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Foundations for Understanding & Managing Behavior

Ch. 1. Basic Concepts of Behavior & Behavior Management

Historical Foundations for Understanding Behavior

Our understanding of behavior as evolved over time. For the most part it has been derived over a variety of different schools of thought

- A. Classical Conditioning – Pavlovian Conditioning – refers to the relationship between the stimulus and the behavioral response. Can be conditional (learned) or unconditional. Responses can be voluntary or involuntary.

John Watson – Father of Behaviorism – paired a loud noise with a white rat to condition fear in Albert.

A precursor to Operant conditioning was Edward Thorndike's "Law of Effect" - responses which lead to satisfying consequences will be strengthened and are likely to be repeated whereas responses that lead to unsatisfying consequences will be weakened and are unlikely to occur again.

- B. Operant Conditioning – B.F. Skinner (Father of Operant Conditioning) – basic mechanism for controlling human behavior is the principle of reinforcement. Our environment is filled with positive & negative consequences that mold our behavior.

Developed a complete system of rules that effectively results in learned behavior. Skinner box – mouse learned how to get food – Historical perspective – college research was predominantly behavioral in nature as opposed to cognitive or psychoanalytic.

Behavioral Vs. Psychoanalytic Approach

Behavioral approach focuses on overt behavior (behavior you can see), psychoanalytic approach focuses on psychological forces you can't see drives, impulses, needs, motives, conflicts and personality traits within the individual.

Behavioral approach views inappropriate behavior as learned, psychoanalytic approach views inappropriate behavior primarily as some maladaptive psych process or some underlying defect in the child's personality.

Weaknesses – psychoanalytic process removes child from the situation in which the inappropriate behavior occurs. Identification of problem does not lead to development of intervention for teacher

- C. Social learning Theory – an integrated approach – combines classical and operant conditioning with child's social environment and cognitive development. Albert Bandura (Father of Social Learning Theory) – the child is an active participant in learning - the personal and environmental factors do not function as independent determinants – they are interactive in a reciprocal way. Process called “reciprocal determinism”.

Studied the importance of modeling on the acquisition of behavior. Three steps: Attention, Retention and Reproduction. Aggression – TV violence – 4 effects on children

- a. teaches children how to be aggressive
 - b. glamorizes aggression
 - c. desensitizes children to cruelty and its effects
 - d. provides false sense of reality
- D. Behavior Therapy – behavior modification & behavior therapy share many of the same principles. Behavior modification stresses operant conditioning while behavior therapy stresses classical conditioning.

Behavior modification is primarily used with overt behaviors that are observable and measureable while behavior therapy is used with covert behaviors.

Treatment Strategies

- a. Systematic Desensitization (successful on phobias & issues involving stress & anxiety – strength of anxiety-producing stimuli could be reduced when paired with non-anxiety producing stimuli. Many small step-by-step pairings. Steps arranged in hierarchy from least to most arousing. Ex. “Fear of Flying” - buy ticket, ride to airport, waiting to get on plane, boarding plane, taxiing down runway, taking off, experiencing mid-air turbulence.
 - b. Modeling – observation and learning new behaviors from others – Ex. Child fearful of dogs – watching other children play with dogs.
 - c. Biofeedback – goal is to teach individuals how to control or manipulate involuntary physiological processes. Used in the treatment of headaches, seizures, pain, anxiety, and poor academic achievement
- E. **Applied Behavior Analysis – (Ivar Lovass – father of ABA)** – the typical approach involves repeated observations of one or a small number of behaviors over an extended period of time. Ex. One might observe hitting in a classroom setting for a period of days. Following the collection of baseline data interventions are introduced within the context of an appropriate

experimental design. The effects of the interventions are evaluated by examining the changing behavior.

Involves direct observation of behavior by one or more individuals. Very time intensive by all involved. One of the weaknesses is often determining to what degree did the behavior change as a result of the extra time given.

Basic Concepts of Behavior & Behavior Management

A. **Behaviors** – refers to both covert responses (feelings & emotions) and overt responses (behavior that is observable and measureable)

B. **Responses** – is a behavior that is observable and measureable. Behaviors can be in response to new stimuli that are added to the environment (professors lecture is boring) or to internal feelings such as being hungry.

Response Generalization – refers to changes in behavior other than the behavior that was targeted to change. Ex. Teacher asking for quiet by moving light switch to on/off position. Some children were in their seat or had their hands on their desk – this behavior was also learned in moving the on/off switch.

C. **Stimuli** – are events or activities within the environment that are capable of forming a relationship with behavior as either an antecedent or a consequence. The switching lights on/off could be the antecedent response to pay attention in class and you moving about getting ready for my lecture to end could be the consequence of it being 8:00.

Discriminative Stimulus – refers to something repeatedly being associated with certain behavior. Ex. A bell in school may serve as a stimulus for students to change classes.

Stimulus Generalization – occurrence of a behavior following a stimulus that's not presented during the stimulus-response training. Ex. Teacher just goes near the light switch without actually touching it.

D. **Antecedents** – What causes the behavior to occur? Antecedents are stimuli that occur prior to behaviors. Antecedents give us the opportunity to change behaviors before they occur. Certain environmental conditions are likely to elicit behaviors in individuals that may be avoided or prevented by means of simple environmental modifications. Ex. Noisy classroom leads to inattentiveness by students, structured environment leads to more focus and attention.

E. **Consequences** – What response is made after a teacher or child behaves in a certain way? Ex. Peter pushes Samantha, Classroom teacher criticizes a child in front of peers.

What does the consequence have on the initial response or antecedent? Ex. Child blurts out answer instead of raising hand when classroom teacher asks child a question. – this leads to child crying in class for 30 minutes. What is the teacher's response next time child blurts out answer instead of raising hand.

- F. Reinforcement** – is a response to a certain behaviors that increase the likelihood of a behavior. Possible effects of reinforcement:
- a. may maintain the current rate, duration, or intensity of a response
 - b. may raise the probability that a new response will occur again
 - c. may increase the future rate, duration, or intensity of a response
 - d. may strengthen a response that is weak and inconsistent

An important property of reinforcement is that its effect does not differentiate between appropriate or inappropriate behavior. Reinforcement is under the control of the user – the one who dishes it out.

Reinforcement may be used to maintain or increase inappropriate behaviors. Ex. Child's temper tantrums are reinforced when teachers and parents give in to the child's demands. Ex. Infant has trouble going to sleep at night and begins crying. Parents run into room when child is crying.

- G. Punishment** – type of stimulus that serves as a consequence for behavior. Possible effects of punishment:
- a. probability of new behavior occurring again is increased
 - b. future rate, duration and intensity of current behavior is decreased or eliminated
 - c. other dimensions or parts of the behavior are weakened

Like reinforcement punishment does not differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Unknowingly, teachers may punish appropriate behavior. Ex. When we become angry at children who show too much curiosity or engage in age appropriate behavior that is annoying. Constantly repeating what we say to them.

- H. Prompts & Cues** – prompts are antecedent stimuli that supplement discriminative stimuli in order to produce a specific behavior. Prompts are used to assure a correct response. Ex. A teacher may supplement ringing a bell with the verbal prompt, "Children, what are you supposed to do when you hear the bell". Prompts and cues should be seen as a temporary instructional aid. Natural prompts are more effective than artificial ones. Ex. The bell rings at the beginning and end of a class period.
- Verbal prompts** – most common type – giving instructions & directions
- Gestural prompts** – generally a pointing prompt, occasionally can result in a feeling prompt (facial expression)

Modeling Prompt – demonstrating part or all of the desired behavior to the student who imitates the action immediately. Ex. Lining up to go to lunch or special activities.

Basic Assumptions about Behavior & Behavior Management

Assumption 1. Most Behaviors are Learned – Behaviorists believe that most behaviors observed in children are learned. Children tend to exhibit behaviors that are reinforced and avoid behaviors that have not been reinforced or punished.

Assumption 2. Most Behaviors are Stimuli-Specific – Children behave differently in different environments. A child may have learned that in one environment tantrums are reinforced and in another environment they are not. Parents who say “my child is not like that at home” are not always wrong.

Assumption 3. Most Behaviors can be Taught, Modified & Changed – research studies tend to support this

Assumption 4. Behavior Change Goals should be Specific – behavior management strategies are based on planned and systematic approaches – behavior change goals should be stated in specific terms – they should be clearly observable and measureable

Assumption 5. Behavior Change Programs should be Individualized – behavior change programs must be individualized for each child in his environment. What one student finds reinforcing, another may find punishing. Ex. Structured vs. unstructured classroom or teacher

Assumption 6. Behavior Change Programs should Focus on the Here & Now – the past & the future cannot play an integral part in designing a behavior change program. Ex. Consequences of behavior should not be meted out when dad gets home. It needs to be done now.

Assumption 7. Behavior Change Programs should Focus on the Child's Environment – behaviorists are interested in the child in relation to his environmental, situational and social issues.

Myths & Misconceptions about Behavior & Behavior Management

Myth 1. Changing Another Person's Behavior is Coercive

Myth 2. The Use of Reinforcement to Change behavior is a Form of Bribery

Myth 3. Students will Learn to Behave Appropriately Only for Reinforcement

Myth 4. Student's should Work for Intrinsic Reinforcers

Myth 5. All Students should be Treated in the Same Way