

Rachael Keplin  
Instrumental Pedagogy  
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# Kohut Ch. III

## Foundations of Human Psychology

Behavioral Psychology: School of thought where humans are passive organisms responding involuntarily to their environment. Behaviorist mindset believes that behavior can be controlled and modified. Behaviorist psychology is a complete 180 from how I view the world and humans. If I were to flip my views, and see my students as predictable humans, I think about the learning environment I create for them. Is it noisy and distracting? Does it make them feel safe? Practically thinking, does it give them room to move? Does it inspire them and remind them of the learning goals we discuss in lessons? I can imagine having a room that is filled with posters, color, and toys make a young student feel right at home. This behaviorist thinking can direct teachers thinking towards preparation in what they do and do not want to happen in lessons.

Positive Reinforcement: Conditioning that uses reward when a desired behavior occurs. Positive reinforcement is the most effective way to achieve repetition of desired behavior. In teaching, positive language is my favorite way to reward a student. It is important to be specific with language so that the student understands what they are doing well and hundredth “good job!” does not feel bland. Rewards can also be in the form of a student’s favorite activity such as dancing, playing a game, or even playing a favorite piece of music. Gifts as rewards are my least favorite form of positive reinforcement because it draws the students attention to the reward itself instead of how the reward was achieved. In some cases, rewards such as stickers or prizes can be a positive way to get a student to reach a goal.

Negative Reinforcement: Conditioning that uses unpleasant actions or language when a desired behavior does not occur. Is negative reinforcement necessary in teaching? If all we are doing as teachers is guiding our students to desired behaviors, then I do not see any negative language or actions being necessary. However, there is a grey area of what is negative. If the

teacher always presents a highly positive attitude, then the slightest frown could be perceived as negative. This type of thinking puts me down a wormhole of possibilities. But if this is within the realm we are discussing, then I believe negative reinforcement is necessary as long as we are careful with how we use our language and avoid unpleasant actions. There are some very valuable learning experiences that come from failing. Those failures could certainly be categorized as unpleasant and I see great value in them for my students as well.

**Cognitive Psychology:** Study of how humans use and organize information to make decisions, gain knowledge, and explore their environment. Cognitive psychologists accept that humans have a choice in what they do. That actualization might be more of a lesson for the teacher than the student. Students choose to practice or not to practice. They choose to engage and listen. As teachers, it is important we provide an environment and variety of materials that allow the student to learn and explore as individuals. Examples of this being assigning listening, talking about current events (as they do or do not relate to music), and connecting to the student on an emotional level (sharing teacher past experiences that may inspire the student to keep going after a tough performance). Cognitive psychology also relates to the topic of practice in studio teaching. I think most would agree that this is a very important ingredient in lessons, vital to the student organizing and retaining information. To me this means we must address not only what needs to be practiced but also how it can and should be practiced.

**Gardner Nine Types of Intelligence:** Nine categories of skilled and/or collected human knowledge. Each intelligence is verified through specific criteria. There are obviously many more kinds of intelligence in the current world. The most obvious to add to this list would be technological intelligence! This list does not express that each human only has one or none of these intellects, but rather a spectrum of knowledge available as a human. One might be very skilled in spacial intelligence but lacking in interpersonal intelligence. As Gardner lists 'musical intelligence', I think of how every person in my life has some sort of musical experience. These experiences range from turning on the radio on the weekends, to playing the cello professionally. I assume that many humans I have not met also have some crumb of experience with music. This is a great advantage as a music teacher. Every student who comes into the studio has the opportunity to connect lesson material with the music they already know and love. This connection should be a very apparent goal in lessons - if not every lesson for the beginner!

Humanistic Psychology: School of thought where each human is viewed as an individual with their own unique set of thoughts, actions, and paths. Humanists believe that humans are unpredictable. I find that belief to be mostly exciting and on a very small level, terrifying. This school of thought makes a lot of sense to me as a teacher and is what I have experienced most. No two students are the same. Teachers must be mindful that every student has their own set of unique backgrounds, learning styles, and personalities.

Peak Experiences: A special intrinsic learning experience that can be characterized as enlightening or moment of discovery. Because this experience is intrinsic, it is felt and achieved by an individual only. This term is so much better than the 'ah-ha-moment' language I have been using! Peak experiences are a crucial part of a musician's (or artist's) journey. They challenge an individual to work to their fullest current potential, hopefully pushing them beyond their current ceiling and setting them up for further progress. How can teachers encourage or stimulate these events? Practice and performance have been the platforms where most of my personal peak experiences have happened. This means we must, must incorporate performance into our teaching! Do studio recitals! Do multiple recitals! Teachers can also encourage peak experiences through juries, or assigning mountain-like repertoire.

Self-esteem and Self Image: Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves and self-image is how we see ourselves. As Kohut discusses, "They directly influence each other; you can't have one without the other" (Kohut, 43). In teaching, we can direct the student to imagine themselves playing smoothly, or having a successful performance and those images form to confident feelings for the student. A student can be built up with feelings of confidence just as easily as they can be torn down to feel insecure. This is a scary power in teaching and we must be mindful in our language. Every comment or response, even to something non-musical in the lesson, can affect our student's self-esteem and self-image.