

Chapter 11

Behavior Modification Programs Used in Corrections

Introduction

Brown et al. (1976, p. 2) state, “Behavior modification is a special form of behavior influence that involves primarily the application of principles derived from research in experimental psychology to alleviate human suffering and to enhance human functioning. Behavior modification emphasizes systematic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of these applications.”

Although change in behavior is the focal point of any behavior modification program, there is a rational element that should not be overlooked. For example, most children learn from experience that there are certain behaviors that will result in positive rewards and others that result in punishment and should be avoided. Children who learn that if they smile and “act cute” when adults are around this will result in a positive reward such as being given a toy or being picked up and held will realize that if they act in the same manner the next time the occasion arises, they will receive the same type of reward. A child who receives a punishment for running out in the street, by way of a small spanking, will probably not run out into the street again, even though the child does not understand the reason for being spanked. However, both children and adults often let their emotions rather than their intellects influence their behavior. When this happens, their behavior often appears to be irrational and contrary to the use of “common sense.” Brown et al. (1976, p. 3) explain the difference between behavior modification principles and the use of common sense by stating, “Behavior modification, (unlike common sense) like other scientific approaches, imposes an organization on its subject matter. While common sense often includes contradictory advice (both out of sight, out of mind, and absence makes the heart grow fonder), the principles of behavior modification codify and organize common sense, showing under what conditions and in what circumstances which aspects of ‘common sense’ should be applied.” The authors go on and explain that mothers who use their common sense to reward and discipline their children for their behavior may not apply the positive rewards

and negative sanctions consistently (punishing the child for an act on one occasion and ignoring the act on another occasion).

The basic concept underlying behavior modification theory is *operant conditioning*. Cherry (2016, p. 1) defines operant conditioning in the following way, “Operant conditioning (sometimes referred to as instrumental conditioning) is a method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishment for behavior. Through operant conditioning, an association is made between a behavior and a consequence for that behavior.” The behavior modification concept follows the basic scientific principle of cause and effect. Through experience, a subject learns that a certain behavior will lead to either a positive or a negative result. Cherry (2016, p. 2) contends, “Operant conditioning relies on a fairly simple premise—actions that are followed by reinforcement will be strengthened and more likely to occur again in the future.” Conversely, actions that result in punishment or undesirable consequences will be weakened and less likely to occur again in the future.

Cherry (2016, pp. 5, 6) notes that “Skinner distinguished between two different types of behaviors: *respondent behaviors* and *operant behaviors*. Respondent behaviors are those that occur automatically and reflexively. You don’t have to learn these behaviors, they simply occur automatically and involuntarily. Operant behaviors, on the other hand, are those under our conscious control. Some may occur spontaneously and others purposely, but it is the consequences of these actions that then influence whether or not they occur again in the future.”

An example to illustrate this can be taken from a fight situation. Any person who is caught up in an unanticipated physical fight will automatically use reflexive actions (respondent behavior) to try to ward off blows by an opponent, regardless of whether the person had any training or prior experience in fighting. However, a professional boxer will have been trained (operant behavior) in developing the best ways to protect himself/herself and will continue to use these methods as long as they bring about the outcome desired. The behavior is strengthened every time the methods used bring about the reward. Of course, situations change, opponents develop new methods of attack, and the boxer must develop new methods of defense.

Implementation of Behavior Modification Programming

Behavior modification had its beginnings in laboratory experiments with animals that were later expanded to include work with severely disturbed persons and autistic children (See Lindsley & Skinner, 1954). The field of behavior modification gradually extended to new populations. Brown et al. (1976, pp. 8–9) described how application of the concept expanded to include “delinquents in halfway houses, the mentally handicapped, preschool and deaf children, and drug abusers.” They added, “Researchers are attempting to develop better behavioral techniques for dealing with asthma, insomnia, and hypertension, as well as evaluating new child rearing

techniques and classroom management methods. Behavioral treatment for problems of alcoholism, drug addiction, and juvenile delinquency are being studied.”

Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1990, p. 352) state, “Behavior modification may involve the use of positive reinforcements or aversion stimuli. In positive reinforcement, a subject is given some type of reward each time a desired behavior takes place. In an institutional setting, this might involve a point system, which increases privileges given for a certain number of points, for school truants, a certain amount of money may be given for each day of prompt attendance at school each week. The reward (reinforcement) given is selected to appeal to the age and needs of the person whose behavior is being modified. In the use of some aversion stimuli, some unpleasant occurrence is associated with improper behavior. In an institutional setting, it could take the form of a short period of isolation, denial of smoking privileges, or restriction of privileges such as television viewing or sports participation.”

A number of behavior modification programs for delinquent youths, both community based and institutional based, were implemented in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of these programs were discarded after evaluations found that the high expectations of the programs in terms of huge reductions in the recidivism of the youths who completed the programs did not materialize. Others, with some modifications, are still in operation. Specialized counseling and treatment is provided for those youths who need such counseling, and it is integrated into the general activities of the behavior modification program.

The former Robert F. Kennedy Federal Correctional Facility located at Morgantown, West Virginia, provides an example of an institution for juvenile offenders in which the program was essentially based on behavior modification principles. The residents were assigned to different cottages based on an assessment of their prior behavior. The cottage security and treatment staff (unit management) were selected for each cottage on the basis of how their training and experience corresponded to the type of supervision and treatment that research showed was likely to produce the type of behavior desired.

A form of token economy based on points earned for positive behavior was put into effect in each cottage. Residents could earn points for such behavior as keeping living space clean, attending all meals and other functions on time, having a positive attitude during attendance at academic and vocational school, and obeying the rules and regulations. Those who earned a certain number of tokens (points) could use the tokens to buy commissary goods, attend special entertainment events, and even secure a better housing unit. (Some of the housing units were dormitory style and others separate rooms.) Perhaps the ultimate reward, with the exception of being released, was a transfer to the honor cottage.

After the Federal Bureau of Prisons made a policy change regarding the supervision of juveniles convicted of federal offenses, the name of the facility was changed to Federal Correctional Facility at Morgantown. The facility now houses low-security adult offenders. The unit management organization still is in operation, but the formalized behavior modification program has been discontinued.

Kratcoski and Kratcoski (2004, p. 377) state, "Another method of group treatment that has aroused considerable public interest was the creation of boot camps designed to imitate the physical and emotional challenging programs the armed forces use for their new recruits." Hengesh (1991) describes the boot camps programs as consisting of a "no nonsense" tough discipline routine with highly structured activities (physical, educational, and recreational) and strict adherence to rules and regulations expected. Youth were committed to boot camps in lieu of being placed in a state-operated juvenile correctional facility. The length of commitment was generally 60–90 days, similar to that of military boot camps. The camp director and staff wore military-type uniforms and even had military ranks to identify their authority positions in the organization. Interaction between the residents and staff was formal, with a mandatory "Sir" being used when addressing male staff and "Miss, Ms., or Mrs." when addressing female staff. Most boot camps were located in the communities in which the youths committed to the camps resided, and visitation from parents and others who qualified during scheduled visiting hours was encouraged.

The goals of "boot camps" were to assist in facilitating positive behavior changes in those delinquent youths sent to the camps. The behavior of the youths was closely monitored, and positive behavior, that is, behavior in conformity with the expectations of the staff, was rewarded with extra privileges, and nonconforming behavior was punished, generally through withdrawal of privileges.

Follow-up research on the effectiveness of boot camps for youths revealed mixed findings (Hengesh, 1991, p. 108). Positive changes cited are the development of positive self-images and self-esteem, learning to adjust to a highly structured environment, developing self-discipline, physical development of the body, learning to work with a group, and, for some, identification with the staff, who they perceived as being "tough, but fair and sincerely interested in their welfare." In addition to having fairly high recidivism rates, negatives of the boot camps were that the behavioral changes that were recorded while in the program did not continue once the youth returned to their community environment and began to associate again with the old peer group. Usually there was no court-ordered supervision of the youths once they were returned back into the community. Hengesh (1991) concluded that, although the initial boot camp experience generally resulted in positive changes in the youths' behavior, there was a need for an intensive period of supervision in the community after release from the program. A study by Burton, Marquart, Cuvelier, Malarid, and Hunter (1993) confirmed that boot camp participants' attitudes, perceptions of future opportunities, and views of their own abilities changed during their time in the boot camp, and, if a structured supervision and treatment program is provided once they are released, these changes may persist.

The majority of boot camp programs that were in operation during the 1990s were eventually discontinued as a result of funding cuts. Many of the programs were funded through federal or state grants, and once this funding was discontinued, the local governments did not have the financial resources to continue with the operation of the programs. Another factor that may have contributed to the

demise of boot camps is the movement of state governments toward funding community correctional facilities for juvenile delinquents. The programs implemented in these facilities tended to center on providing treatment for youth with special needs, rather than the more generalized programs boot camps offered.

Behavioral Contracting

Rutherford (1975, p. 28) states, "Behavioral contracting involves the systematic negotiation between mediator (parent, teacher, probation officer, social worker, unit counselor, or supervisor) and a target (delinquent, adolescent) of the behaviors to be performed within a given environment and the specific reinforcing consequences or 'payoffs' to be provided when performance requirements are met." Alexander (2000, p. 78) states, "Behavioral contracting is a signed agreement between the clinician and client specifying the desired behavior and the re-enforcers to be given for the desired behavior. An advantage of contracting is the necessity of being concrete and specific. Also the contract may be revised to create a new understanding of the behavior to be achieved."

If the juvenile and criminal justice processes in responding to alleged and convicted offenders are closely examined, it is apparent that there is some form of behavioral contracting between a justice official and the juvenile or adult offender at every step of the process. For example, if a youth is diverted from the juvenile justice system and placed in a diversion program, there will be provisions established pertaining to the youth's behavior that must be maintained. Before being placed in the diversion program, the youth or caretaker will be informed that the acceptance of the placement in the diversion program is optional and that the youth can choose to opt for formal justice processing.

An adult offender arrested and held in jail until bail can be arranged must enter into a contract by agreeing to show up for court and trial at the appropriate scheduled times. Likewise, a convicted offender who is placed on probation must agree to adhere to a set of general and special rules relating to behavior. The convicted offender who is sentenced to prison is given a list of rules that must be adhered to during the incarceration period as well as the possible consequences if the rules are not followed. All of the behavioral contracts, regardless of the type of offender and situation under which the behavioral contract was established, require behavior change of the type specified on the part of the person under the justice system's authority. The behavioral contracts (also referred to as contingency contracting) also specify the negative sanctions (either explicitly listed or implied) that will likely result if the behavior does not change in the manner established or regresses toward unacceptable behavior. For example, negative sanctions for a diverted offender would be to have the offender officially processed through the courts; for an offender with a suspended sentence, it would involve having the prison sentence activated, while an imprisoned inmate could lose privileges, be reassigned to a more secure section of the prison, or even transferred to a more secure facility.

Positive reinforcements (rewards) can be immediate or long range. A juvenile under juvenile court supervision in the community may earn the immediate reward of being able to stay out 1 h later than initially contracted in the probation rules, a resident of a community residential facility may earn an intermediate reward of being allowed a home visit, and an inmate may be given the extra privilege of going to the library unescorted, or being given a more favorable work assignment. In all of the cases mentioned above, the intermediate rewards serve as reinforcers for obtaining the long-range goal, which in all cases is to be released from the authority of the justice system.

Behavior Modification as a Treatment Modality

Behavior modification programs have been used in corrections as a method of treatment as well as a control mechanism. Generally, behavior modification is used in conjunction with some other treatment modality when applied to juvenile or adult offenders.

The underlying theoretical basis for any behavior modification , treatment is the application of *operant conditioning*. Aumilier (2016, p. 1) states, “Operant conditioning relies on something called the *Law of Effect* which states that a response will increase if followed by a positive consequence and decrease if followed by a negative consequence.” He continues, “There are two main ‘consequences’ out there; reinforcement, which is consequences that increase the rate with which you will respond the desired way, and punishments, which are consequences that decrease the rate of responding. Both of these include positive (add a stimulus) and negative (remove a stimulus) options, so we really have four possibilities: positive -reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment.”

Aumilier (2016, p. 2), in referring to schedules of reinforcement, states:

There are two main schedules of reinforcement. The first one is *continuous reinforcement*, when you reward someone every time they do the desired activity. The other schedule of reinforcement is *intermittent reinforcement*. There are four further schedules of intermittent reinforcement.

Fixed-ratio is when the number of responses needed to receive reinforcement stays the same. This could mean rewarding [police officers] every time they write ten tickets or catch five DWI’s, *Fixed-interval* is when the time to receive reinforcement stays the same after a fixed period . . . *Variable-ratio* is when the number of responses needed to receive reinforcement changes, but will average out overall . . . The last schedule of reinforcement is *variable-interval*. This is when the time to receive reinforcement changes, but will average out in the end.

Behavior modifications principles are used in some way in every facet of the criminal justice process. Beginning with the initial assessment of offenders brought under the jurisdiction of a justice agency, scientifically derived evidence-based instruments are used to determine how much stimulation the offender needs

(supervision and direction by a justice official) to produce the changes desired. Those convicted offenders placed under community-based supervision are placed into low-, medium-, and high-risk categories, and the appropriate amount of supervision contacts (number of face-to-face interactions, frequency of administering drug screens, number of home visits) are established based on the risk of the offenders committing new offenses. The results of a companion instrument, the needs assessment, provide information on what forms of counseling and treatment the offender needs to bring about the change desired. Correctional personnel who use these assessment instruments for assistance and guidance in developing case management plans for those offenders under their supervision may not be thinking in terms of behavior modification principles such as positive and negative reinforcements and other concepts used in explaining how behavior modification techniques are used, but they nevertheless understand the basis of the supervision models and the reasons for differentiating the offenders supervised on the basis of their risks and needs and in providing variable positive and negative reinforcements to those they supervise.

The more experienced correctional workers also realize that every offender in some ways is very similar to other offenders, but in many other ways is quite different. The assessment instrument may predict with a high probability those who are likely to succeed in terms of changing their behavior in the manner desired and those who have a greater chance of failing, but some of the individual factors that may have an effect on the individual's behavior, such as family support, personal values, desire to please others, and motivation to change, are much harder to measure and difficult to take into consideration when developing a case management plan.

**Box 11.1: Illustration of Behavior Modification Programming
(Sid's Experience in the Drug Court)**

Sid, a 32-year-old janitor at a high school, was arrested by the police as he was loading school office equipment into his pickup truck. He also was in the possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia. Sid was transported to the county jail. The following day he was released on his own recognizance. The school administrator, on being notified of his arrest, immediately suspended him from his position, pending a further investigation. Sid's case was sent to the county prosecutor's office to determine if he would be eligible for the drug court. The court's pretrial department reviewed Sid's past history, focusing on the factors that would make him eligible for drug court consideration and the factors that could eliminate him from drug court participation. Factors that were considered in the decision to refer the case to the prosecutor's office with a recommendation for acceptance into the drug court were:

- The offenses were lower-level felonies.
- The prior criminal history revealed only one offense of disorderly conduct.

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Box 11.1 (continued)

- The offenses did not require a mandatory jail or prison sentence, if he were convicted.
- The offenses were drug or alcohol related. (The prior disorderly conduct charge was the result of public intoxication, and the school principal indicated that Sid was reprimanded on two separate occasions for using alcohol while at work.)
- Sid would most likely benefit by participating in the drug treatment program.

Sid had already received some information about the drug court from his attorney when he appeared before the court to make a plea. The judge informed him of his rights and the options available. He informed the court that he would plead guilty to the charges and opted for the drug court program. After reviewing the conditions pertaining to his participating in the drug court program, he signed a document (contingency contract) that spelled out his commitments and the reward for successfully completion of the program (positive reinforcement). He was informed that a successful completion of the program, with no additional criminal charges, would result in the charges being dropped and his not having a criminal record.

Since Sid was now unemployed, he was required to attend the day treatment program under the auspices of the court. Several specific requirements were completion of 150 h of community service (restorative justice), participation in a group drug treatment therapy program, submission to periodic drug screening tests, meeting with a probation officer, and attending the regularly scheduled drug court sessions. His performance would be closely monitored by the day treatment staff and by his probation officer.

Sid's commitment to the drug court program was for 1 year. However, the length of time could be shortened or extended, depending on his performance in the program. Also, Sid understood that he could be terminated from the program for cause (commitment of a new offense or failure to adhere to the conditions of the contract).

At the drug court sessions held weekly, all of the drug court participants who were required to attend would have their cases reviewed before the judge. Their supervising probation officers would state the positive and negative behavior for each participant. Those who received negative reports were punished. They could have privileges taken away and in more severe cases ordered to jail for several days (negative reinforcements). Reasons for receiving negative reinforcements included not showing up at the day treatment center, not completing their community service, and relapsing into drug or alcohol use. At the end of each session, the judge would provide some sort of food for the participants (continuous reinforcement).

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Box 11.1 (continued)

Sid's progress during the first few months of participating in the drug court program was extraordinary. Each time he appeared before the judge in a drug court session, the probation officer gave a glowing report, and the judge praised him for his progress (continuous reinforcement). He had completed his community service obligation, and the school administrator had promised to consider taking him back at his old job as janitor. After 2 months, Sid's obligation to attend the drug court session every week was changed to every 2 weeks (intermittent reinforcement). The judge informed him that, if he completed the drug abuse counseling and continued to receive positive evaluations from his probation officer, the court appearance requirement would be dropped to once a month (shaping—a continuous reinforcement toward a desired goal).

After 5 months in the program, Sid's performance continued to be above satisfactory, and the drug court judge lowered Sid's mandatory appearance to once a month. However, shortly after this he tested positive when he was given an unscheduled drug screening. The probation officer reported this to the drug court judge, and Sid was ordered to appear at the next scheduled court session. He did not appear, and the judge issued a warrant for his arrest. He was arrested and placed in jail (negative reinforcement).

Sid was brought before the drug court judge and was given the opportunity to explain his behavior, particularly his reasons for relapsing. After Sid stated that several family-related matters had created a great deal of anxiety, the judge decided to have him continue in the drug court program, but changed the conditions of the contract by increasing by 2 months the time before completion and requiring Sid to attend the drug court sessions every week (negative reinforcement).

Sid did not have any more relapses during the following months. He seemed to benefit by participating in the drug treatment sessions that were grounded in rational behavioral theory. He eventually had the privileges he lost reinstated, and the judge shortened the time period required of Sid to complete the program by 2 months (intermittent reinforcement).

After graduation (during the graduation ceremony, the judge gave him special praise for his motivation to succeed in the program, despite a few setbacks—positive reinforcement), the criminal charges were dropped, and Sid now did not have a criminal record for the offenses. He did not get his old job back, but was successful in obtaining employment as a janitor with a local business establishment. When asked to comment on the drug court program, he indicated that the positive interaction with the judge, probation officer, and day treatment personnel and their willingness not to give up on him were the primary reasons why he succeeded.

Behavior Modification for Special Treatment

Kratcoski (2012, p. 429), in reference to treating juvenile delinquents, states, “The treatment modalities used in juvenile corrections generally center on cognitive and behavior therapies. Many of the programs used in residential treatment centers combine the two modalities.” In the development of a case management plan, the counselor (supervisor, probation officer) will enter into a contract that specifies the type of changes required on the part of the juvenile and which holds the juvenile responsible for adhering to the provisions laid out in the plan. As with most contracts, there are provisions for making modifications if for some reason it is not possible for the youth to meet the requirements specified in the original provisions.

Similar treatment modalities apply to adults under supervision of a justice agency. In the Cliff Skeen Community Based Correctional Facility, a secure facility that houses female offenders who have been convicted of drug-related offenses, behavior modification programming is intermixed with special treatment for substance abusers.

Box 11.2: Cliff Skeen Community Based Correctional Facility

The Cliff Skeen Correctional Facility is one of the several residential facilities operated by Oriana House, Inc., a nonprofit organization headquartered in Akron, Ohio, that provides community-based services for adult offenders. It houses 86 women who have been referred to the facility by judges from Summit County and several surrounding counties. Some of the women have been sentenced after being convicted in the regular Court of Common Pleas, others processed in a drug court, and others in a specialized family court. Before entering the program, the women were assessed for risks and need with the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) used as the assessment tool.

On entering the facility, the women are assigned to different housing areas based on the scores received on the ORAS. Those who scored in a high-risk category are housed in a separate area of the facility. This housing area holds 20 women who live in four housing units. The residents are eligible for 180 days of residency. However, a resident can complete the program in less than 180 days. Residents who have not completed the program in 180 days for reasons related to lack of motivation to complete the required programming, failure to comply with the rules, or other reasons will be taken into custody and placed in the county jail.

The risk levels also determine the types and amount of programming they will be required to complete before becoming eligible for release. Those who scored in the low-risk category will need 1–100 dosage h, low/moderate and moderate category will need 100–200 dosage h, moderate category will need 200–300 dosage h, and the high-risk category will need 200–300 dosage h.

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In addition to the risk assessment, each resident is given a chemical dependency assessment, an employment assessment, an educational needs assessment, a mental health assessment, a medical assessment, and a behavior assessment. These assessments are used in developing an individualized case management plan for the resident.

Every woman housed in the facility is assigned a caseworker. During the first meeting, the resident is provided with a list of programs offered at the facility. The resident may be required to participate in several of the programs and has the option of participating in others that are not required. Generally, the more hours of dosage required the more treatment programs will be required. A plan for specified program achievements during the week is developed and agreed upon by the resident.

The caseworker meets with the resident either weekly or biweekly to review the resident's activities from the previous meeting, progress made in mandatory programs assigned, changes in programming, rewards reports, and disciplinary measures levied against the resident.

Treatment Programs. Treatment programs offered are geared toward developing skills related to changing behavior, such as Anger Management, Planned Parenting, and Motivation for Success; toward changing attitudes and values, such as Character Building, Reflections, and Healthy Outlets; and toward physical and mental development, such as Nutrition, Recreational Activities, and HIV/AIDS information, and other treatment programs focus on the development of cognitive skills, such as Thinking for a Change and Thinking Errors. Some of the programs are conducted by the professional staff having the expertise and certification to conduct the treatment sessions. Other more specialized treatment problems, such as those that may require some expertise in treating the mentally ill or in specialized drug treatment, are provided by professional therapists who are employed by other agencies, but come into the facility to conduct either individual or group counseling. The goal of all of the treatment programs is to have the clients be able to discuss the changes in their lives that have occurred as a result of having participated in the program.

Phase Progression. The program at the Cliff Skeen Facility consists of three phases. During phase I, the orientation phase, the women are confined to the facility for a minimum of 30 days. They are required to attend the programming that was determined for them from the needs assessments that were administered when they first entered the facility. They also have to participate in facility upkeep and comply with the rules of the facility. Women who have completed all of the requirements of phase I can apply for admittance into phase II. However, the movement is not automatic, and a

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woman can be held back for such reasons as failure to obey the rules, failure to complete required programming, and other reasons Cliff Skeen Behavior Modification program: Phase I such as trying to escape.

Phase II is referred to as the treatment phase. In Phase II, the women are given more privileges as well as more freedom. They are allowed to leave the facility for structured community service and educational/vocational training, to search for employment, and other matters. After the residents have completed more than 50% of their core programming, they can advance to Phase III. This level provides additional rewards such as being eligible to earn social pass time outside of the facility on a biweekly basis. However, the movement to Phase III is not automatic, and to be eligible to receive these extra rewards, the women must demonstrate appropriate behavior and have completed their weekly program objectives.

Transitional Services. Some residents will be required to participate in transitional services upon release from the facility. These are nonresidential components of the program, and the services required may consist of continued case programming, mandatory urine screens, reporting to a probation officer, and participation in other activities related to treatment.

(The information in Box 11.2 was abstracted from the Cliff Skeen Community Based Correctional Facility New Client Orientation Manual, Most recent revision 6/17/2015).

Application of Operant Conditioning in Probation/Aftercare Supervision

The underlying principles of probation supervision are grounded in operant conditioning. However, department policies as well as individual officers may emphasize the positive reinforcements (rewards) over the negative reinforcements (punishments) in the completion of the tasks related to the supervision of probationers.

Research completed by Wodahl, Garland, Culhane, and McCarty (2011) with criminal offenders under intensive supervision revealed the likelihood of the offenders successfully completing the program increased as the ratio of rewards given to punishments given widened. Carter and Sankovitz (2014) contend that the model of case management supervision developed by the National Institute of Corrections and the Center for Effective Public Policy, in which face-to-face contact between the client and the supervisor in case management is highly recommended, can have a positive impact on the outcomes of the supervision.

Roberson et al. (2015, p. 4) reported that, even though research would indicate that an emphasis on positive reinforcements in the supervision of clients is likely to lead to more positive results than an emphasis on the negative reinforcements (sanctions), the typical community corrections officer does not know how to respond to non-compliance to probation rules except through use of negative

sanctions. Roberson et al. (2015, p. 4) stated, “Community corrections officers still face a knowledge gap in the attempt to use operant conditioning to supervise clients. Specifically, with a few exceptions, the literature lacks an understanding of the way the offenders perceive commonly used community supervision responses. The offenders’ thoughts and perceptions are important when we apply incentives and sanctions because they help us better understand the kinds and magnitude necessary to extinguish undesirable behaviors and encourage replication of more desirable replacement behaviors, and the clients’ likely reaction. That is, what one person might consider a strong reinforcement another might consider a weak reinforcement or even a punishment.” Roberson et al. (2015, p. 10) completed a survey of clients under community supervision and asked the subjects to respond to each item of a total of 45 actions used by community-based supervisors in their management of their clients in terms of their “like” or “dislike” of the item. The action items could conceptually be categorized as reinforcements (verbal praise, supervision fees removed, letter of recognition from judge) or punishments (jail time, removal of driving privileges, verbal reprimand, increased curfew hours, and referral for service for inpatient treatment or counseling). The researchers concluded that for many of the items the clients did not make huge distinctions in their like or dislike of the actions probation officers used in the supervision and treatment of the clients. In addition, the clients, with the exception of several of the most severe punishments such as going to jail or prison, often did not distinguish between a reinforcement action, a neutral action, and a punishment.

Their recommendations, based on the finding of the research, include (Roberson et al., 2015, pp. 7–8):

- An actuarial risk/needs assessment tool should serve as the foundation for the development of an effective case management plan.
- In the development of case management plans, supervisors should be aware of what supervisory actions are punishments and what actions are reinforcements and what actions are essentially treatment.
- Community supervision officers must have a good understanding of what motivates the individual and give the offender the opportunity to participate (have some input) in the selection of the required actions and programs selected for the case management plan.
- Establishing good communications with the clients is essential. Even when giving punishments, the supervisor can try to understand the client’s perception of the action taken and try to explain why it is necessary in the achievement of the behavior changes required of the client.

Honest Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE)

The Honest Opportunity Probation with Enforcement program referred to as the HOPE model was started in 2004. The program places emphasis on close monitoring of the probationers placed under the community supervision, frequent testing

for drug use, and immediate consistent sanctioning of those who violate the rules of probation. It is definitely a punishment-oriented model, and according to Zajac et al. (2015, p. 31), “The Hope model contrasts with the more traditional approaches to probation in which multiple violations of conditions and positive drug tests are tolerated.” Zajac et al. (2015, p. 34) state, “The underlying premise of HOPE is that it provides a framework within which probationers develop an understanding of the relationship between their behavior and official responses, learning that violations will be met with sanctions, even if the severity of the sanctions is low.” An essential feature of the HOPE program is providing the offenders under community supervision with information on the consequences (negative reinforcements) they can expect if they violate the conditions. The sentencing judge conducts a hearing and informs the probationers that their behavior will be closely monitored, that non-compliance of the conditions of probation will result in their arrest, and that they will be given a short sentence in jail. Each time there is a violation, the jail time will be lengthened, and new conditions of probation will be added. If the probationer commits multiple violations, probation will be revoked.

The HOPE program is not drastically different from many of the probation programs in operation throughout the United States, that is, sanctions will be given for violations of probation conditions, and if the violations are severe and frequent, the probation will be revoked. The major difference is that the probationer is provided with information about the type of sanction that will be given, the reason for the sanction, and the certainty that the sanction will be given.

Several concerns, if not criticisms of HOPE and other probation programs fashioned on HOPE features, are:

- The body of research on HOPE is not sufficient to accept the HOPE model as being more effective than other more traditional models (Duriez, Cullen, & Manchak, 2014).
- The program is similar to police surveillance with not much emphasis on providing service or treatment to the clients, thus reverting back to the punishment era of corrections (Duriez et al., 2014).
- Not all districts will have the opportunity to use the jail as a sanctioning instrument, since many of the jails are always filled to capacity and there is no room for minor offenders.
- A different form of sanction, such as a community residential treatment center placement, would provide a more positive response for the frequent drug abuse offender.
- The major decisions are made by the court and probation staff, and the roles of others such as medical and psychology treatment providers are secondary in the case management of the persons being supervised (Zajac et al., 2015).
- Factors specifically related to local conditions, such as resources available, cooperation and coordination of justice agencies, and other factors have an effect on the extent the HOPE model can be implemented (Zajac et al., 2015).

Behavior Modification Programming in a Community Treatment Correctional Facility

A study of youths housed in residential placement completed by Sedlak and McPherson (2010) revealed that the community-based secure facilities and open facilities that are essentially oriented toward providing treatment for the youths housed in the facilities will utilize several different treatment models in their treatment programs. Sedlak and McPherson (2010, p. 3) state, “Generally, the treatment programs utilized in these facilities were specialized and required the use of a professional staff with specialized training.” The treatment programs generally were directed toward providing counseling and other forms of therapy to sex offenders, substance abusers, and violent offenders. Kratcoski (2012, p. 452) observed that those youths housed in treatment facilities being provided with individual and group counseling, depending on their problems and needs, are all expected to adhere to the rules and policies of the institution at which they are housed. A management/treatment model is typically used to obtain compliance with the rules and to motivate the youths toward positive change. Such plans are generally grounded in operant behavior modification.

Box 11.3: Multicounty Community Corrections Facility

The Multicounty Community Corrections Center, located in Canton, Ohio, is one of several facilities of the Multicounty Juvenile Attention System. It is administered by a board of trustees consisting of the juvenile court judges of the six counties included in the system, several government officials, and selected citizens of the six counties.

The youths housed in the facility are selected on the basis of the seriousness of their current and/or past offenses. Their commitment to the Community Corrections Center is an alternative selected by the judges of the six counties to being committed to a state-operated juvenile correctional institution.

The daily routine for the youth begins at 6 a.m. and ends at either 10 or 11 p.m., depending on the youth’s level in the program. During a typical day, time is devoted to meals, attendance at school, individual and group counseling, recreation, and free time when in the housing unit. The routine does not vary much each day, with the exception of when an occasional volunteer group comes into the facility to offer religious services, mentoring in school subjects, or participation in quiet games. Attendance at these functions is optional. The number and types of privileges (positive reinforcements) received are dependent on the resident’s position in the level system.

All new residents start at Level I. This is the level with the least amount of extra privileges. The youth’s behavior is evaluated daily and based on the

(continued)

Box 11.3 (continued)

positives (honor points) earned each day. The youth can earn points by adhering to the rules, being cooperative in school, in recreation, and in treatment programs, and in general showing that he is motivated to change. After a period of time and with positive evaluations, the youth is moved to Level II, which provides more privileges; Level III youth may be given passes to attend activities outside the facility, as well as short home visits. Eventually the youth will be placed in Level IV, unless there are setbacks. In these cases, such as in serious violations of the rules, causing a disturbance, stealing, fighting with another resident, or physically attacking a staff member, the youth will be sent back to a lower level or terminated from the facility.

Level IV residents have the most privileges. These include a 10 p.m. bedtime, extra free time, home visits, and special passes for out of residence entertainment and sporting events. Those residents on Level IV are preparing for release and reentry into their families and the community. Thus, the home visits are a vital part of the treatment program.

(Abstracted from Peter C. Kratcoski (2012) *Juvenile Justice Administration*, CRC Press, p. 469).

Summary

Behavior modification programming is used in juvenile and adult corrections as a management tool as well as a treatment modality. The use of behavior modification in correctional supervision can best be illustrated in community-based supervision of probationers and parolees, in juvenile and adult correctional facilities, and in community-based residential facilities. Programs based on behavior modification principles (operant conditioning) are given different titles and structured in various ways. Generally, the behavior modification treatment provided is combined with other forms of treatment such as those treatment modalities relating to cognitive behavioral therapy. Such therapies require that the person being treated think about the causes of his/her deviant behavior and why behavior changes are necessary if he/she is to function in the community.

The research on programs that emphasized behavior modification such as “boot camps” and institutional programs in which other forms of group or individual counseling were not provided reveals that the changes in behavior that occurred during the time the participants were in the program were not sustained after the participants were no longer under supervision, thus indicating that the behavior patterns were not ingrained.

Discussion Questions

1. The behavior of humans has been divided into two types: respondent behaviors and operant behaviors. Discuss the differences in these types of behavior. What types of behaviors are being changed through the use of behavior modification programs?
2. What are the basic principles underlying behavior modification programming? Give an example of how a behavior modification approach could be used for a 14-year-old boy who is frequently tardy or truant from school.
3. The unit management organizational model used at the Robert F. Kennedy Federal Institution for delinquent boys used a classification system that placed the delinquents housed at the facility in different cottages based on their behavior patterns. A form of token economy was used in the facility. Why did the token economy serve as a behavior modification program? For what type of youth housed at the facility would the token economy be effective in motivating positive behavior changes? What types of youths would be more likely to respond to some other types of reinforcements?
4. Discuss the characteristics of “boot camps” designed to house delinquent youth. Discuss the reasons why the positive changes that the youth made in their behavior while at the camps did not carry over to their behavior in the community after they were released from the “boot camps.”
5. What is behavior contracting? Give an example of a type of behavior contract used in community corrections.
6. What are the four reinforcements mentioned by Aumiller presented in this chapter? When trying to produce behavior change with a group of criminal offenders who have been convicted of offenses related to their substance abuse, do you think positive reinforcements or negative reinforcements would be more likely to produce the behavior changes desired? When would it be appropriate to use a negative reinforcement for a substance abuser under drug court supervision? What types of negative reinforcements could be used?
7. Discuss the behavior modification program employed at the Cliff Skeen Community Correctional Facility for Women.
8. The Honest Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE) implemented in Hawaii has been adopted in several other states because the program has been considered to be highly effective in reducing the proportion of offenders in the program who commit new offenses after being released from the program. What are the major characteristics of the HOPE program? Why have some critics been skeptical of the HOPE approach?
9. Outline the behavior modification program used for delinquent youths housed at the Multicounty Community Corrections facility for delinquent boys located in Ohio. What are some of the positive reinforcements used in the program?
10. Assume you are the leader of a group behavior modification program for adult males who have been convicted of abusing their significant others (wives, girlfriends) and have been ordered by the court to complete the behavior

modification program as a condition of their probation. You have decided to use both material reinforcements and nonmaterial reinforcements when conducting the group counseling sessions. Give some examples of what types of material reinforcements and nonmaterial reinforcements you would use.

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