

Psychodynamic vs behaviourist theory

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



Psychology is not just philosophical speculation and reasoning over the years it has evolved and it is now also recognised as a science, to understand what psychology is all about it is necessary to know its origins and the theorist who brought it out of obscurity, Sigmund Freud. He developed the Psychodynamic or Psychoanalytical perspective to enable better understanding of human behaviour these concepts will be discussed further later in this study.

After Freud opened the gateway other perspectives and approaches have been developed, now with five main areas of psychology - Cognitive, Behaviourist, Biopsychology and Humanist approaches. For a comparison with the Psychodynamic theory, Behaviourist Theory will be discussed. Psychodynamic theory is referred to in psychological literature more than any other. This is the stereotypical psychology - looking into your past, discovering hidden desires, rummaging through the unconscious.

It is the most radical of the five theories, and by far the most criticised - accused of being sexist, seeing the human population as ill, and considering sex and hostility as the only motivation for human actions. However, this theory has proven to be one of the most influential forces in the twentieth century. Sigmund Freud believed that humans are driven from birth by two innate instincts Eros the life instinct - the self-preserving and erotic instinct and Thanatos the death instinct - the self destructive, aggression and cruelty instinct.

These are controlled by a free floating sexual energy, the libido and is seen to be the single most important motivating force in adult life, driven from

birth to enhance bodily pleasure. There is a lot more to the mind than meets the eye, much like an iceberg - only the very tip is showing. He is the one who came up with the concept of one's unconscious - the part of the mind where desires and memories are stored, unrecognised, only hinted at through dreams or slips of the tongue or the 'Freudian slip' as it is more widely known.

Rallying between the conscious and unconscious are the id, ego, and superego - separate and conflicting forces, requiring a balance for mental health and normal behaviour. The id is a person's animal force, their need to satisfy basic psychological needs. The superego is the 'ideal' force, the civilised, competent figure the person strives to be. The ego sort of regulates the two, keeping the id satisfied while staying within the guidelines of the superego. The strength of each individual force is a factor in personality - if a person's superego is too strong, they are seen as rigid and guilty.

If a person's id is too strong, they are seen as delinquent and antisocial (Boeree, 2000). The psychodynamic theory also established the idea that what happens in a person's childhood is one of the most important factors in personality development, especially traumatic experiences. The theory states that children who go through such things repress their memories, and this is the cause of adulthood mental disease. In order to further understand how personalities are shaped during childhood, Freud thought up the psychosexual stages.

This shows the development of the id and the establishment of pleasure-sensitive areas known as erogenous zones. This also brings about the idea of fixations. Such things are developed in the Oral stage of a child's development from birth to eighteen months where the mouth is the source of nourishment and pleasure an example of this is seen in a nursing infant and if deprived of nourishment will fixate their pleasure seeking energies on this stage, the need to constantly stimulate the mouth through smoking, biting and chewing.

The next is the Anal stage between eighteen and thirty-six months focus on bladder and bowel elimination and is seen as a source of pleasure when the child is able to control them, this is why toilet training usually happens around this age and if not mastered an adult would be seen to be anal expulsive or anal retentive. Phallic stage between age three and five years where sexual energy is focused on the genitals. Oedipus and Electra complex in which the child unconsciously wishes to possess the parent of the opposite sex and rid themselves of the parent of the same sex.

The result of this desire in boys would experience castration anxiety which would drive them to identify with their fathers. If there is no male figure in this stage of a child's development it is thought that the child will have problems with authority figures later in life as he has never had the chance to conclude this stage. Freud's explanation for the female development claiming that they would experience penis envy (a realisation they do not have a penis) they would eventually overcome by achieving motherhood and having their own baby.

Latency stage from six years through puberty here the child will develop their confidence and mastery of the world around them. He believed that during this stage their experiences and excitations of previous stages are repressed and children develop infantile amnesia being unable to remember much of their earlier years. The Genital stage from twelve years upwards to adulthood is the culmination of the psychosexual development and the fixing of sexual energy in the genitals.

This eventually directs humans towards sexual intercourse and the beginnings of the next cycle of life (Breger, 2009). John Watson a theorist who rejected the idea of introspection and every part of the psychodynamic theory, suggested the Behaviourist view is an objective, experimental branch of natural science who are interested in prediction and control of behaviour, most of the early research was carried out on animals before moving onto humans.

This is an approach that believes people are born 'Tabula rasa' literally meaning 'blank slate', that all human behaviour is infinitely plastic and therefore is ultimately explainable in terms of the experiences that an organism goes through rather than any genetic predisposition of characteristics that the organism possesses. The relationship between the environment and the organism is seen as a straight line, in that the organisms act on their environment, which in turn provides rewards and punishments to determine the future probability of a response occurring.

Behaviours are acquired or learned in one of two main ways, these are classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Examples of classical

conditioning applied to real life are things like, taste aversion, learned emotions, advertising and development of phobias. Use of operant conditioning is referred to as behaviour modification such as in a classroom or therapy settings (Wyman, 2005). Watson suggests that children have three basic emotions, fear, rage and love and attempted to prove that these emotions could be artificially conditioned.

The experiment of Little Albert is his most famous and controversial experiment, Watson and a graduate assistant named Rosalie Rayner conditioned a small child to fear a white rat. They accomplished this by repeatedly pairing the white rat with a loud, frightening clanging noise. They were also able to demonstrate that this fear could be generalized to other white, furry objects. The ethics of the experiment are often criticized today, especially because the child's fear was never deconditioned. Another example of classical conditioning is Ivan Pavlov ' Dogs', in this experiment he noted that dogs would salivate before the delivery of food.

In a series of well-known experiments, he presented a variety of stimuli before the presentation of food, eventually finding that, after repeated association, a dog would salivate (response) to the presence of a stimulus (noise) other than food (Bitterman, 2006). The most influential of all behaviourists is B F Skinner he is famous for his research on operant conditioning and negative reinforcement. He developed a device called the ' cumulative recorder' which showed rates of responding as a sloped line. Using this device, he found that behaviour did not depend on the preceding stimulus as Watson and Pavlov maintained.

Instead, Skinner found that behaviours were dependent upon what happens after the response, therefore, using positive and negative reinforcement responses can be conditioned to a stimulus, those that are rewarded will increase and those that are not will decrease (Rubin, 2003). Not unlike other perspectives Behaviourism has gone through many transformations in the years since its conception by John Watson, one of the recent extensions in this approach has been the development of Social Learning theory. This theory is most relevant to criminology.

Bandura suggests that we learn through observation, imitation and modelling of a significant other, people learn through the outcome of those behaviours and later a person will form an idea which serves as a guide for action. A significant other could be someone one aspires to become, not necessarily family, it could be someone famous for instance. If a person sees another being rewarded or punished for a certain behaviour they may or may not copy that behaviour, what is seen as a punishment or reward for one person may not be for another.

However, if it is a person they aspire to be children in particular tend to emulate this behaviour either good or bad. Part of this study was the 'Bobo doll' experiment, he demonstrated that children learn and imitate behaviours they have observed in other people. The children observed an adult acting violently toward a Bobo doll. When the children were later allowed to play in a room with the Bobo doll, they began to imitate the aggressive actions they had previously observed (Green, 2003).

Psychology has changed its face over the many years since Freud first introduced the psychodynamic theory putting forward a different way of trying to understand why people behave the way they do, moving onto the Behaviourist approach which completely refutes Freud's theory by refusing to accept that people are born with natural innate instincts and that consciousness is the subject matter of psychology, who believe that psychology is about behaviour and activities and that the consciousness is not definable.

They leave a huge gaping whole in their theory relating to perception, sensations, memories and imagination. Whereas Freud simply focused on his masculinity and the inferiority of the female population, although he can be forgiven for this as his theory came about in the Victorian era and this theory was a major breakthrough in history and is still one of the biggest thinkers and without whom psychologists and the like would not know as much about ourselves as people do. References

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