

MODULE 27 OPERANT CONDITIONING

OPERANT CONDITIONING

- OPERANT CONDITIONING is where organisms associate their own actions with consequences. Actions followed by reinforcers increase; those followed by punishers often decrease.

SKINNER'S EXPERIMENTS

- B.F. Skinner work elaborated on what Edward Thorndike called the LAW OF EFFECT, the principle that behaviors followed by favorable consequences become more likely, and that behaviors followed by unfavorable consequences become less likely.
- Skinner designed an OPERANT CHAMBER, known as the Skinner Box. The box has a bar (lever) that an animal presses or a key (disc) the animal pecks to release a reward of food or water.
- REINFORCEMENT is in operant conditioning; any event that strengthens the behavior it follows.
- SHAPING is an operant conditioning procedure in which reinforcers guide behavior toward closer and closer approximations of the desired behavior. Observe a baseline behavior and guide the rat's actions toward the desired behavior.
- DISCRIMINATIVE STIMULUS is the operant conditioning, a stimulus that elicits a response after association with reinforcement.

TYPES OF REINFORCERS

- POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT which increase behaviors by presenting positive reinforcers. A positive reinforcer is any stimulus that, when presented after a response, strengthens the response.
- NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT strengthens a response by reducing or removing something negative. Taking an aspirin may relieve your headache, and pushing the snooze button will silence your annoying alarm. Negative reinforcement removes a punishing event.
- PRIMARY REINFORCEMENTS is an innately reinforcing stimulus, such as one that satisfies a biological need. A CONDITIONED REINFORCER is a stimulus that gains its reinforcing power through its association with a primary reinforcer; also known as a secondary reinforcer.

REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULES

- REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULES is a pattern that defines how often a desired response will be reinforced.

- **CONTINUOUS REINFORCEMENT** is reinforcing the desired response every time it occurs. **SPONTANEOUS RECOVERY** is recovery that a behavior can experience due to prior pairings that were shown in the past.
- **PARTIAL (INTERMITTENT) REINFORCEMENT** is a response only part of the time; results in slower acquisition of a response but much greater resistance to extinction than does continuous reinforcement. Gambling machines and lottery tickets. Children's behavior... occasionally giving into a child's tantrum for the sake of peace and quiet.
- **FIXED-RATIO SCHEDULES** reinforces behavior after a set number of responses. Coffee shops may reward us with a free drink after every 10 purchased.
- **VARIABLE-RATIO SCHEDULE** provides reinforcers after a seemingly unpredictable number of responses. This is slot-machines and fly fishing.
- **FIXED-INTERVAL SCHEDULES** is a reinforcement schedule that reinforces a response only after a specified time has elapsed. Not always effective because behavior only increases near known time of reinforcement.
- **VARIABLE-INTERVAL SCHEDULES** reinforce the first response varying time intervals. Responses to emails, Facebook, when not knowing when a reinforcement is going to occur.

PUNISHMENT

- Reinforcement increase a behavior; **PUNISHMENT** is any consequence that decreases the frequency of a preceding behavior. **POSITIVE PUNISHMENT** is where a punishment is given in order to decrease a behavior (spray water at a barking dog) and **NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT** is withdrawing a stimulus in order to decrease a behavior (taking away a teen's car for being late the night before).
- Drawbacks of physical punishment: 1. Punished behavior is suppressed, not forgotten. 2. Punishment teaches discrimination among situations, 3. Punishment can teach fear to the individual handing the punishment out, and 4. Physical punishment may increase aggression by modeling aggression as a way to cope with problems.

B.F. SKINNER

- Critics say Skinner dehumanizes people by neglecting their personal freedom and by seeking to control their actions. With this idea, Skinner replied with Does this give us hope that we can shape our future?

BE ABLE TO ANSWER: Identify the following terms: negative reinforcement, positive reinforcement, positive punishment, negative punishment.

PRACTICE FRQ: Mom is frustrated because 3-year-old Maya has started to spit frequently. She has decided to temporarily put away one of Maya's toys every time she spits. Mom is going to continue this until Maya has stopped spitting. Explain whether Mom's plan uses reinforcement or punishment. Explain whether Mom's plan is a positive or negative form of reinforcement.