

# Operant conditioning, classical conditioning and social learning theory



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

“ Joe is 79 years old and has recently entered a private nursing home. His behaviour is proving a problem to all around him. He shouts at the nursing staff, is very demanding and constantly argues with other residents.

He frequently hides the television remote control and insists that other people in the leisure room should be ‘ discussing important world events not watching trashy programmes’. The nursing home staff and other clients initially indulged him but his behaviour seems to be getting worse. He is showing signs of depression and lethargy which alternates with his difficult behaviour. It had reached the point where the person in charge of the nursing home is so concerned about the negative effect on other clients that she is considering asking him to leave.” by Stretch, B, Whitehouse, M

(2007)Operant ConditioningWhen relating Joe’s behaviour to operant conditioning it seems that he has learnt how to get a positive reward in a negative way when with his past carers, by shouting his demands at them, and by causing arguments with his fellow residents so he can be given something to make him stop. As he has taught himself on how to get positive rewards and privileges in his last residence, he is getting frustrated at his new home because he is not getting what he wants when he wants it.

I think one reason Joe keeps hiding the remote from his fellow residents is because he wants to be able to have in-depth discussions with them about recent events to help stimulate his social development. If this is the case, Joe’s carers should explain to him that he cannot force the others to watch certain things on the television (TV), but can talk to them about the important issues if they want too, and make it known that he can talk to the carers about any of his needs as well. He may also be used to having

<https://assignbuster.com/operant-conditioning-classical-conditioning-and-social-learning-theory/>

conversations with family and friends about world issues and is in a routine that has suddenly changed when moved into the home. To get around this the carers should ask his past carers about his routine and try to adapt to it as much as possible to keep it the same, but gradually change it to include new activities that the home can offer, giving him rewards if he participates or is enthusiastic. Personally, I think that the operant conditioning perspective is one of the best for changing challenging behaviour because it is the one that is subconsciously learnt throughout life, for example, getting rewarded for eating your dinner as a child, or being given a promotion for meeting targets and doing extra work in your job as an adult.

Alternately, being arrested for a criminal offence or being told off at school for fighting are negative behaviours being punished which can then be learnt. The strengths of operant conditioning would be the range of methods that have been developed around B. F Skinner's theory to help challenge behaviour, and how much it is used in everyday life, such as parenting, training pets etc. Also, people's views have changed on how they look at obstacles in their way and how they can resolve them. Weaknesses of the perspective would be that it won't always work because people can just pretend to of learnt better behaviour so they get the reward, but soon after go back to the negative behaviour. (DePaul.

2004). Also, there can be ethical issues when using the perspective on what is negative and positive behaviour in certain situations. For example, some people can be brought up as children to always say ' please and thank you', whereas others can learn to ' take what you can get when you can get it'.

This could be because of different cultural backgrounds and the geography <https://assignbuster.com/operant-conditioning-classical-conditioning-and-social-learning-theory/>

on where they have been raised or what they have picked up from their social environment. Classical Conditioning When relating Joe's behaviour to classical conditioning, he could have picked up a stimulus of how to react when someone was to switch over the TV or not get his own way.

For example, say Joe was watching something on TV with someone in his past and the TV was turned over and the other person got angry or shouted to turn the TV back, Joe may have picked it up that if the TV is turned over, if he shouts it will be put back to the previous channel. He could then of expanded this to other situations until he gets his own way, making it a reason why he could have learnt to shout for his demands or why he has certain issues about the TV. I think that to change Joe's behaviour the carers would need to find out why he shouts and what his issues are about the TV program. They would then have to attempt to change the conditioned stimulus for Joe's behaviour to something positive that can benefit him and his fellow residents. Pavlov's theory is a well thought up perspective on how to subconscious can decide on the body's actions to certain stimuli, but I personally believe that there is more to a person's actions than and unconditioned response. Which is why I believe the operant conditioning to be better because you learn your actions first then repeat them if you choose, whereas Pavlov believed that you would just react a certain way in a certain situation.

A main weakness of the classical conditioning perspective would be that if you don't know the history of a person you don't know how or why they have unconditionally learnt a stimulus, making it harder for you to change it. A strength of this perspective would be that it can start to explain any random <https://assignbuster.com/operant-conditioning-classical-conditioning-and-social-learning-theory/>

behaviour a person does in certain situations. Social Learning When relating Joe's behaviour to the social learning theory, he could be copying someone else's behaviour that he has witnessed before to get his demands met. By using the modelling method, Joe may have watched someone shout to get their own way and taken notice to what they did exactly, being put into a situation where he gets the opportunity to copy the behaviour and put it to the test, evidently ending with him getting what he wanted. If this is the case he learnt to get his own way by observing someone else and then adapting it for the same situations he gets put into.

To change his behaviour the nursing staff would have to put up with Joe's behaviour for a while until he realises that he won't get his needs met by shouting anymore. This could take some time to work as he may find it hard to understand why it isn't working, but he will soon see that it doesn't work in his new environment. Personally I believe this perspective to be one of the most effective when trying to change challenging behaviour. This could be because the social learning theory is closely linked to the operant conditioning perspective because they both are learnt through doing certain actions and observing the consequences. A main strength of this perspective is that most of what is learnt is through observations and interactions with other people socially, which can affect the way the others can act in similar situations.

This can also be seen as a weakness though, for example, if Joe was to start shouting a demand at a nurse and they gave into him, the others may see the behaviour as acceptable and copy him, which is why the nurses should

try to get to the bottom of why Joe behaves in these manners when he wants something or has an opinion.