



Integrative Review of Developmental Behavior-Analytic Concepts

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Abstract

We reviewed five behavior-analytic concepts related to development: behavioral trap, cumulative-hierarchical learning (CHL), basic behavioral repertoire (BBR), pivotal behavior, and behavioral cusp. We searched for terminological variations of the concepts in the CAPES Journals Portal and selected for analysis 31 peer-reviewed articles written in English or Portuguese, published between 1967 and 2021, that contained the search terms in the title, abstract, or keywords and contextualized in the main text. We analysed the conventional usage of the concepts, their conceptual limitations, and the relationships among them, declared or implied, and proposed a conceptual integration of the concepts under a CHL framework, following a path indicated by other authors. We considered BBR, pivotal behavior, and behavioral cusp nonsynonymous concepts of the same logical category, referring to prerequisites for important developmental outcomes and targets of CHL-inspired interventions but defined by different effects on subsequent behavioral development. The three concepts can be conflated in a superset–subset fashion, based on the specificity of their effects: BBR consists of a broad class of behaviors that may affect subsequent learning; the subclass of BBRs characterized by far-reaching collateral effects are classified as pivotal behavior, and the subclass of pivotal behaviors whose potential effects include contact with unprecedented environmental contingencies are classified as behavioral cusps. We propose that behavioral traps be explicitly incorporated in the CHL framework, to emphasize the environmental component of the cumulative-hierarchical learning process. Our formulation seems to organize the conceptual field in a way that respects the conventional use of concepts, preserving their strengths. Regardless of the specific formulation, we believe that integrating the various development-related concepts within a cumulative-hierarchical learning framework can encourage a more proactive integration of findings, questions, and practices informed by each concept, which could lead to the mutual refinement of the corresponding conceptual and methodological frameworks, as well as new

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