Operant behavior

Describe the primary ways your behavior was conditioned (operant) when growing up. How was reward and punishment used in your family?

BF Skinner used the word Operant theoretically to show how an organism behavior is influenced by consequences. This means that the consequences from previous behavior are crucial for the future state of the behavior, and can be either contrived or natural. Therefore, operant behavior is an individual's response to such consequences and behavior that results from its influence. It is clear that operant behavior that has vast effects on the general environment and may cause significant changes to it.

Several types of operant behavior can give encouragement to the behavior based on a positive reinforcement. For example, testing rats' speed on a maze. This is done by placing a tasty snack at the end of the maze in order to determine the rat that takes the shortest time running to the maze (Honig, Werner, and Staddon.). This is a representation of an operant behavior if the rat's running time increases. In this case, the speed of the rat will increase because of a positive reinforcement all through the maze. On the other hand, whenever there is a lacks of consequences or coordination, this kind of conditioning will not be effective. Extinction is another example of operant behavior. This happens whenever nothing results from a certain behavior. It is clear that young children use this coordination extinction which is a representation of a cry it out. This cry it out method is an example of operant behavior when parents fail to respond to children's cies. This concept of reinforcement from a crying infant is not a solution and never elicits response from a parent. It is a form of instrumental conditioning in the context of gaining rewards and avoiding punishments.

Shaping is one of the methods used in conditioning behavior while growing up. Shaping begins by reinforcing behavior that is largely or indistinctly similar to the desired behavior. Once there is the establishment of the desired behavior, there is a possibility of variations occurrence that are close to the desired behavior and are relevant for reward. This continues until the desired behavior is performed. Although this idea has no likelihood of creating behavior that is applicable in the ordinary life.

The other method was the learning method. In this case, children learnt forms of good or harmful behavior from the adults. Children were at the exposure of learning both positive and negative behavior (Catania). Once a child behaved not in accordance to the parent's expectations, they used punishments in order to try to shape the behavior in accordance. Gifts and rewards were also used as a way of recommending a positive behavior.

Families used rewards as well as punishments in the forms of teaching tools. There was a belief that these methods were useful in the process of encouraging a good behavior and conditioning factors against immoral behavior. The forms of rewards and punishments included positive reinforcement, and it was clear that once a behavior was followed with a reward, it remained strong. When a child received praise as a result of doing something good in the family, there was likelihood that such behavior would be followed and repeated with continued aim of receiving rewards. A positively rewarded behavior has no likelihood of fading and will continue being repeated in accordance to the family expectations.

Another method was the use of punishments. Iin this context a stimulus is induced after the occurrence of a certain behavior with an intention of suppressing it. Children in the family would try to modify their behavior with aiming to minimize punishments. This form of punishment included infliction of physical pain or general withdrawal of a certain attention to a child. It may also include an introduction of an activity that the child does not want to participate. The problem with this method is that it is not always effective. The aim is to get the child fear consequences that arise because of a certain action. However, children get used to these punishments and do not fear them anymore causing these punishments lose their desired meaning.

It is clear that families may try to reward any good behavior with an aim of getting even better behavior from a child and this way they are able to create a kid that they want (Nuttin, Joseph, and Anthony). Once a good behavior is rewarded, chances of dealing with unacceptable behavior are reduced. However, the problem is that it is hard to live in an ideal world where kids react to ideal situations. Therefore, families should try to come up with behaviors that are predictable and that may occur frequently, in order to set rules and regulations to govern them. Rewards and punishments are effective once the families take time to understand the characters of their children.