

Introduction: How voluntary actions are affected

Even before Redl and Wattenberg published their suggestions for working with the group, a Harvard psychologist named Burrhus Frederic Skinner was making interesting findings about how our voluntary actions are affected by what happens to us immediately after we perform a given act.

Skinner is respected as perhaps the greatest behavioral psychologist of all time.** He published articles and books based on his findings and beliefs about human behavior. During all those years, Skinner never concerned himself with classroom discipline. However, his followers saw the applicability of his findings, especially in regard to encouraging students to behave acceptably in the classroom. Those followers, sometimes referred to as "Neo- Skinnerians," devised and popularized the procedure of behavior modification which is used extensively in different realms of human learning.

Source: <http://slideplayer.com/slide/7723713/>

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40. Behavior modification (not a term Skinner used) refers to the overall procedure of shaping student behavior intentionally through reinforcement.This procedure still comprises a major part of many teachers' discipline systems,. particularly at the primary grade level. Constant reinforcement, provided every time a student performs a desired act, helps new learnings become established. The teacher might praise Jonathan every time he raises his hand, or privately compliment Mary every time she turns in required homework.. **41.**

Intermittent reinforcement, in which rewards are supplied only occasionally, is sufficient to maintain desired behavior once it has become established. After students have learned to come into the room and get immediately to work, the teacher will only occasionally need to express appreciation. Behaviors that are not reinforced soon disappear or, as Skinner said, become extinguished. If Roberto raises his hand in class but is never called on, he will sooner or later stop raising his hand

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42.Successive approximation refers to a behavior-shaping progression in which behavior comes closer and closer to a preset goal. This process is evident when skills are being built. Here students are rewarded regularly for improvement. Punishment often has negative effects in behavior modification and hence is not used in the classroom. Skinner believed punishment could not extinguish inappropriate behavior.

43. Although Skinner did not concern himself with classroom discipline per se, his discoveries concerning the shaping of desired behavior through reinforcement led directly to behavior modification, still used to speed and shape academic and social learning. Years ago many primary grade teachers used behavior modification as their entire discipline system, rewarding students who behaved properly and ignoring those who misbehaved. Very few teachers now use behavior modification as their discipline system,yet Skinner's principles of reinforcement are applied in classrooms everywhere..



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