

Problem Behavior Maintained by Automatic Reinforcement Brian A. Iwata

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Automatic Reinforcement

An example

 "... when a craftsman spends a week completing a given object, each of the parts produced in the week is likely to be automatically reinforcing because of its place in the completed object (Skinner, 1969, p. 18)

Definition

* "... reinforcement that is not mediated by the deliberate action of another person.... It is a natural result of behavior when it operates upon the behaver's own body or the surrounding world" (Vaughn & Michael, 1982, p. 219)

Some Characteristics of	
Automatic Reinforcement	
 A Public event: Distinctive topographical features A Private event: Subtle, potentially unobservable features (e.g., perceiving, problm solving) 	3
Effect on behaver	
Synonyms	
 "Automatic" refers to a general contingency Sr+, Sr-, or punishment Conditioned or unconditioned 	

Automatic Contingencies – Some Examples	
Sr+	
Vnconditioned: Consuming food, turning on a light	
instrument	
Sr-	
Vnconditioned: Scratching a mosquito bite, shielding	
eyes from glare of sun	
cleaning dog poop from shoe	
Punishment	
Vnconditioned: Touching hot stove burner, going	
outside in Winter sans coat	
wrong note on piano	









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	Probable Functions of Specific Behavior Disorders					
		Po Reinf	ositive orcement	Ne Reinfe	egative orcement	
	Behavior Disorder	<u>Social</u>	<u>Automatic</u>	<u>Social</u>	<u>Automatic</u>	
	Aggression	+	Ø	+	Ø	
	Tantrums	+	Ø	+	Ø	
	Noncompliance	+	Ø	+	Ø	
	Property Destruction	+	?	+	Ø	
	"Stereotypy"	?	+	?	?	
	SIB	+	+	+	+	
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	Opioid Hypothesis for SIB (see research by Sandman)	
	Endorphin system Endogenous, neuropeptide regulatory system Physiological stress endorphin release 	
	Potential relevance to SIR	
	 SIB increased insensitivity to pain SIB more susceptible to social consequences SIB Self-administration of narcotic 	
	Treatment implications: Opioid antagonists Blocks uptake of endorphins Decreases pain threshold 	
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What about Automatic Sr-? (The pain attenuation function)	
 Response characteristics Cyclical response pattern? Correlated with physical symptoms? (allergy, dental condition, infection) Correlated with other behavioral changes (lethargy, appetite loss, sleep disturbance)? 	
Assessment Issues	



