Introduction to Human Learning

EDS 248
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Learning Theories

- Behaviorism
  - Learning = external/nurture
- Social Learning theory
  - Learning = external and internal factors
- Cognitive Psychology
  - Learning = internal/nature

Learning Theory Reflection Paper
Outline and Content

- Assumptions or ideas regarding learning/schooling held before the class
  - Pre-class personal theory
- Ways in which ideas have been changed or validated
  - Post-class personal theory
  - Understanding of current theories of learning
- Practical (psycho-educational) applications of theories
  - Understanding of current theories of learning
  - Reflective practice
- Future study proposals
  - Understanding of current theories of learning
  - Reflective practice
What is a Learning Theory?
The relationship between a theory and its principles

- What causes learning (principles)
  vs.
- Why learning has taken place (theory)

Principles (or laws) identify factors that consistently influence learning
- When present these factors cause specific effects
- They tell us what is important
- Tend to be more durable
- Are specific and testable

Theories explain why factors are important
- They explain the cause and effect relationship (why principles of learning have their effect)
- Describe the underlying mechanisms involved
- Help us to make sense of research
- Help us to design learning environments
- Disadvantage, may restrict our view/interpretation of data
- Are much more general than specific principles (no one study will verify)
For Example (my principles)
- Repetition improves learning
- Intrinsic value improves learning
- Extrinsic reasons for learning are inferior to intrinsic motivations.
- Making new material concrete improves learning.
- Learners need to be developmentally and emotionally available for new learning.

For Example (my principles)
- People learn best by practicing what they have done.
- Modeling improves learning.
- People learn best when they can make a meaningful personal connection to the material to be learned.

For Example (my theory)
- Both internal and external factors are important to learning. While both are important, all other things being equal, internal factors have a greater influence over learning.
  - Internal factors: development, emotions, motivation, and meaningful connections.
  - External factors: instruction, modeling, and motivation.
Activity

- Write an outline for the first section of your paper. Think about the principles that you feel are important to learning. Especially reflect on those instances where your own learning has been successful. In particular try to identify those factors that consistently affected your learning. List these personal principles of learning.

Concluding Thoughts

- Explanations provided by theories for specific cause/effect relationships are dynamic, they evolve, they are typically not static.
- Just as is true for the study of learning in general, it should also be true for your own personal theory. It should develop/evolve as this course progresses.