Variables Related to Punishment Administration

Psychology 390
Psychology of Learning
Steven E. Meier, Ph.D.

Listen to the audio lecture while viewing these slides

Severity or Intensity of the Stimulus

- Intensity refers to the physical parameters of the stimulus.
- Severity refers to the degree of suppression achieved.

- Very intense punisher that produces minimal suppression is a mild punisher.
- Low intensity stimuli that produce complete suppression are severe punishers.

Manner of Introduction

- Sudden introduction of punishment produces much greater response suppression than if the punishment intensity is gradually increased.
- Don’t begin with mildpunishers and make more intense.

- If use gradual small punishers and increase the intensity, it takes a more intense punisher to suppress the unwanted behavior than if had given the full amount immediately.

- Is problematic for Human Rights Organizations and Criminal Justice System.

Intensity can differ amongst individuals

- E.g., $200 ticket for speeding
  Bill Gates
  You
  It will impact you more.

- Public Whipping,
  May affect you both the same.

Immediacy of Punishment

- In general, the longer the delay between the response and the punisher, the less effective the punisher becomes.

- Immediate punishment is no more effective than stimulus delivery within the first hour.

- After the first hour, effectiveness continues to decrease.
Punishment Certainty

- Can have high intensity.
- Can have good immediacy.
- But will be ineffective if there is low certainty.

- The greater the certainty of receiving the punishing stimulus, the greater the response suppression.

Example

- If have high intensity but low certainty of apprehension, you will usually perform the behavior.

- Rob a Bank get 10 million dollars.
- Get caught you get executed.
- 1/10 million chance of apprehension.
- Vs 1/1000 chance of apprehension.

Relates to Concept of Deterrence

- What is the probability of being caught if I do a behavior.

- The higher the odds of success, the more likely the probability of engaging in the behavior.

Occurs even when severity is high.

Two Types of Deterrence

- General Deterrence
  - Prevents you from engaging in the act in the first place.

- Specific Deterrence
  - Relates to preventing you from repeating the behavior after being caught.

Availability of Unpunished Responses

- Even low intensity punishers can be effective when an alternative unpunished behavior is available that produces reinforcement.

- With no alternatives, need higher intensity.

How Often is the Punished Behavior Reinforced?

- Punishers are more effective when punished behavior is no longer reinforced.

- The more reinforcement for the behavior, the less effective the punisher becomes.

  Also, depends on the intensity.
Examples

- Kid in class shoots a spit wad.
- Teacher – Stand in the corner
- Kid gets lots of attention from other kids
- Behavior increases
- Drug selling behavior by juveniles
- Get caught – slap on the wrist
- Also, kid gets lots of attention.

Is the Punisher Delivered Before the Reinforcer

- Punishment is more effective when it is delivered before the behavior is reinforced.
- Early studies found it was more effective.
- Today it is not so clear cut.

Self Control / Self Management

- Relates to immediacy vs. delayed consequences for a behavior.
- Several Types

- Small Immed. Pos Delayed Lg. Neg
  - Smoke Cig Cancer, Death
  - Small Immed. Neg Delayed Lg. Neg
  - See Dentist Get Root Canal
  - Small Immed. Pos Delayed Lg. Pos
  - Save Money Buy a boat or car
  - Small Immed. Neg Delayed Lg. Pos
  - Meet new People Fall in love

  Generally, immediate consequences have a greater impact than delayed consequences.

Classic Mistakes and Inappropriate use of Punishment

- Ignore behaviors that should be punished.
  - Puts persons on a random schedule
  - Don’t start early.
  - Usually wait until misbehavior persists or becomes more severe
  - Delay.
  - Wait until class is over before sending to principal’s office
  - Don’t reinforce alternative “good” behavior.

Side Effects of Punishment

- May be a general decrease in all behavior
  - Kids who are punished may not talk as much – can become withdrawn.
- May cause emotional outbursts. Yelling, acting out, fear
- May generate hostility toward the source or the person giving the punisher.
Psyc 390 – Psychology of Learning

Punishment

• Physical punishment is highly correlated with aggressive behavior in kids.

• Lots of physical punishment increases aggression in kids.

Psyc 390 – Psychology of Learning

Best Procedure

• MONITOR BEHAVIOR

• IMPLEMENT A INTERVENTION

• Use Reinforcement Techniques.

• Reinforce good behavior and extinguish or punish bad behavior