Introduction to Behaviorism

EDS 248
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Introduction

- A collection of theories (explaining why certain factors have specific effects) that focus on external observable events (occurring outside of the organism).
- Emphasizes the role of the environment in learning.
- Principles of behaviorism are essential to the understanding and application of functional assessment (EDS 240, 3rd Semester).

Basic Assumptions of Behaviorism

- Equipotentiality.
  - Principles of learning apply equally to different behaviors and different species. Thus, what is learned about the learning of one species can be generalized, and much behavioral research is done with animals.
- Emphasizes Stimulus (cause) – Response (effect) relationships.
  - The study of learning must employ the same methods as are sued in the physical sciences. The introduction of an IV (cause or stimulus) should be studied to determine if its effect on a DV (specific effect).
Basic Assumptions of Behaviorism

 Defines learning as an observable behavioral change.
 - Study of learning is a science. Focuses on the observable/measurable. Stimulus from the environment and response from the organism fits this requirement.
 - Tabula Rasa
   - Besides specific instincts, organisms are not born to behavior in any particular way.

Basic Assumptions of Behaviorism

 Excludes from study internal processes.
 - Internal processes cannot be directly observed, thus they cannot be studied.
   
   ![Stimulus Response Diagram]
   
   - However, neo-behaviorists believe that factors operating within the individual are important, and are thus often referred to as S-O-R theorists.

Basic Assumptions of Behaviorism

 Learning is documented by observable behavior change.
 - Learning has occurred only when behavior change is observed.
 - Conditioning is often used instead of “learning.”
   - Behavior is conditioned by environmental events. The things we learn – the results of experience – are often beyond our control.
 - Parsimony.
   - Explain learning in as few principles as possible.
Modern Behaviorism

- Has begun to focus on internal factors (e.g., motivations).
- Pays more attention to the role of aversive stimuli as being important to learning.
- Learning (ability) and performance (choice) are related, but not necessarily one in the same.

Educational Implications of Modern Behaviorism

- Learning is behavior change.
  - Students as active respondents
  - Assessment
  - Practice
- Drill and practice.
  - Repetition strengthens/makes more automatic habits
- Rewards.