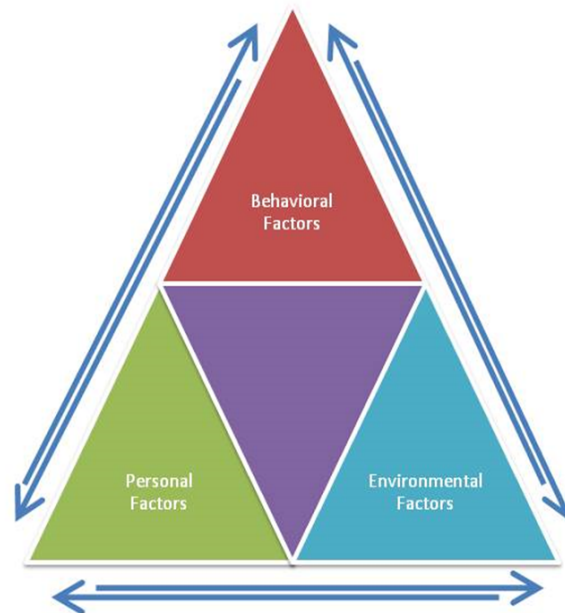


Fall 2016, Self-Efficacy Theory Case Study

Social Cognitive Theory

If a person observes another person performing a certain behavior and its consequence, and if they remember these sequence of events and act subsequently based on these observations, then the Social Cognitive Theory has been examined. The Social Cognitive Theory coined by Albert Bandura focuses on the interplay of cognitive, behavioral, individual, and environmental factors that all work together to determine motivation and behavior (PSU WC, L.7, p.1).

Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Determinism



The prevailing belief goes on to say that human thoughts, emotions and behavior are not always determined by a single reason but conversely are caused by a combination of many influences, which also has an effect on the influences themselves (PSU WC, L.7, P.2). The Social Cognitive Theory is composed of four interrelated goal realizations that have direct effects on motivation and goal attainment which are: self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reaction and self-efficacy (PSU, Wiki, L.7).

Self-Observation: Can be used to assess one's progress toward goal attainment and motivate behavioral change.

Self-Evaluation: Compares an individual's current performance with desired performance with a desired goal in mind.

Self-Reaction: If someone reacts well to a performance it can be motivating to achieving a goal. Reactions boosts self-efficacy and in turn helps sustain motivation towards the achievement of their goal.

Self-Efficacy: Increases the effort and persistence towards challenging tasks; therefore, increasing the likelihood that they will be completed" (Barling & Beattie, 1983, as cited in Axtell & Parker, 2003, p. 114).

In the case presented below, Jeanne's cognitive interpretation of the world is influenced by many factors. She is a new, inexperienced real estate agent who has joined a well known and established brokerage firm. She will draw influences from others and her environment and her actions will be shaped based on a multitude of factors. Another cognitive theory of motivation, Self-Efficacy, draws many links to Goal setting further joining the larger more broader theory of social cognition (PSU WC, L.7, p.3). The basic idea behind this theory is that motivation and performance are determined in part by how effective people believe they can be (Bandura, 1982). People will be more motivated when they feel competent to complete a task and think that they can successfully accomplish desired goals(PSU WC, L.7, p.3).

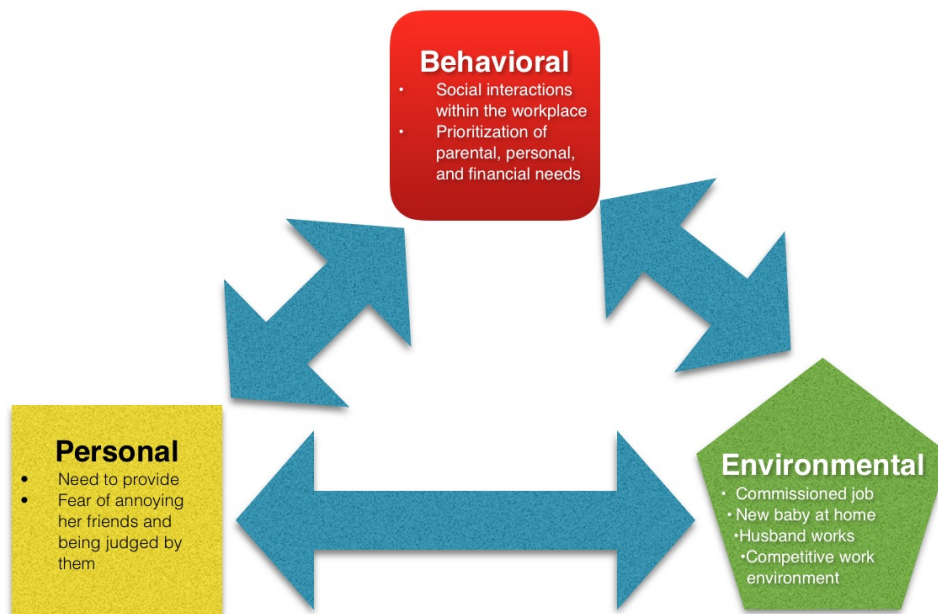
Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task. This belief determines motivation and performance. A strong belief leads to greater motivation. Strong ability does not necessarily mean greater motivation though. An individual can have strong capabilities but lack the belief in them and therefore have low motivation (PSU WC, L.7, p.4).



Applying Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory is a meta-theory composed of both Social Learning Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory. It is a rather broad theory and suggests that many factors contribute to motivation and behavior including: cognitive, behavioral, individual, and environmental factors (PSU WC, L.7, p.3). Bandura's idea of Triadic Reciprocal Determinism suggests that behavioral, personal, and environmental factors work together in tandem, yet determination of which factor might take a lead role is situational (PSU WC L.7, P.3). In our case study, there are behavioral, personal, and environmental factors that all have the potential to affect the subjects motivation. Jeanne has a family at home which means the environment she lives in at home may be busy and stressful. She may feel personally responsible to provide for her family, which may cause internal tension when she has to decide between spending quality family time at home, and productive time on the job. Her feelings of responsibility may drive her to spend more time away from home (changing her environment) in order to be better successful at her job. She may choose to spend more time with her more outgoing co-worker if she believes that will improve her outcome. She may choose to forego her fear of judgement if she burdens her friends with sales calls if her need for financial stability surpasses her need to believe she's positively favored in the eyes of her friends and family. The point to remember here is that each factor has the potential to affect the other depending on the situation and how Jeanne perceives it.



Applying Self-Efficacy Theory

Several components of the self-efficacy theory are inherent in our case study. All four primary sources of information (performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback) are seen in the case study (PSU WC, L.7, p.6).

Performance Outcomes: Although Jeanne is new to the real estate job, she has familiarity with showing properties. This helps to increase her self-efficacy because she can use her previous skills and knowledge to assist her in making sales. Knowing how to communicate with clients, understanding client needs, and managerial experience are some of the skills she can draw upon. Having confidence in her abilities to translate her previous skill set to her new job will vastly improve her self-efficacy in being able to complete tasks required of her. Furthermore, her past managerial experience will assist her in prioritizing her tasks.

Vicarious Experiences: The two primary individuals with whom Jeanne can observe for learning purposes are Jack and Brandon. Jack has the knowledge and experience Jeanne is seeking. Despite Brandon being new to the job, she can also learn and grow from his successes and failures along the way as well. In order for Jeanne to be successful at increasing her self-efficacy, she must be open to accepting insight from others. If she views Jack and Brandon as successful and competent, then hopefully she will view herself in the same manner. If however, she sees either of them struggling in certain areas such as completing a sale or gaining new

clients, she may develop low self-efficacy. In turn, her performance may suffer due to her lack of believing she can be successful despite the struggles of others.

Verbal Persuasion: Having weekly mentorship meetings is a form of verbal persuasion (PSU WC, L.7, p.8). This allows Jeanne an opportunity to receive feedback from Jack. In the case study, Jeanne was given a task of contacting a specific amount of individuals per day. Although Jack has confidence that she can successfully complete the task of contacting 10 people a day, Jeanne displays low self-efficacy in the area due to not wanting to burden her friends. If either Jack or Brandon make negative comments to her about her ability in completing this task, her self-efficacy may decrease. Perhaps all she needs is to hear encouraging words to keep trying to hopefully raise her self-efficacy.

Physiological Feedback: As mentioned in the case study, Jeanne does not want to disrupt her current status quo with her friends by asking them if they are interested in buying or selling real estate. Internally, this task may be stressing her out, thus decreasing her self-efficacy. She knows she has to make the calls, but is reluctant to do so. Furthermore, she is also experiencing stress at home in that she must provide for her family. Being a commissioned based job, she may start to feel pressure from her family in meeting their needs if she cannot complete tasks required of her at work. Currently, her self-efficacy is probably in the middle between high and low. Making that first deal will hopefully cause her to stop stressing as much and increase her self-efficacy in that she can be successful in real estate.

Another way in which Jeanne can increase her self-efficacy include further researching marketing strategies in order to become more comfortable with how to market. The more knowledge she gains, whether via study materials or on-the-job tasks, will allow her to become more relaxed and confident. Jeanne could also talk with Brandon to see if they might be able to help one another in certain tasks. Perhaps Brandon is having some difficulty in an area that Jeanne feels pretty strong in; helping him will reaffirm her ability to be successful. Lastly, Jeanne could take advantage of the weekly meetings with Jack and ask him questions about the job. Getting further insight from someone with a vast amount of experience could alleviate some hesitation in accomplishing certain tasks.

In addition to the four primary sources of information, there are three assessment processes which impact the level of self-efficacy Jeanne has: "Analysis of Task Requirements, Attributional Analysis of Experience, and Assessment of Personal and Situational Resources/Constraints" (PSU WC, Wiki, L.7).

Analysis of Task Requirements: Jeanne appears to be extremely committed to accomplishing the tasks set forth before her. She does not want to fail because it could be detrimental to her family. Therefore she is willing to put forth the energy and motivation required of her. If she did not believe she could be successful at real estate (low self-efficacy), she likely would not have agreed to take the job. She has a moderate level of self-efficacy which will increase as time progresses.

Attributional Analysis of Experience: If Jeanne succeeds at a particular task, she should take a few moments to analyze what was supposed to happen, what actually happened, and what factors led to the success of the task. Knowing this information will be useful in future tasks of a similar nature. The same aforementioned process can be used for task failures as well.

Assessment of Personal and Situational Resources/Constraints: Jeanne understands she is new to real estate and therefore seeks guidance from her mentor and peers. Knowing she lacks a client base, she must, despite her uncomfortableness, complete the exercise Jack has established. If not, she may end up losing her job to someone who is willing to accomplish the task.

Persistence, patience, knowledge, and confidence will all help to increase her self-efficacy. Resulting in a motivated person who knows what she must do to be successful and who is willing to put in the effort required due to her own sake and that of her family's.

Vicarious Experience

Negative Example - Brandon as negative: At the end of the first week, Jeanne noticed that Brandon was not as excited about real estate as he was when they first met. Jeanne began to ask Brandon about his experiences so far and he disclosed that he was having difficulties developing leads by speaking with friends and family, just as he was instructed to do by Jack. Brandon has been working in real estate for nearly three weeks and has not found one person interested in either buying or selling property. After speaking with Brandon, Jeanne is beginning to think she made a mistake by getting into real estate since she has no experience. After learning that Brandon is struggling to meet Jack's goals for them, Jeanne is starting to experience low self-efficacy with regard to cultivating leads and eventually selling property.

Jeanne views Brandon as a peer and has been comparing his performance to hers since she started. Since Jeanne thinks Brandon's competency is very similar to hers, she is having negative vicarious experiences, which impacts her own self-efficacy (PSU WC, L.7, p.6). After Jeanne heard about Brandon's failure to get business, it made her doubt her own ability to sell property. This loss of confidence in the task of selling real estate means she has a low self-efficacy.

Positive Example - Brandon as positive: Brandon is a recent marketing graduate and he is implementing marketing strategies he learned in college and hasn't seem to lose momentum. He has not yet secured any clients, but he seems not to be losing his motivation. Jeanne is intrigued with his excitement and feels positive about her abilities in the field.

After the first week, Brandon shares that he has had some positive feedback from the marketing strategies he's been using in the accountability meeting at the end of the first week. At that point, Jeanne asks Brandon about his strategies, and he happily shares what he's been doing. In turn, he points out that he has noticed some of her strengths in the experience she brings to the agency and asks her about them. They share ideas and it works to strengthen the self-efficacy in both individuals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with the case of Jeanne, during the process of starting a new career and attempting to build a clientele base she has the ability to

use self-efficacy theory as a way to increase her motivation and succeed in her new venture. She is capable of taking her strengths and using self-efficacy theory to increase her motivation and confidence mainly through these factors, performance outcomes, positive vicarious experiences and positive feedback. Performance outcomes by using her previous experience in property management to increase her belief in her ability to build clientele and sell homes. Positive vicarious experiences through watching her team at the real estate company grow and achieve home sales and income, will allow Jeanne to see where her hard work can lead her. Verbal persuasion can be influential with positive feedback from family, friends and mentorship meetings with Jack and Brandon. With all of these factors Jeanne's belief in her abilities will increase, and her confidence and strength at selling homes will grow. However, while she has the ability to use self-efficacy in a positive way to build on her confidence she could also decrease her self-efficacy and belief in herself through these factors and experiences. Negative vicarious experiences with Brandon or Jack, negative feedback from Jack or her husband, through physiological feedback when she feels as though she is putting out her friends or stressing out about bringing money into her family. These factors could lower her confidence and self-efficacy making her believe that her work has been a waste of time.

References:

Axtell, C. M. & Parker, S. K. (January 2003). Promoting role breadth self-efficacy through involvement, work redesign and training. *Human Relations*, 56(1), p. 113-131.

Pennsylvania State University World Campus (2016). PSYCH 484 Lesson 7: Self-Efficacy Theory: Do I think I can succeed in my work? Retrieved from <https://psu.instructure.com/courses/1803780/modules/items/21267660>

Pennsylvania State University World Campus Wiki Page (n.d.). PSYCH 484 Lesson 7: Self-Efficacy Theory. Retrieved from <https://wikispaces.psu.edu/display/PSYCH484/7.+Self-Efficacy+and+Social+Cognitive+Theories>