

Phobias and addiction paper assignment



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Individual Assignment: Phobias and Addiction Paper Classical conditioning and operant conditioning both involve the learning process. Through classical conditioning a subject will learn to respond to a stimulus such as a light or bell before food is given. In operant conditioning a subject will learn by a response given off from its environment such as hitting a button or lever accidentally resulting in a positive reinforcement, food given, and a higher chance that the action will happen again. Classical conditioning is a learned form of a condition.

As in Pavlov's study of the dog, salivation is a natural response or an unconditioned reflex. It occurs automatically. Pavlov introduced food as an unconditioned stimulus (UCS) to cause the unconditioned reflex (salivating) in the dog. This reaction did not require any learning on the dog's part; it was an unconditioned response (UCR). Pavlov in his experiment introduced a neutral stimulus (a ringing bell) before introducing the food (UCS). After a number of tries the dog associated the food with the bell, a conditioned response (CR), and began to salivate when the bell rang, a conditioned stimulus (CS) or learned response.

Classical conditioning works in every day in humans and animals as conditioned responses. Becoming ill after eating a certain food may cause a person to stay away from this food, a conditioned aversion. The person may become ill again from the smell or sight of the food. For health reasons food was tested in trial and error by humans and animals through evolution to know what is safe to eat by adaptation, and conditioning (learning). Kowalsi and Westen (2009) stated, " One of the most important ways classical conditioning affects behavior is in the conditioning of emotional responses.

When a person sees or hears something he or she finds stimulating, a familiar face, a song, this person may become happy and smile. This is a conditioned emotional response. When a person becomes nervous at seeing an instructor he or she may experience anxiety and fear, this too is a conditioned emotional response. An experiment conducted on an infant by John Watson and Rosalie Rayner showed what may be “ the most famous example of the classical conditioning of emotional responses,” (Kowalsi & Westen, 2009, p. 160).

The infant was shown and allowed to play with several objects including a rabbit, a white rat, a Santa Clause mask, and a fur coat. The infant showed no fear of these objects and played with the rat regularly. While playing Watson and Raynor tested the infants response to loud noise (the UCS) by clanging a metal bar behind him. Startled the infant fell forward crying. Later the experiment used the rat as the (CS) used to condition a fear in the infant. Every time the infant would reach to touch the rat, Watson and or Raynor would bang the metal bar and frighten the infant.

After several times the infant became frightened of the rat. As the infant was shown the dog, rabbit, fur coat, and Santa Clause mask he acted in a similarly negative way. Studies similar to the experiment by Watson and Raynor have led some to connect classical conditioning with certain human phobias. A person with a phobia becomes scared of certain objects or situations. A child receiving vaccinations may learn to fear needles (CS) and become scared of doctor visits. These fears may stay into and throughout adulthood, controlled by the subcortical neural pathways.

An adult who faints at the sight of needles may think he or she can control his or her fear but are usually overtaken before they have the chance. “ The crucial neural circuits are outside cortical control and are activated before the cortex even gets the message” (Kowalsi & Westen, 2009, p. 161).

Extinction in classical conditioning happens when the (CS) is presented a subject without the (UCS). After a short time the (CS) will be forgotten, and the connection will not exist. As an example, the dog does not hear the bell (CS) yet sees the food (UCS).

The dog will still salivate without the bell. After a time the dog may again be submitted to bell, and may salivate again unknowingly. This is spontaneous recovery. More recent studies have become far advanced from Pavlov’s experiments in thinking the stimulus triggered in the brain to a (CR) will not be the same function as a (UCR). For example a dog will salivate when conditioned to hear the bell for food. The same dog will salivate for just the food, and probably salivate more. In paradoxical conditioning, the body tries to counteract the stimulus, which is attempting to happen.

If a drug user sees the paraphernalia he or she uses to inject drugs, a psychological reaction will reduce the effect of the drug he or she is about to use. This is a conditioned tolerance to the drug is weakening the effect by continued use causing the person to use more. Operant conditioning is a result of a spontaneous act with a certain environmental effect. Edward Thorndike called this law of effect. “ B. F. Skinner believed that the best way to understand behaviour is to look at the causes of an action and its consequences. He called this approach operant conditioning” (Mcleod, 2007, p.). The difference between classical and operant conditioning is a behavior,

or operant, to get an environmental response. Thorndike placed a hungry cat into a box with a lever on one side. As the cat paced and rubbed the walls (an operant) it tripped the lever causing a door to open and access to food (an environmental response). After several more tries the cat went straight to the lever to open the door. In operant conditioning the behavior comes before the result, opposite of classical conditioning where a stimulus comes before the result.

Reinforcement in operant conditioning is a process that ensures or adds to the likelihood that a certain response will happen again. In positive reinforcement, there will be some kind of reward offered that makes the behavior more appealing and repeatable. Skinner used a pigeon in a box with a button on the wall. As the pigeon pecked around it hit the button releasing a food pellet. This was a positive reinforcer for the pigeon, a stimulus that strengthened its behavior to try again.

Negative reinforcement works by taking a negative or unpleasant reaction away. A certain teen nagged by his or her mother every week to take out the garbage, always complains to his or her friends about it. One-week he or she does it before his or her mother nags, and nothing is said. He or she has taken away the negative reaction. "When you remove something in order to decrease a behavior, this is called extinction" (AllPsych, 2004, p. 1). If the positive consequences are not applied continuously, the operant responses may be ended.

If a child is getting good grades and the parent only makes remarks to the child about the so-so grades (need to work harder) the child may not work as

hard to keep the good grades up. All Psyc Online (2004). Learning Theory and Behavioral Psychology. Retrieved October 1, 2011, from <http://allpsych.com/psychology101/reinforcement.html> Kowalski, R. and Westen, D. (2009). Psychology (5th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Mcleod, S. (2007). Skinner-Operant Conditioning. Retrieved October 3, 2011, from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html>