A study on theoretical perspectives in maladaptive behavior

Maladaptive behavior is known as behavior that is “ different” than normal. There are many ways to define behavior that is unusual. Antisocial Disorder is also known as abnormal. There are many perspectives known to help define and explain these behaviors. Scientific theories have been created to organize our thoughts and our beliefs to explain what it all means (Sarason, 2005). Biological Perspective explains the relationships between our brain and our behavior (Sarason, 2005). This would also cover heredity and genetics (Sarason, 2005). This perspective assumes that our bodily maladaptive behavior is due to a problem in our body (Sarason, 2005). “ Behavior genetics is known as a study of the effects of our genetic inheritance of behavior” (Sarason, 2005). “ Psychodynamic Perspective is the idea that thoughts and emotions are important causes of behavior” (Sarason, 2005).

In most cases biological factors are important in the diagnosis of a patient. “ Most medical conditions require biological factors”, (Sarason, 2005). “ Equipment such as the position emission tomography scan and the computerized tomography (CT scan) are starting to be used to demonstrate studies between the brain and behavior,” (Sarason, 2005). “ In research of genetics and heredity it has shown that chromosomal defects are the cause of metabolic disorders that may lead to mental retardation,” (Sarason, 2005). “ Phenylketonuria is an example of such a condition,” (Sarason, 2005).

“ Body refers to organs, muscles, bones, and the brain; mind refers to attitudes and feelings or thoughts,” (Sarason, 2005). The separation between the two is intellectual intervention (Sarason, 2005). Although many people

believe the separation to be complete. Cognitive and bodily functioning are closely working together (Sarason, 2005). It is known that maladaptive behavior is because of a dysfunction in the body and the way it functions (Sarason, 2005). Maladaptive behavior is a joint product of three major components; in the body or a hormonal deficiency, in physiological functioning or a tendency towards shyness, and in a social environment (Sarason, 2005).

Chromosomes are threadlike that are present in the cells that make up our DNA (Sarason, 2005). Anomolies in the chromosomes are likely to cause abnormalities in our brain (Sarason, 2005). Someone with Down syndrome usually has 21 of these chromosomes as opposed to the usual 2 (Sarason, 2005). Each of these genes contains their own characteristic positions (Sarason, 2005). “ 60% of these genes are responsible for brain functions,” (Sarason, 2005). “ 4, 000 diseases are caused by abnormalities in these chromosomes,” (Sarason, 2005).

Psychologists study these genes; this is called behavior genetics (Sarason, 2005). As humans we inherit behavior (Sarason, 2005). This study is called pedigree studies. Here are some of the common studies of genetic research:

Gene- Parts of your DNA that contain proteins that carries out tasks in your body (Sarason, 2005).

“ Alleles- Variants of the same gene in a species”(Sarason, 2005).

“ Genome- All DNA processed by a person” (Sarason, 2005).

“ Genotype- the DNA makeup at the moment of conception” (Sarason, 2005).

“ Phenotype-Characteristics resulting from environment and genetics” (Sarason, 2005)

“ Heritability- A statistical estimate of characteristics affected by genetics” (Sarason, 2005).

Nervous System and the Brain

The nervous system and the brain are also affecting who we are as humans. The nervous system is the brains control area and very important in the functioning of the brain (Sarason, 2005). The nervous system consists of neurons which have very special purposes (Sarason, 2005). The brain is now known as the most complex structure in the entire world (Sarason, 2005).

The nervous system is split into two parts: the central nervous system, including the nerve cells or neurons, brain and spinal cords (Sarason, 2005). “ The Peripheral nervous system includes all the neurons that connect the central nervous system with the glands, muscles, and sensory system” (Sarason, 2005). “ The Peripheral nervous system has two parts; the somatic system and the Autonomic system” (Sarason, 2005). “ The somatic system transmits information from sense organs to the muscles that help us move” (Sarason, 2005). Autonomic system directs activity of the glands and our internal organs (Sarason, 2005). It is said that the brain has a lot to do with our behavior. The way it functions and the way we perceive things when the brain is trying to transmit the information can also get “ lost in translation.”

There are so many ways that information can be misinterpreted when the brain is not correctly functioning.

The behavioral state of a human is usually best observed through an EEG machine. This machine can measure alertness through tracings of the brain and its activity. It can measure if someone is alert or awake, resting, eyes closed, light sleep, deep sleep, or dreaming (Sarason, 2005). A healthy brain will also react to new experiences where a damaged brain might not react (Sarason, 2005). This can also be measure on an EEG machine.

Freud's Theory of Personalities

Sigmund Freud was a great neurologist from 1856-1939 (Sarason, 2005). He was also one of the most influential writers in the twentieth century. Freud's theory of Personality is also one of the most influential writings. It seems very complex to some.

One of Freud's theories consists of psychic determinism. This states that behavior is determined by prior mental events in ones life (Sarason, 2005). Freud believed that there are two levels of consciousness. One is consciousness itself and the other is precociousness (Sarason, 2005). This means that if someone were thinking of one thing, they could easily store this in mind and move back to a previous thought. Freud found that this had a lot to do with overt behavior. He also believed that the greater the mental conflict in the conscious stayed there, the greater the stress would become (Sarason, 2005).

Behavior Perspectives and Genetics

“ The behavioral perspective focuses on behavior as a response to stimuli in the environment of the organism,” (Sarason, 2005). An American psychologist names John B. Watson created was the founder of behaviorism (Sarason, 2005). “ Watson created this as a thoroughly mechanical affair,” (Sarason, 2005). “ The complete personality was created for overt behavior and was built up out of the conditioning process” (Sarason, 2005). Many psychologists did not believe Watson. They believed that behavior was much more complex. They believed that it is truly a hard process. Watson just believed that a little time would bring on a dynamic behavioral change. “ Behavioral Perspective was also created because psychologists found that Freud’s ideas about the mind were too complex enough and very vague” (Sarason, 2005). Psychologists believed that this could be explained in an easier way to understand. Many of them were having problems understanding so this led them to creation of their own theories.

“ Both the psychoanalytical and behavioral approaches are deterministic but can be found in different places,” (Sarason, 2005). Psychologists that use this type of behavioral perspective focus on what the patient is learning (Sarason, 2005). They view any type of behavior as stimuli-response and relationships (Sarason, 2005). In the process of changing someone’s behavior, they concentrate on altering the environment and rewards (Sarason, 2005). Early behavioral perspectives lacked certain elements.

“ In the process of classical conditioning psychologists are watching for a response that an organism is automatically stimulated and transferred to a new one through an association between the two” (Sarason, 2005). Ivan

Pavlov was one of the most famous classical conditioning experimenters. “ Pavlov placed a hungry dog in a harness and turned on a light at certain intervals” (Sarason, 2005). The dog did not salivate in response to the light making the light conditioned stimuli (Sarason, 2005). After a few times of trying this, meat powder was delivered after the dog was stimulated. Since the dog was hungry, he salivated an unconditional response” (Sarason). Pavlov found that although there was no food delivered at certain points of the experiment, the dog was still salivating. Pavlov also tried the ringing of a bell as a stimulus (Sarason, 2005).

In some cases there are unpleasant, avoidant or escape responses (Sarason, 2005). For example, the experiments that entails a mouse moving through a maze to find food. They use the electric charge to pulse through the mouse to help them find the food. Eventually the mouse is able to get to the food every time without the stimuli of the electric charge to show him the way. When these conditioned responses are reinforced during the process of conditioning, these responses dissipate (Sarason, 2005). The disappearance of early responses is called extinction (Sarason, 2005). Many students of maladaptive behavior begin to become fascinated with classical conditioning when they realize it explains a lot about many types of emotional responses (Sarason, 2005). There is also such a thing as accidental conditional responses

For example, I almost drowned when I was 4 years old. Since that day I have been terrified of any body of water. If I were to tell a psychologist this, they might recommend systematic desensitization (Sarason, 2005).

Here is a diagram of how this might work (Sarason, 2005).

Unconditional ——————– Unconditional responses

Drowning———————– Fear

Conditional Stimulus————- Conditional response

Pool or another body of water— Fear

Breaking down the steps of stimuli between the conditional stimuli and conditional responses could alleviate the fear of water or drowning.

“ Operant response is also called instrumental conditioning, when the organism must make a particular response to the actions before the reinforcement starts to take affect” (Sarason, 2005). The organism reflects its environment (Sarason, 2005). B. F. Skinner was the first psychologist to demonstrate this type of conditioning and its effectiveness (Sarason, 2005). He was also one of the most influential psychologists of the 20th century (Sarason, 2005). “ Skinner created an experiment named “ Skinner box” where a rat will press a bar repeatedly if this activity is reinforced by pellets of food falling into a dish (Sarason, 2005)”. Operant conditioning is responses that occur less prior to being reinforced (Sarason, 2005).

Reinforcement, punishment, and extinction are all steps of operant conditioning (Sarason, 2005). A reinforce is an event that increases the possibility of a stimulus responding in a certain way (Sarason, 2005). A positive reinforce increases the possibility of the outcome being something good (Sarason, 2005). A negative reinforce increases the outcome being

something negative (Sarason, 2005). Punishment is another way of changing behavior that is hit or miss. Sometimes it will be effective and other times it will not.

Here are a few examples of a schedule of reinforcements used to research learning.

“ Continuous reinforcement schedule- every response of a particular type is reinforced (Sarason, 2005)”.

“ Partial or Intermittent reinforcement schedule- only some of these responses are reinforced (Sarason, 2005)”.

“ Fixed-ratio schedule- reinforcement is given after a fixed number of these responses (Sarason, 2005)”.

“ Variable-ration schedule-reinforcement varies around an average 10 responses (Sarason, 2005)”.

“ Fixed-Interval schedule- reinforcement follows the first response that occurs after certain time intervals (Sarason, 2005)”.

“ Variable-interval schedule- reinforcement occurs after a variable interval of time (Sarason, 2005)”.

Psychodynamic Perspective

“ The psychodynamic perspective the idea that thoughts and emotions are important causes of behavior, (Sarason, 2005)”. Many psychologists believe that “ rational” thinking will produce personal and social adjustment

(Sarason, 2005). In the 19th century this began to attract more and more attention. People were drawn to the fact that maladaptive behavior was not normal.

The organic approach to psychological behavior is influenced by physiological and the anatomy of a human being (Sarason, 2005). Mental disorders are a direct reflection of what is going on in the brain and how we function with this (Sarason, 2005). People began to believe that brain cells were what were making us unhappy (Sarason, 2005). The bad thing about this belief system is that there is much more to it. We needed to dig deeper to figure out what the stem of the problem was. Psychologists were finding it harder to convince people that there was really something wrong as opposed to someone just being crazy. People wanted to believe what they wanted to, making it difficult for psychologist. Psychologists hope to find evidence that behavior was a reflection of the brain (Sarason, 2005). “ An interact ional or biopsychological approach currently directs the work of most clinicians and researchers,” (Sarason, 2005). Coping, skills due to this perspective result in stress and vulnerability (Sarason, 2005). Think of these as a coping mechanism (Sarason, 2005).

Antisocial Disorder

Anti-social disorder is typically associated with violence, delinquency and violence (Sarason, 2005).

Critical features of this disorder would be:

“ Failure to conform to social norms,” (Sarason, 2005)

Deceitfulness or being manipulative (Sarason, 2005)

Failure to plan ahead or being impulsive (Sarason, 2005)

Irritability or being aggressive (Sarason, 2005)

Disregard for other; being reckless (Sarason, 2005)

Consistently being irresponsible (Sarason, 2005)

Lack of remorse for their actions (Sarason, 2005)

Anti-social disorder is inherited and it is not yet clear how (Sarason, 2005). " Impulsive physical violence is related to low levels of serotonin and one of its metabolites in spinal fluid," (Sarason, 2005). Anxiety has also been studied. It has become a very consistent component of Anti-social disorder (Sarason, 2005). People with anti-social disorder lack the ability to feel for others and will most likely hurt the people that are closest to them without remorse (Sarason, 2005). People with anti-social disorder are very difficult to diagnose and help. Their tendencies and personalities are very hard to understand (Sarason, 2005).

In conclusion, our behavior is not only altered by genetics but is also altered by our brain and our nervous system. It is very difficult to find a direct diagnosis of a person without all medical history. There are numerous things that could affect a human's train of thought and the ability to cope in day to day life. Freud's theory shows that people are able to be aware of their ability to consciously think. We are constantly thinking on two levels, giving us the ability to make choices. We are able to think on a level of good or bad.

We are able to capacitate many types of brain alterations. The brain is so complex making it very difficult for us to truly understand. We have the basis of how behavior can affect us. We can chose to listen to our preconscious as opposed to the conscious that is telling us to do the wrong thing. Or we can run through life with reckless disregard for others. We have the ability to make these choices for ourselves, given that we are aware of the malfunctioning of our brains. Despite this, technology and diagnosis will continue to expand and diagnosis will become easier and easier.