

W2 Portfolio Activity: Behaviorism

The Theory of Behaviorism:



Behaviorism, also known as behavioral psychology, is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment. Behaviorists believe that our responses to environmental stimuli shape our behaviors.

Behaviorism was established in 1913 with the publication of Watson's classic paper "Psychology as the Behaviorist views It". Behaviorism refers to the school of psychology founded by John B. Watson based on the belief that behavior can be measured, trained, and changed. In 1930 Watson proclaimed:

"Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select-- doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and, yes, even beggarman and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors." (Cherry, 2020)

Other major contributors to Behaviorism include: B.F. Skinner, Ivan Pavlov, Edward Thorndike, and Clark Hull.

Experiments by behaviorists identify conditioning as a universal learning process. There are two major types of conditioning, Classical Conditioning, and Operant Conditioning, each yielding a different behavioral pattern. (Jaehnig, 2021)

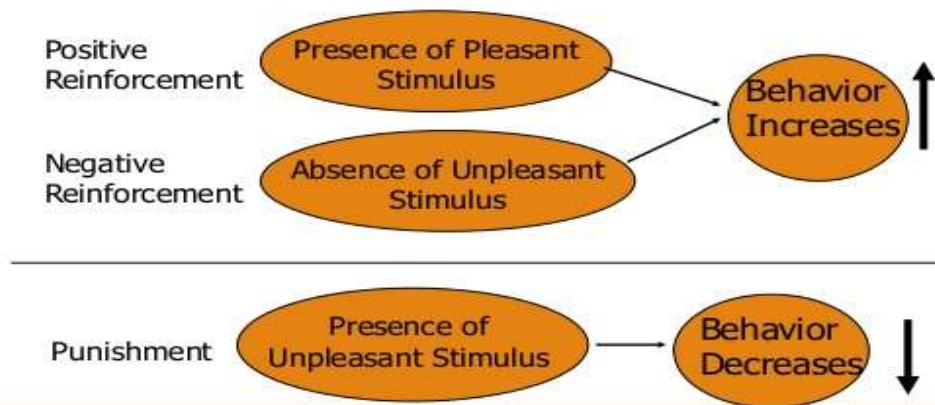
Behaviorism in the Classroom:

In the classroom, the behavioral learning theory is key in understanding how to motivate and help students. Information is transferred from teachers to learners from a response to the right stimulus. Students are a passive participant in behavioral learning—teachers are giving them the information as an element of stimulus-response. Teachers use behaviorism to show students how they should react

and respond to certain stimuli. This needs to be done in a repetitive way, to regularly remind students what behavior a teacher is looking for. Without positive reinforcement, students will quickly abandon their responses because they do not appear to be working. Repetition and positive reinforcement work together in the behavioral learning theory. Motivation plays an important role in behavioral learning. Positive and negative reinforcement can be motivators for students. Students who receive positive reinforcement see a direct correlation to continuing excellence. Students who receive no praise experience negative reinforcement. Positive punishment weakens a response by presenting something unpleasant after the response. (B.F Skinner, 1950)

Behaviorism can easily be applied to student's behaviors in a classroom. Positive Behaviors are reinforced through incentives and Negative Behaviors are eliminated through punishments.

Skinner's Operant Conditioning



Behaviorism Example:

When working with students in the preschool age group cookies/snacks are a good reward for positive behavior. Students do not want to be left out when snacks are given out in class and tend to stay on task to ensure they receive one. A bell and a jar full of different cookies are two useful tools to use in facilitating good student behaviors. Below is an example of behaviorism created using these two tools.

Stimulus: A teacher rings her bell on her desk to get students to sit down quietly at their desk.

Response: When the students hear the bell ring they immediately sit quietly at their desk and look forward in the room towards the teacher for further instructions.

Positive reinforcement: Students that follow the teacher's instructions and are sitting quietly at their desk get to choose one item out of the cookie jar. The cookie jar is passed around the classroom for students to make a cookie selection.

Negative reinforcement: No bell is rung. Students arrive to class, immediately sit down quietly at their desk, and look forward in the room towards the teacher for further instructions.

Positive Punishment: Students that do not follow the teacher's instructions need to write 100 times the sentence "I will follow the teacher's instructions and sit quietly at my desk looking towards the teacher when the bell rings".

The Pros of developing instruction that is grounded in Behaviorism:

1. The positive reinforcement aspect of Behaviorism helps students see that there are rewards for following the rules.
2. The school classroom runs more smoothly because of the regulated behaviors.
3. The students tend to learn to be better behaved using Behaviorism.
4. Many teachers are successfully using Behaviorism in the classroom.

The Cons of developing instruction that is grounded in Behaviorism:

1. Teachers feel that Behaviorism is primarily extrinsically motivated and less intrinsically.
2. There are teachers that feel they are inappropriately manipulating student behaviors.
3. Teachers become more authoritarian in interacting with students in the classroom.
4. Instruction becomes more teacher centered and does not promote appropriate independent student behavior.

Behaviorism is deemed applicable to instructional design when you aim:

- To create measurable and observable learning outcomes among students.
- To use tangible rewards and informative feedback to improve student learning performance.
- To guide students in mastering a set of predictable skills or behaviors.

References:

1. Cherry, K. (2020, April 1). Biography of Psychologist John B. Watson. Retrieved from: <https://www.verywellmind.com/john-b-watson-biography-1878-1958-2795550#:~:text=John%20B.%20Watson%20was%20a%20pioneering%20psychologist%20who,remembered%20for%20his%20research%20on%20the%20conditioning%20process.>
2. Jaehnig, J. (2021, January 28). What is Behavioral Learning. Retrieved from: <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/behavior/what-is-behavioral-learning/>
3. B. F. Skinner (1950) Are Theories of Learning Necessary? Psychological-Review, Retrieved from: <https://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/learning-theory-research/behaviorism/>
4. Image of Behaviorism. (N.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com>
5. Image of Skinner's Operant Conditioning (N.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com>
6. Drew, C. (2020) Behaviorism-Skinner's Education Learning Theory. Retrieved from: <https://www.helpfulprofessor.com/behaviorism>

7. Admin (2019) A Quick No-Nonsense Guide to Basic Instructional Design Theory. Retrieved from: <https://www.shiftelearning.com>