*EFFECTS OF DIRECT, INTERMITTENT, AND VICARIOUS
REINFORCEMENT PROCEDURES ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND
MAINTENANCE OF INSTRUCTION-FOLLOWING BEHAVIORS
IN A GROUP OF YOUNG CHILDREN¹*

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A group of young children (mean age: 2.5 yr) were instructed to follow different requests by a teacher in a day-care setting. Experiment I verified that mean group instruction following was low (10%) despite the opportunity for "observational learning", *i.e.*, the group of 12 children could watch a nonreinforced adult comply with the teacher's request. In Experiment II, when positive consequences were provided contingent on the adult model's behavior, mean group instruction following was relatively unaffected (14%). When direct reinforcement was given to four peer models, each for several sessions, the individual performances of three of the four peer models was elevated (from 50% to 80%); however, the mean performance of the remaining nonreinforced children ($N = 7$) was only moderately affected (21%). When reinforcement contingencies were again changed, so that each group member was provided direct, but intermittent reinforcement, mean group performance increased substantially to levels of over 70%. Once instruction following was high, presentation of reinforcement only to one peer model sufficed to maintain performance whereas earlier, this same vicarious reinforcement procedure had failed to establish group compliance. The maintenance of instruction-following behavior when reinforcement was applied solely to one child was interpreted mainly in terms of a high resistance to extinction following a history of intermittent reinforcement rather than a "vicarious" or "self"-reinforcement mechanism. Finally, removal and re-introduction of group intermittent reinforcement, respectively, lowered performance (to levels of 40%) and elevated (to levels of 65%) the group's performance.

DESCRIPTORS: contingencies, group contingencies, extinction, instruction-following, intermittent schedule, modelling, stimulus control, vicarious reinforcement, pre-school children

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