# **Written Assignment - Unit 3**

Computer Science, University of the People

PSYC 1504-01 Introduction to Psychology - AY2024-T4

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**Part 1 – Beyond the five senses**

We all know the classic five senses - Sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. All of them rely on external stimulation. But even though we all know these senses we sometimes forget that we humans have other senses too, these senses though are more internal and look inwards. For example, hunger is an internal sense when our digestive system is in need of nourishment. Or breathing, when our blood oxygen levels get low our body senses this and commands the lungs to take a breath. More internally than that we can find such things as the sense of sense of belonging and other socially effected senses, such as loneliness or love. These are controlled and created by complex neurochemical processes in our brains and too are influenced by external interactions through social interactions and even our internal state.

This scientific community has largely focused on the traditionally classic five senses, not surprisingly since these senses are easier to quantify, measure and are directly linked to specific organs that can be seen and monitored. This outlook is a more focused and minimalistic and over simplified view on the human condition. It also allows us to quantify and categorize the human experience in a more comfortable way. But this is slowly changing as more and more senses like proprioception (sense of body position) and interoception (sense of internal body states) are becoming more mainstream and recognized by the scientific community. This means that as our knowledge and understanding of neuroscience is getting better so is our outlook of the senses.

The rigidness of confining the senses to the five “classic” senses has pros and cons, the pro is that it helps us to set boundaries to our research and observations, but the problem is that this limit is just that a limitation that prevents us from seeing the complete picture and missing some of the parts that might be important to understanding the phenomena we are trying to observe. We should push ourselves and the scientific community to become not only more aware of these extra senses but to acknowledge their importance to the scientific research of the human condition.

**Part 2 - Operant Conditioning and Skill Development**

Operant Conditioning (using rewards and/or punishments) can be an important part of the learning process, like reading. The process requires us to try and modify behavior using rewards and/or punishments. While teaching to read, an example of reward could be a simple praise and pat on the back from the teacher or parent when a child succeeds in reading a word or phrase. This creates a need for the child to continue and repeat this success to receive a positive reaction again and again. The more the child repeats and continues to succeed the child brain will strengthen the pathways required to read faster and faster.

This is of course not limited to the learning of reading skills and can be implemented and used in many other skills. For example, riding a bike, learning to play a musical instrument, or even driving a car. All these skills require some initial effort to learn the basics skills and the repetition of these harder skill blocks becomes easier and easier the more they are repeated and reinforced. At some point the skills will even become almost automatic and instinctive to the learner since the brain will require less time to plan and react. This is because at the beginning of learning a skill our brain needs to actively processes all the input and actions that we need to preform but as repetition kicks in the brain can hand off control to the more automated control of actions and require less active focus.

This means the operant conditioning helps us build and expand our skill set in both the mental and physical aspects of our lives. It also shows us how we humans adapt to our surrounding environment through repetition. It also shows why positive reinforcement is important since this is what makes the action easier and more desirable to be repeated the many times until it becomes embedded in our long-term skill set.

**Conclusion:**

Understanding and acknowledging the full spectrum of human senses and skill learning abilities allows us to get a fuller and more complete picture of the human condition. When we expand our definition of senses beyond the basic five, we open ourselves and the community to new ways to understand and research humanity. Also understanding and accepting the need for operant conditioning and that it is an important part of skill acquisition in a multitude of subjects and needs.

## References

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