whether a behaviour will be copied. The first process is attention- where the person who is going to do the behaviour must first see it in the environment, such as on TV and it must catch their attention. Then the person must remember the behaviour as they will not be able to perform it if it is forgotten. Then the person must be able to physically copy out the behaviour using their muscles or skill to be able to replicate it. Finally the individual must have the will or desire to actually do the behaviour. This will happen more if the behaviour was performed by a role model (such as peer or celebrity).

However the two studies done by Bandura have been criticised as all the children were all from Stanford university nursery and were all young (3-5 years old). This means they do not represent all people from different backgrounds. Also it was done in a lab so it does not represent real life as it cannot tell us whether the children would have performed the same behaviour if it was a person, not a doll. This means it cannot tell us whether seeing aggression on the TV or on video games actually makes someone aggressive. Also social learning theory does not focus on whether genes or hormones are more likely to make the children aggressive, for example levels of testosterone making the boys more aggressive.

**A01- 6 marks A03- 10 marks**

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| Level | Marks | Description |
| 4 | 13-16 | Knowledge of social learning theory is accurate and generally well detailed. Evaluation is effective and thorough. The answer is clear and coherent and focused. Specialist terminology is used effectively.  |
| 3 | 9-12 | Knowledge of social learning theory is evident but there are occasional inaccuracies/omissions. . The evaluation is mostly effective. The answer is mostly clear and organised. Specialist terminology is mostly used appropriately |
| 2 | 5-8 | Limited knowledge of the social learning theory approach is present. Focus is mainly on description. Any evaluation is of limited effectiveness. The answer lacks clarity, accuracy and organisation in places. Specialist terminology is used inappropriately on occasions. |
| 1 | 1-4 | Knowledge of social learning theory is very limited. Evaluation is limited, poorly focused or absent. The answer as a whole lacks clarity, has many inaccuracies and is poorly organised. Specialist terminology is either absent or inappropriately used. |
|  | 0 | No relevant content |

Essay A= 7/16 marks

Essay B= 14/16 marks