

## ***This Week's Citation Classic***

Dunham P J. Contrasted conditions of reinforcement: a selective critique.  
Psychol. Bull. 69:295-315, 1968.  
[Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada]

**Simultaneous or successive exposure to two different magnitudes of reward enhances the value of the larger magnitude and reduces the value of the smaller magnitude when compared to either magnitude presented alone. These phenomena have traditionally been called contrast effects, and this paper critically reviewed the methods and theory concerned with contrast effects in the context of research concerned with animal learning and motivation processes. [The Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicates that this paper has been cited over 120 times since 1968.]**

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"During the period between 1950 and 1970 there were a number of phenomena which emerged as 'hot' topics of research for psychologists interested in animal learning and motivation. With the aid of hindsight, I tend to clump these phenomena together under the general label of neo-Hullian research. They originally attracted attention because they challenged the predictions of the grand S-R learning theories of the first half of this century—Hullian theory in particular. Long after our enchantment with such grand theories had worn thin, the phenomena seemed to persist and each attracted a constellation of 'miniature theories' and special methods devoted almost exclusively to each phenomenon. Contrast effects are a prime example, and students of this literature will recognize other

labels such as the partial reinforcement phenomenon, the overlearning extinction phenomenon, the delay of reward phenomenon, etc., as similar 'hot' topics.

"In 1966, I had taken my first job as an assistant professor in Canada. I had completed a dissertation that year on contrast phenomena, and decided that my first task upon arriving here in Halifax would be to write a critical review of the contrast literature which covered the existing theoretical ideas and the methodological variations. This paper was the result, and I remember celebrating the editorial decision in the Lord Nelson Beverage Room—Halifax's finest in those days (believe it or not, women were not permitted in public taverns and ale was served by the quart).

"Ironically, I also recall that the paper served to plant the first seeds of disenchantment with this area of research in my mind. I felt that the Hullian and neo-Hullian theoretical roots from which contrast phenomena had emerged no longer provided the most viable approach to thinking about behavior, and my interests gradually shifted away from contrast effects and related phenomena. My other theoretical efforts over the past decade are a record of this gradual shift in interest<sup>13</sup>—although I still celebrate at the Lord Nelson where ale is now served by the pint and women are permitted!

"In spite of my different interests, it pleases me to know that the first major paper I wrote in my academic career has become a Citation Classic. I suspect that there are two reasons for the frequent citations the paper receives. First, it is a review article, and they tend to be more frequently cited than experimental papers. Second, the timing was fortuitous. I suspect that interest in contrast phenomena was at its very peak when the paper appeared and has gradually declined since that time."

1. Dunham P J. Punishment: method and theory. Psychol. Rev. 78:58-70, 1971.
2. ...., The nature of reinforcing stimuli. (Honig W K & Staddon J, eds.) Handbook of operant behavior. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1977. p. 98-124.
3. ...., Crustacean sex pheromones. Biol. Rev. 53:555-83, 1978.