E3 Influences

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I believe in conditioning in that I reward good behavior and punish negative behavior. If my son was particularly well behaved, I make note of it and offer him a reward for doing so. This is instead of bribing him with candy if he does something. Over time, he has learned to some degree, that doing things without being prompted will get him more praise than if he does things he is expected to do because I am offering the reward. Like cleaning up his mess when he spills his chocolate milk. The end goal is to modify out the inappropriate behavior by reinforcing the good. And if necessary, punishing the bad.

I heavily apply this technique to my teaching. When students offer answers to prompts, rather than sitting disconnected and silent, I give those kids candy. This prompts other students to offer answers, even if they may not be right. Sadly, this results in kids only attempting to answer questions if I have a candy in my hand. But I have to admit, in a very Pavlov way, they perk up when I rattle the wrapper.

B.F. Skinner was an operant behaviorist. His Operant Conditioning was a practice that rewarded some behavior and punished others. In his example, a rat may push a red button and be rewarded with food, and pushing the blue button would give the rat a shock. So over time the rat learned to avoid the blue button. Skinner believed that internal thoughts and motivations could not be used to explain behavior, but instead we should look at external stimuli. Skinner's operant conditioning, as opposed to Pavlov's conditioning, states that behavior is conditioned by reactions that occur after the behavior, rather than before.
Skinner's work was influenced by his life in multiple ways. First, he was an inventor. He crafted a box called the "Skinner Box" in which he placed a rat. The rat would then step accidentally step on the pedal and get the food, then learned what caused the reward and how to get it again. So a behavior, followed by a reinforcing stimulus results in an increased probability of that behavior happening again in the future.

He also had a family of his own. It is said that his wife asked him to create a safer crib, so he constructed one out of plexiglass and created a heating mechanism for it, getting rid of the need for blankets. This was controversial as he was accused of experimenting on his children. After observing the students in his daughter's fourth grade math class, he decided that there must be a better way for teaching children. The teacher was not providing immediate reinforcement, which is critical to the learning process. He thought that students needed to be immediately notified of the accuracy or inaccuracy of their work in order to be successful learners. This prompted him to apply his knowledge of behavioral psychology to education.
References


