

# Behaviorism time line and today's world

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



Introduction Behaviorism, as a theory evolved from around 1930 and fell out of favor around 1960. Here the topic will look at the linear existence of behaviorism in reference to the discipline of psychology, as well as the main influential persons that raised the theory from its infancy to its heights as to the contributions each made. In conclusion, relevance to what is still in use to day as residual as well as what differences have happened: what has changed and what has stayed the same.

This investigation of the actual time line in comparison with the various groupings of the base theory as it evolved into various sub-groupings will be looked at particularly. Behaviorism Time Line and Today's World To have an idea of the theories involving behaviorism, it becomes crucial to know and understand the vocabulary and background of the terms and theories of the topic being discussed. This is a brief introduction of the theory of behaviorism, as it will be discussed and dissected here in.

The evolution of this theory as well as contributions by its various champions will be looked at in a sort of time line to see what has been retained and what has been discarded over time. Behaviorism is the idea of all learned behaviors find genesis in specific conditioning; and that this conditioning occurs with interaction with the environment (Cherry, 2009). Behaviorism also purports systematic and observable study with little or no consideration of internal mental states (Cherry, 2009). Behaviorism can be broken into two distinct areas, being: classical and operant conditioning (Cherry, 2009).

Classical conditioning consists of pairing a naturally occurring stimulus with a response, followed by the transference of the relationship to a formerly

neutral stimulus, thus causing the reaction to the newly transferred stimulus relationship (Goodwin, 2008). Operant conditioning on the other hand consists of the relationship of either a reward or consequence regarding certain behaviors (Goodwin, 2008). This is also referred to as instrumental conditioning and revolves around the consequences of actions taken.

Behaviorism can trace its roots to the empiricism idea of classical association pioneered by John Locke and David Hume as an idea loosely tossed about shortly before the 20th century in consideration of learning in animals and humans linking mental states and perceptual influences (O'Donell, 1986). The earliest reference to behaviorism as an idea in consideration though comes from 1863 when Ivan Sechenov published a paper titled Reflexes of the Brain, where a concept of the mind's responses being inhibited in the central nervous system instead of the brain itself occurs (Cherry, 2009).

Even with this evidenced, the solidification of behaviorism would occur with the publication of the behavioral manifesto by John Watson in 1913 ushered in the realm of behaviorism that flourished from around 1930 until 1960, when it fell out of favor (O'Donell, 1986). The time line genesis is associated with Watson's manifesto, but other prominent scientists had pending works in place before, such as Pavlov with his classical conditioning research, officially starting around 1910 (Babkin, 1949).

This researcher worked with canines in reference to classical conditioning and behavior modification in Russia, and then the Soviet Union as it fell to socialism, which seemed the lesser of two evils: the other being Nazi Germany (Babkin, 1949). His work was bolstered by the bolshevik regime at

this time, who thought it would be a good tool for controlling their massive population to keep them in order and so funded Pavlov's research lavishly (Babkin, 1949). Edward Thorndike published his work *Animal Intelligence*, which led to the theory of operant conditioning later in the realm of behaviorism (O'Donell, 1986).

Thorndike also went on to carry out the first major scientific study of the adult learner and the learning process used by adults in 1928, and so formulating his theory of learning (Odonell, 1986). Kurt Lewin developed his theories on group behavior in 1946, working with T-groups in research with mob behavior and how it occurs, forming experimental theories still in use today by most counts (Lewin, 1964). Lewin worked with prejudicial situations spurred by social normality and group behavior in terms of group-think and mob behavior (Lewin, 1964).

The ways groups interact and process as individual entities were the specialty he followed in his theories and assumptions, and became a pivotal expert in the situations of the 1960s with Negro aggression, warfare revolts, and the rights movements to name a few of the situational events of the time (Lewin, 1964). Later, Skinner worked on the theory of operant behavior, with its schedules of reinforcement: fixed ratio schedule; variable ratio schedule; fixed interval schedule; and variable interval schedule (Cherry, 2009).

Skinner was best known for his idea that the consequences of a behavior determine the probability of its recurrence (O'Donell, 1986). In 1948, he published *Walden 2*, in which he described a behaviorist principally based

utopian society, and in 1971, he published again, arguing that free will is an illusion in his book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (Cherry, 2009). It becomes clear, the radicalism of Skinner in statements such as that the ultimate goal of behavioral psychology should be to predict and control behavior (Goodwin, 2008).

Operant conditioning was his realm of work, separating conditioning into S and R types, where S is Pavlovian conditioning and R is where a behavior is emitted and a reactive consequence is given as a reward or punishment (Goodwin, 2008). With a stricter methodology his schedules of reinforcement would be repeatable and so fall more into the scientific methods, which was a new way to proceed in psychology research to that time in eliminating explanatory fiction (Goodwin, 2008).

Edward Tolman was a cross of the empirical research and the logical positivism, using theory to form predictions to be vetted out in research (Goodwin, 2008). Being goal-directed in his research, Tolman ideally thought of his methods as paralleling the subject's ultimate goals so he was able to follow in same (Goodwin, 2008). In this pursuit though, things happen to influence these goals, and Tolman labeled these as intervening variables (Goodwin, 2008). Cognitive mapping was a contribution of Tolman; as was the downplay of latent learning (Goodwin, 2008).

He argued with the ideas of Clark Hull on nearly every point possible, believing in cognitive maps for children to influence their abilities to learn both academically as well as in the real world in terms of tools they could take and keep in their lives (Goodwin, 2008). A lot of these people can not

really be placed on a linear time line because they contributed several points to the evolution of behaviorism. The contributions come from a standpoint of little background followed by research and data compilation in a collective knowledge base.

Behaviorism has been declining in popularity for several years, or even decades as the philosophy of the cognitive theory changes through experimentation and hypothetical ideas rendered based on observations and speculations alike. Behaviorism started as a method to understand the way actions are taken and why they are done so. Behaviorist psychologists tended to “mechanize” the process, taking out of the scope the free will affect as well as that of decision on the part of the participant or subject of studies (Kassin, 2008).

This can be seen in terms of either over-simplification of the mental processes or simplification of the tests for plausibility (Kassin, 2008). To this end, it can be seen how the testing apparatus put in place for conducting such experimentation holds true in its function and viability, so the actions and testing results are still affective, although interpreted differently as to data extracted from such experimentation (O'donnell, 1986). The tests and ideas found and exemplified by these pioneers of behaviorism still ring true, and can be used today, but in different context.

The mechanistic procedures held strenuously at the time though are both outdated as the more complex background information is discovered as well as methodologies used in light of the neo-behaviorism that followed referencing some animal to human references (Roediger, 2010). The

principles have stayed the same, but the application and reliance has changed due in part to diversity and the simple will to differentiate the various peoples of the world. Today, reflecting back on the age of behaviorism, we can still use some of the principles of behaviorism in terms of treatment of bad behavior as well as understanding why this occurs.

In the time of the behaviorists though, thoughts of utopian societies with everyone acting in unison, predicted and anticipated was just too mechanized for society to swallow, and guarantee freedom at the same time(Roediger, 2010). Today, behavior analysis is often used in various therapeutic techniques for all kinds of situations of behavioral situations such as to help children with autism with developmental delays to acquire new skills needed in the world for example.

Advances in medicalscienceresearch tools as well as cognitive theories and treatment overshadow behaviorism as it has starting in the 1950's from that of strictly observational to that of scientifically tested and verified facts in modern cognitive behavioral theories: simplistic boxes and pointers in references to thought processes of the day seem simplistic and abstract compared to today's brain scans for mapping cognizant processes in the advance of science in the roles of psychology research (Roediger, 2010).

Behaviorism was never really proven wrong or accused of this, but rather drifted away due to its inability to modernize in relation to today's research tools and abilities of examining what is really happening (Roediger, 2010). the learning history associated with behaviorism simply is not relevant to today's cognizant theorists, and is either compartmentalized, or ignored all

together as unimportant (Roediger, 2010). Babkin, B. P. (1949). Pavlov: a biography. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Cherry, K. , (2009). What is behaviorism? Retrieved May 15, 2010 from <http://psychology.bout.com/od/behavioralpsychology/f/behaviorism.htm> Goodwin, C. J. (2008). A history of modern psychology (3rd ed. ). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Kassin, S. (2008). Psychology in Modules-ORG 5002, Survey of Psychology II. Pearson Custom Publishing. Boston, MA. Lewin, K. (1964). T-group theory and laboratory method. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. O'Donnell, J. (1986). Origins of behaviorism. New York University Press. Roediger, R. (2010). What happened to Behaviorism? Retrieved May 15, 2010 from <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=1540>