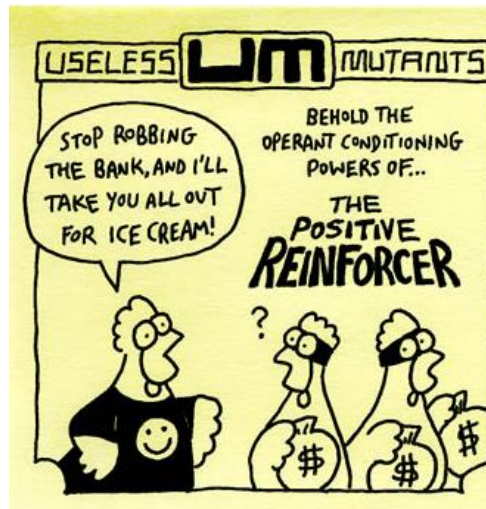


AP Psychology



6.2 - Operant Conditioning (Part I)

1

Operant Conditioning

• **Limitations of Classical Conditioning**

- Classical Conditioning focuses on existing reflexive behaviors that are automatically elicited by a specific stimulus
 - Does not account for the actions that someone would take voluntarily
- Learning involves new behaviors or voluntary actions that classical conditioning cannot explain

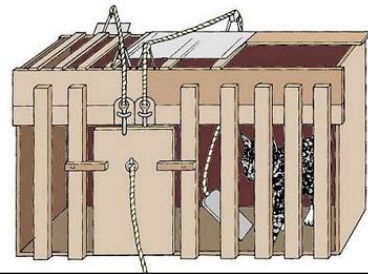


2

Operant Conditioning

• The Law of Effect

- Theorized by Edward Thorndike (1874-1949)
- Used baby chicks and cats to systematically investigate animal behavior
- Stated that voluntary behaviors are influenced by their consequences
 - In other words, behaviors that lead to satisfying outcomes are more likely to be repeated
 - Behaviors that lead to unpleasant outcomes are less likely to be repeated

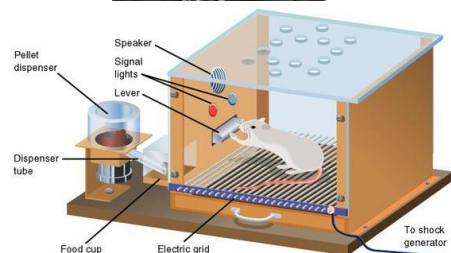
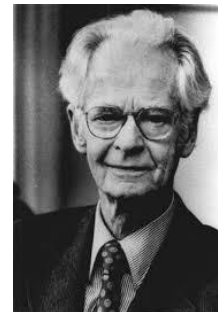


3

Operant Conditioning

• BF Skinner & Operant Conditioning

- Skinner believed that psychologists should only focus on observable behavior that could be objectively measured and verified
- Operant = Any active behavior that operates upon the environment to generate consequences
- Operant Conditioning is a learning process in which behavior is shaped and manipulated by consequences (rewards or punishment) that follow a response



4

Operant Conditioning

• Reinforcement

- Occurs when a reinforcing stimulus follows an active behavior or response
- The stimulus **increases** the probability that the behavior or response will be repeated
- Types of Reinforcers:
 - **Primary:** Naturally reinforcing for a given species
 - Food, water, shelter, etc.
 - **Secondary:** Gains its effectiveness through a learned association with primary reinforcers
 - Money!



5

Operant Conditioning

• Positive Reinforcement

- Adding a positive stimulus following a desirable behavior
- Examples?



• Negative Reinforcement

- Removing an adverse stimulus following a desirable behavior
- Examples?

• Remember!

- Positive ≠ Good
- Negative ≠ Bad



6

Operant Conditioning

• Punishment

- A process in which an aversive stimulus follows a behavior or response
- The aversive consequence **decreases** the likelihood of the behavior being repeated



• Positive Punishment

- Adding an aversive stimulus after a response
- "Punishment by application"

• Negative Punishment

- Removing a reinforcing stimulus after a response
- "Punishment by removal"
- NOT Negative Reinforcement!!



7

Operant Conditioning

• Punishment

- Drawbacks:
 - Punishment can produce undesirable effects such as fear, hostility, and aggression
 - Punishment is often only a temporary change in behavior
 - Can cause a behavior pattern of "Learned Helplessness"
 - The learner feels that it is impossible to escape punishment, which leads to a passive feeling of hopelessness that may lead to depression
- Effective Uses:
 - Delivered immediately after the behavior
 - Should be certain and "fit the crime"
 - Should focus on the behavior, not the character of the learner



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