

# [From determinism to cognitive theory](https://assignbuster.com/from-determinism-to-cognitive-theory/)

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From Deterministic Behaviorism to Cognitive Theory: An Evolutionary Trail Alesia G. McDaniel University of the Rockies Abstract The Behaviorist theory, introduced by Pavlov and popularized by Watson and Skinner is discussed based on its roots in thephilosophyof determinism which maintains that all behavior is the result of a specific cause. The theory of evolution and the consequential nature-nurture debate following contributes to the search for the meaning of behavior.

A relationship to present day behaviorism theory and the rise of cognitive behavioral theory with its branches of cognitive behavior therapy and neuroscience will be explored. An analysis of the similarities and differences between the two constructs in the field ofpsychology, leads to a discussion of how these theories are used in current psychological practice. Keywords: Determinism, Behaviorism, Cognitive Theory, Cognitive Behavioral Psychology From Determinism to Cognitive Theory: An Evolutionary Trail The history of psychology is informative.

It began 100 years ago with an introspective search for mind (Skinner, 1990) that came from philosophy and metaphysics. A philosophical principle called determinism appears to serve as a root for what later became behaviorism. This paper will outline an evolutionary trail. Beginning at the sea of determinism and crossing the plains of evolution, through the jungle of experimental psychology to find the path leading to the oasis of explanation of behaviorism where after a short rest, the trail winds around the curve of cognitive theory ending at a fork in the road.

At this point, one path leads to current cognitive therapy practice and the other to current applications of behaviorism. The Sea of Determinism Determinism emerges as the explanation of a principle of physics called cause and effect which asserts that all behavior is the result of some cause (Bargh, 2000). Causation comes as a direct result of purpose or reason. No event is uncaused and all events are of necessity. Philosophy tends to use introspection to flesh out concepts of how the mind interacts with the body.

Introspection was rejected by the experimental psychologists. The Plains of Evolution Behaviorism is the idea that all behavior can be traced to specific causes either environmental or reflexive. Thompson (1994) states that behavior of the organism as a whole is the product of three types of variation and selection and that natural selection is the first type. It is responsible for the evolution of the species and hence for species behavior. The Jungle of Experimental Psychology

Watson attacked introspection in his behaviorist manifesto of 1913, and for that or other reasons, introspection was essentially abandoned (Bargh, 2000). Behaviorists came out of structuralism and functionalism as a protest of the mentalism that guided the careers of Wundt and Titchener. Experimental psychologists hoped to isolate compounds of images, feelings and sensations in a way that they could measure them and us the measurements to predict the cause of human behavior (Bargh, 2000). It was hoped that these elements could be organized into a type of table as is used in physics.

Thefailureof experimental psychologists to isolate behavior in this manner gave rise to Behaviorist theory. An Oasis: Behaviorism Pavlov’s conditioned reflex formed the basis of Watson’s behaviorism (Thompson, 1994) B. F. Skinner and John Watson developed “ nurture focused” determinism with in two models of behavioral conditioning (Bargh, 2000). B. F. Skinner is known for development of Operant Conditioning which differed from Watson’s version by addition of operation procedures in addition to the CS and the UCS in his S-R model.

Operant conditioning addressed the causality of human behavior and as such involved specification of how stimuli, responses, reinforcers, and drive states are woven into relationships that change and sustain an organism’s behavior (Herrnstein, 1977). This method had some limitations that contributed to the rise of cognitive theory as the answer to the question of why humans behave as they do. This process lacked objectivity to sustain its vision andgoals. Psychological study without consideration of internal process in unproductive.

It is missing a significant variable. Behaviorism came about as a reaction to the subjectivity and unreliability of methods used in experimental psychology and strove to provide a mechanical account of human behavior (Bargh, 2000). It was based on the physiological concept of reflex as a result of external stimulation. The S-R unit was seen as the basic building block of human behavior with no theoretical base. There isn’t any empirical evidence to prove its actual existence.

As long as the S-R units of the behaviorist experiments remained contained in labs and boxes, it proved successful, but when taken to higher level processes such as language and social interaction, the S-R unit was no longer plausible. It was thought that what was discovered in the lab with pigeons and rats was transferrable to human behavior outside the lab. The failure of behaviorism’s model to explain higher mental processes of language acquisition, social interaction, memory, and judgment led to cognitive theory to find the missing link (Bargh, 2000).

The Curve of Cognitive Theory Behavioral theory exposed the rudimentary or first principles of human behavior from which cognitive therapy evolved. Behaviorism denied internal processing and focusing only on external stimuli leaves much to be desired. The behaviorist held to the idea that the mediating internal constructs and processes hinder achieving the results of the assumption that human behavior can be explained by nurture focused determinism (Bargh, 2000).

An integration of cognitive and dynamic psychology to understand all processes that cause behavior is needed. Cognitive theory focuses on the internal processing of external events as the cause of behavior and as such relates to determinism. Perhaps behaviorism failed to completely answer the questions of causality of human behavior because it denied that consciousness plays a role, with consciousness, representing those processes that motivate behavior internally. Perception, interpretation, memory, judgment, evaluation, and goal pursuit all serve to cause behavior.

Maybe behaviorists were trying to disprove religious teachings of their time and the belief that God or the Devil had something to do with behavior. They were not willing to deal with what they did not know how to measure. As cognitivesciencepicked up where Behaviorism left off, psychology begins to unravel a process by which an understanding of how the internal processes of the human mind work in combination with individual differences in consciousness and how that influences and directs human behavior.

The Fork in the Road: Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Current Behaviorism Applied Cognitive behavior theory and behaviorism theory translated to cognitive-behavioral therapy currently helps practitioners to flesh out the root causality of problematic behavior with their clients. An understanding of why we do, what we do or, what thinking leads to certain behaviors is crucial to eradication of self-destructive behavior as well as restoration and growth after experiencing trauma or victimization. Applications of these theories have contributed to advances in treatment of addiction and trauma.

The practices of psychotherapy and medication therapy have also benefited from advances in this area. The End of the Trail? The trail began seeing behavior as the effect of a cause. It continues to evolve from the present path of thinking processes being the cause of behavior. Experimental psychology, behaviorism blazed new trails toward the manifest destiny that is the mind. As new trails are being blazed to understand how thought is related to behavior the evolution continues. . References Bargh, J. A. (2000). Beyond behaviorism: On the automaticity of higher mental processes.

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