Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

4. Describe different ways in which humans learn new behaviors.
   4.1 List and explain each of the four key elements that make classical conditioning take place.
   4.2 Discuss how Thorndike's law of effect served as the basis for operant conditioning.
   4.3 Describe six reasons why punishment often fails to effectively change behavior.
   4.4 Compare social norms and social roles, and note how each contributes to the social rules that govern a culture.
   4.5 Explain how diffusion of responsibility, deindividuation, and anonymity contribute to the madness of crowds.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 7: Learning and Conditioning

Chapter 8: Behavior in Social and Cultural Context

Unit Lesson

Chapter 7: Learning and Conditioning

Can you really teach an old dog some new tricks? Does one's learning history impact his or her future learning potential? If behaviors can be learned, can they be unlearned as well?

Wade, Tavris, and Garry (2014) explain that behaviorists use two types of conditioning to describe our actions: classical and operant. However, what can be done to overcome negative fears and behaviors? Many scholars suggest that fearful behaviors can be conditioned. For instance, a person who is originally bitten by a dog may develop a fear of all dogs due to the fact that the dog (stimulus) is now associated with a negative attack. One way to overcome such fears is by embracing systematic desensitization, in which the person is slowly exposed to the fear-evoking stimulus in a safe environment. This form of therapy can be compared to extinction. What do you think? Can you learn to overcome a certain fear by associating it with a new thought? As you read this section, you will learn more about classical conditioning and the various attempts to shape behaviors.

As you continue your exploration of the material, begin to examine your own thoughts in relation to operant conditioning. What prompts one to approach certain behaviors? Conversely, what issues might encourage one to avoid other behaviors? Edward Thorndike's law of effect supposes that we are more prone to repeat certain behaviors that receive reinforcement. What do you think? Have you ever given a reinforcer to a child to promote a certain behavior? As you read this section, take note of the various behavior modification techniques associated with operant conditioning. Which is the most effective in your opinion? Which technique has the potential to create negative reactions? How could these be used in a positive way to enrich educational experiences?

Do all individuals learn the same way? Will differing perspectives emerge when the same event is experienced by various individuals? Much research has been conducted to ascertain the intricate workings of the mind. Edward Tolman (1949) focused on latent learning. Tolman advanced that six types of learning exist: drive discrimination, field expectancies, cathexis, motor patterns, field-cognition modes, and equivalence beliefs. For example in motor patterns, Tolman suggested that an animal would repeatedly shake a fencepost
in order to gain access to more grass which serves as his meal. Tolman’s various schools of thought were a culmination of the works conducted by Clark Hull, various gestaltists, and Edwin Guthrie. As you examine this section, you will learn more about how one’s perceptions, social interactions, and personality traits can shape his or her responses.

How effective is punishment? According to Martin and Pear (2010), people often embrace physical punishment by dispensing a stimulus that is designed to elicit discomfort. Electrical shocks, loud sounds, spankings, and pinches would be classified as such. On the other hand, response cost entails the removal of a specific reinforcement when an unsatisfactory action takes place. For instance, have you ever received a parking ticket, bank fee, or library fine? Did these punishments help to reshape your future actions?

As you conclude your study of this chapter, take a moment to reflect upon your personal opinion in regards to violence. Are you bothered if you view aggressive acts on television or in games? Do you think most individuals have become desensitized to such actions? What implications will our numbing reactions have on future generations?

Chapter 8: Behavior in Social and Cultural Context

What do you think you’re doing? Why are you standing so close to me?

In this section, Wade et al. (2014) share research conducted by several scholars that provides insight into social attitudes, behaviors, and group roles. Social psychologists seek to examine group influence on one’s behaviors. Consequently, cultural psychologists study the impact of cultural influences on one’s actions. In a particular study conducted in the 1960’s, Stanley Milgram sought to uncover the reasons why individuals obey authority figures, even if the orders violated one’s ethics. The controversial study revealed some alarming findings. What do you think? Could you have the tendency to hurt another individual if directed to do so by your superior? Read this next section to discover the shocking truths.

"You’re an idiot" yells John as he storms out of the room while slamming the door in Bob’s face. What characterization about John immediately comes to mind? Do you think John is a hostile individual? Would you predict that he has a short temper? What if you knew that Bob had just punched and insulted John? Would you still think badly of John? This is a prime example of the fundamental attribution error. This occurs when one overestimates a personality trait as a source of behavior while underestimating the influence of a particular situation. Have you ever been guilty of judging another individual simply based on observations alone? As you read this section, carefully examine the various social influences on one’s beliefs and behaviors.

Do you love hanging out with large groups? As you continue your examination of the material, pay particular attention to the section related to the influence of groups. Studies have shown that many individuals have an innate need to belong, but how far will we go to be accepted? Have you ever noticed that you behave differently while in the presence of others versus when you are alone? If you are in a close-knit group, are you more likely to voice your opinion if it goes against the opinions of others in the group? Are you more willing to trust the judgment of a crowd than that of your own instincts? This section will reveal some fascinating findings in regards to the powerful influence groups have on us each day.

Did you like my pic on Instagram? When are you going to accept my friend’s request on Facebook? How many followers do you have on Twitter?

Social networking has become the norm in the twenty-first century. According to many scholars today, these networking websites have drastically altered the size of our social networks. Known as Dunbar’s number, Robin Dunbar estimated the average human’s social network to consist of approximately 150 people in 1992 (Roberts, Wilson, Fedurek, & Dunbar, 2008). Was this ever truly a realistic number? How does that statistic compare to your inner circle? Do you actually have effective social relationships with all of your “friends”?

Do you think racism still exists? Could you identify individuals who still embrace prejudice acts in the twenty-first century? Has racism actually declined or taken on a new face? As you read this section, critically examine your own beliefs and biases. Were you taught to detest certain groups of people based on skin color alone? Have you ever embraced certain negative, unconscious thoughts against various groups because your family taught you to do so? Much can be learned when examining the influence that groups
have on racism and prejudice acts. Is it possible to embrace certain strategies to move beyond these negative behaviors?

Do you think individuals are inherently good or evil? As you approach the end of this unit, carefully examine your viewpoint of human nature. For example, if someone does something nice for you, should you automatically repay the favor? We are all influenced by varying social processes including entrapment, conformity, and stereotyping. Challenge yourself to examine your own beliefs while reviewing this section. Is there a need to alter your thinking?

References


Suggested Reading

Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 7 PowerPoint Presentation. Click [here](#) for the PDF version.

Click [here](#) to access the Chapter 8 PowerPoint Presentation. Click [here](#) for the PDF version.

Various films exist that illustrate aspects of learning. The movies listed below relate to operant and classical conditioning as well as observational learning. For additional enrichment, take a couple of hours to review one or more of these movies to identify the learning concept portrayed.

- *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)
- *As Good as it Gets* (1997)
- *Crocodile Dundee* (1986)
- *Jurassic Park* (1993)
- *Planet of the Apes* (1968; 2001)

As you review the film(s), ponder the following questions:

1. Which type of learning was depicted in the film?
2. Did learning occur as predicted by the theory? In essence, was the learning effective?
3. Were any ethical concerns raised in the film? If so, what were they?

The following two psychology articles are found within the CSU Online Library. The articles discuss the topics of operant and classical conditioning.

**Operant Conditioning:**
Classical Conditioning:

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Quiz

1. Ivan Pavlov studied the reflexive flow of saliva in dogs. He used meat powder or other food to trigger the salivation. It was later observed that the salivation in the dog was triggered even before the food was placed in its mouth. In this experiment, __________ was the unconditioned stimulus.
   a. food
   b. thoughts of anticipation
   c. salivation
   d. the sight of the food dish

2. Every week, Jade spends her allowance on a half-pound of sour lemon gummy candies even though they always make her mouth water. One day, as she is walking down the street, Jade sees a girl carrying a little white bag that looks like a candy shop bag. Jade notices that her mouth is puckering and overflowing with saliva. In this example, the unconditioned stimulus is the:
   a. little white bag.
   b. allowance money.
   c. puckering and saliva.
   d. sour lemon gummy candy.

3. Based on his observations of cats in puzzle boxes, Thorndike concluded that:
   a. behavior modification does not work.
   b. animals can learn from watching others model behavior.
   c. behavior is controlled by its consequences.
   d. there are biological limits to what behaviors an animal can learn.

4. __________ is the process by which a response becomes more likely to occur or less so, depending on its consequences.
   a. Classical conditioning
   b. Operant conditioning
   c. Higher-order conditioning
   d. Counterconditioning

5. Tim yells at his daughter Allison for soiling her pants. He also threatens to spank her if she ever does it again. Next week, she soils her pants again. According to studies on punishment, why did Tim’s approach fail?
   a. The threat was a reinforcer.
   b. The punishment did not tell her how to change her behavior.
   c. Allison was not punished immediately.
   d. Yelling is not a form of punishment.

6. The application of operant-conditioning techniques to teach new responses or to reduce or eliminate maladaptive or problematic behavior is called __________.
   a. stimulus generalization
   b. higher-order conditioning
   c. counterconditioning
   d. behavior modification
7. Donald enters an elevator and stands in it, facing the back instead of turning around to face the elevator door. Donald is violating:
   a. his gender role.
   b. a social role.
   c. a norm.
   d. a stereotype.

8. Tahir, an Arab, and Jan, a Swede, meet at a dinner for international students. Because the cultures of the two men differ with regard to __________, both may feel uncomfortable during their conversation.
   a. knowledge of a common eating etiquette
   b. attitudes toward higher education
   c. explicit laws
   d. conversational distance

9. Lucas walks around his busy college campus between classes. He notices smoke coming from the side of the cafeteria, but assumes that someone inside already has called the fire department. What phenomenon does this example illustrate?
   a. Just-world hypothesis
   b. Diffusion of responsibility
   c. Deindividuation
   d. Groupthink

10. During baseball games and soccer matches, the fans scream and cheer from the stands. Sometimes even the most reserved person who is watching joins in. This situation is an example of __________.
    a. the validity effect
    b. deindividuation
    c. the familiarity effect
    d. cognitive dissonance

### Quiz Answer Key

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Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.