**CONDITIONING IN THE REAL WORLD: PROJECT**



**Intro:** What do parents do at fast food restaurants to encourage desirable behaviors and discourage undesirable behaviors? Are the principles of operant conditioning being used? You are to visit any fast food restaurant (McDonald’s, Burger King, Chic-fil-a, Wendy’s, etc).

You are to observe how parents use the principles of operant conditioning, where they misuse them, and where they fail to use them but should. You can observe in the main dining area or the play area, if they have one, or both. ***You may not include any drive up observations.***

Then briefly describe one outstanding example for any THREE of the principles listed below. You can use three different subjects or use one subject for more than one example. You only need one OUTSTANDING (clear, definite) example for each of the three principles you choose.

Two person teams, one report per team. **Be prepared to share with the class. I need one written report from your team and expect you to present your findings.**

Reports are due on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Report requirements:** Split your report up into 3 sections, make sure to complete all requirements for each section.

**Section 1:** Description of restaurant, date and time of observation. In this section include information about the restaurant such as: does it have a play place or not, is it clean, are there a lot of people or not too many, does it have a drive-thru, what types of people are there, families, single people, couples, etc.

**Section 2:** Three observations. Each observation should be labeled with the principle of operant conditioning it relates to at the beginning. Include a description of your subjects (adults and children) including age, gender, race. Then answer the following questions as you describe the operant conditioning you saw taking place: what did you observe that demonstrated the principle being discussed? How effective was the technique? What was the reinforcement and/or punishment? How did the child react?

**Section 3:**

* Comments, including examples of misuse or failure to use operant conditioning.
* Questions that came up about operant conditioning.
* Surprises.
* Make sure to only include these things in your last section and keep section 2 purely about the observations.

**Principles of Operant Conditioning to look for (pick any 3 of the 4):**

1. Positive reinforcement of desired behaviors
2. Negative reinforcement of desired behaviors
3. Punishment of undesired behaviors
4. Extinction of undesired behaviors by withdrawing attention or reinforcing stimuli

**Rubric:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Requirement** | **Points Available** | **Points Earned** |
| Report completed by due date | 5 |  |
| Section 1 complete | 5 |  |
| Section 2 complete (each observation is worth 5 points, to get full 5 points you must correctly identify the principle) | 15 |  |
| Section 3 complete | 5 |  |
| Overall report showed understanding and analysis of techniques | 5 |  |
| Presentation | 10 |  |
| TOTAL |  |

**SAMPLE:** Conditioning Observations

**Section 1**: Our observation took place on Nov. 12th, 2012 and 3:30pm at the McDonald’s on Fort Avenue. It was a bit cold and rainy out so there were not all that many people out and about walking on the sidewalks. There were a number of cars in line for the drive thru however and a few people inside the restaurant. The restaurant did not have a play place, but there were still a couple of families with young children there. It was pretty clean for a fast food place, but you could tell it has been around for a while. The workers were not very friendly and did not seem to be keeping on top of wiping off tables, emptying the trash, etc. When we first arrived at the restaurant there were 12 other people there. There was a mother with her two children, two older gentlemen drinking coffee, a group of 5 women eating lunch together and then a father and son. We stayed for an hour, from 12:30-1:30, to make sure we were able to gain a greater understanding of our subjects.

**Section 2:**

Observation 1: We observed the mother with her two small children correctly use positive reinforcement to increase the frequency of a desired behavior. The mother was African-American and looked to be about 40 years old. She had one son and one daughter. The son looked to be about 5 years old and the daughter looked a bit younger at about 3 or 4 years old. The children were not in their seats and the mother had set their food out and was trying to get them to sit down and start eating. She had bought them both Happy Meals, so when she asked them to sit down and eat again, she said, “you will get your Happy Meal tool when you eat your meal.” She was using the tool as a positive reinforcement to get them to eat.

Observation 2: We observed the father use punishment to reduce the likelihood of an undesirable behavior with his son.

Observation 3: Lastly, we saw a mother punish her child by spanking them.

**Section 3**: I found this activity to be interesting. It was like the first naturalistic observation, but I felt like I had a better understanding of what behaviors I was actually seeing. I was surprised that I actually saw an example of each type of reinforcement within an hour. It made me realize how much reinforcement is used on a daily basis, and I think I’ll start looking for it more in my daily life.