**PS340: Exceptional Needs Children**

**Unit 5 Discussion Board Lecture**

Unit 5 takes a closer look at the functions of behavior, or the purposes of behavior, and how the identification of probable functions can help you design effective behavior intervention plans. You will learn that the functions of behavior fall under two broad categories, i.e., attainment and avoidance/escape. Identifying these probable functions is done through analyses of the antecedents and consequences surrounding the target behaviors. Finally, you will examine how culture influences these functional motivations and learn about some of the tools behavior analysts use to modify behaviors based upon the probable functions behaviors serve for individuals.

While Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) allows the behavior analyst to identify the controlling variables of a target behavior and the ***probable*** function (purpose) of the behavior, a Functional Analysis (FA) allows the analyst to ***determine*** the function of the target behavior. The FA requires the systematic manipulation of possible antecedents and/or consequences of the target behavior in an experimental design. The result of a FA is a clear demonstration of the functional relations between antecedent, behavior, and consequence, i.e., the function of the behavior. A FBA or direct observation using antecedent-behavior-consequence (A-B-C) data collection is necessary before a FA can be conducted. However, it is very rare that a FA is necessary in your work in the field.

Identifying the function of a student’s interfering behavior can help teachers develop alternative behaviors and interventions designed to reduce the target behavior. Mentioned previously, there are two broad categories of behavior function, i.e., attainment and avoidance/escape.

Attainment is a function of behavior in which an individual acquires something he or she wants. The functional motivation of attainment can include a desire to attain attention, tangibles, privileges, and power or control.

Attention is a common functional motivation for students and can include verbal and non-verbal praise from peers and adults. Attention can also be in the form of punitive statements and actions on the part of others. Sometimes, any attention is better than no attention. Attention can reinforce and maintain appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. The final functional motivation of attention is the desire to gain power or control over a situation or event. Gaining power is a basic human need and, when that need is not met, the result can be conflict.

Tangibles can include toys, money - virtually any item an individual may desire. Privileges may include handing out worksheets in class; early dismissal from school; access to a tablet or computer; etc.

Sometimes, individuals behave in certain ways to avoid or escape non-preferred activities; social situations or others; confrontations, etc.

With regard social isolation, sometimes a student will behave in a certain manner in order to avoid attention from others. Students who have a low sense of self-efficacy or who have been abused or ridiculed will often avoid attention from others.

Students often behave in certain ways when they want to avoid unpleasant activities. They may display inappropriate behaviors in order to avoid certain interactions with peers or adults in certain settings.

Adverse interactions in school can lead to school refusal or the student’s attempt to miss school. School refusal is generally the result of cultural factors, family factors, peer factors, and/or neuropsychiatric factors.

Societal and cultural norms often influence the functional motivations of behaviors. It is important that teachers understand the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students when trying to identify the functions of students’ behaviors.

A function-based intervention is based upon the identification of the probable function of the unwanted behavior. Knowing the probable function allows the behavior analyst to identify an appropriate alternative – or replacement - behavior.

Functional communication training (FCT), antecedent-based interventions, instructional accommodations, extinction, and differential reinforcement are five types of interventions that can be used to develop alternative behaviors.

FCT is a systematic technique for replacing an inappropriate behavior with an appropriate communication response as a means to obtain reinforcement. The basic premise of FCT is the association between communication difficulties and the inappropriate behavior.

Antecedent-based interventions are modifications of the environment that prevent or decrease the occurrence of the inappropriate behavior and increase the probability of appropriate behavior.

Instructional accommodations are alterations to the delivery of instruction, method of student performance, or method of assessment.

Extinction is the reduction or elimination of inappropriate behavior through the withdrawal of the reinforcement that maintains the behavior.

Differential reinforcement is used to increase the frequency of an appropriate behavior while decreasing the inappropriate behavior. It includes differential reinforcement of other behavior (DRO), differential reinforcement of alternative behavior (DRA), differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior (DRI), and differential reinforcement of lower rates (DRL).

It is possible for multiple behaviors to have the same function. In addition, the variables that affect the behavior in one setting may not be the same variables in another setting. When an alternative behavior is successful in one setting but not in another, the teacher must consider the possibility that the functions are not the same and develop different, function-based interventions for the two settings.

Once the FBA and/or FA has been completed and alternative behaviors to replace the target behavior have been developed, a BIP can be generated. The BIP should include information obtained from the FBA and the FA (if needed). It should also include a statement of probable function, an outline of specific behavior goals, a detailed intervention strategy, and a method to assess the effectiveness of the plan.

While these steps to behavior modification are detailed and time-consuming, the quality added to our clients’ lives through the modification of behaviors that interfere with success are worth it!

Thank you for viewing your Unit 5 lecture!