

Behavioral perspectives of psychology



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Behavioral psychology is thought to be a perspective that mainly focuses on behaviors that have been learned. While psychology was mainly dominated by behaviorism in the early 20th century, it quickly started to diminish in the 1950s. Now a days, the behavioral perspective still deals with how behaviors have been learned and reinforced. Behavioral principles have many a times been applied in settings of mental health where some therapists/ counselors have used these certain techniques to try to explain and treat a great deal of illnesses.

Since Behavioral Perspective is the way people view the psychological aspect of behavior then it is obvious that this perspective indicates the study of observable and measurable behavior. It does this in a way only in which the environment is the only this that determines this behavior. Also included in this perspective is natural way of man, the belief that everything is caused by something, and the fact that change is capable of happening.

Behaviorists tend to think that the nature of man is not good nor evil. They also believe in the theory of “ Tabula Rasa,” also known as the blank slate theory. This theory explains that when a baby is born with no reason or knowledge then obviously their knowledge has to be drawn from their environment and experiences.

Behaviorist B. F. Skinner goes over the fact that he believes in this concept by always stating that as far as he knows, at any point in time, his behavior has not been anything more than the product of his own personal history, his own genetic endowment, and the current setting he is in at that point in time.

The Behavioral Perspective takes some ideas from the Tabula Rasa such as conditioning and behavior modification in order to merge or combine the other valuable ideas inside of the Behavioral Perspective such as the perspective which includes the natural way of man, the belief that everything is caused by something, and the fact that change is capable of happening. The concept that we as humans have no free-will is called Determinism. Also with the Tabula Rasa theory there has been one more aspect of determinism which is called conditioning.

Conditioning is considered to be one of the simplest forms one can do to learn. In conditioning a certain type of behavior is learned by a person and or animal. This type of learning is often considered to be a direct result of the reinforcement or the connection of an unconditioned stimulus with a conditioned stimulus.

An interesting concept some behaviorists believe is that certain behaviors can be countered or unlearned through an either positive or negative change in the actual reinforcement. The change in the reinforcement is called behavior modification and in it the person can be given an object or something that they can use to trade in for something better every time they do the right thing.

“ The behavioral approach to understanding motivation deals with drives, both learned and unlearned, and with incentives. Drive theory involves the concepts of unlearned (or primary) drives, drive reduction, and learned (secondary) drives. It is based on the fact that all living organisms have physiological needs that must be satisfied for survival (for example, the need

for food, water, sleep, and so forth) to maintain a state of homeostasis, that is, a steady internal state.

Disruption of an organism's homeostatic state causes a state of tension (arousal) called an unlearned, or primary, drive. If the aroused state has been created by hunger, it is called a hunger drive, and the drive can be reduced by food. Drive reduction moves toward the re-establishment of homeostasis. Drives, then, may be thought of as the consequence of a physiological need, which an organism is impelled to reduce or eliminate. Clark Hull, a learning theorist, developed an equation to show how learning and drive are related. Drives may also be learned, or secondary. Fear (or anxiety), for example, is often considered a secondary drive that can be learned through either classical or operant conditioning. In Neal Miller's well-known operant conditioning experiment, a rat was placed in a black box and then given a mild electrical shock. Eventually, the rat learned to react to the experience of being put in a black box (with no shock given) with the response of turning a wheel to escape. In this case, the black box is said to have elicited the learned drive of fear. Among other drives considered by some theorists to be learned are the need for affiliation (that is, to belong, to have companionship), the need for security (money), and the need for achievement. Theories of incentive motivation contend that external stimuli can motivate behavior. Humans and other animals can learn to value external stimuli (for example, the first prize in a track meet for a human and a pat on the head for a dog) and will work to get them. Incentive motivation is sometimes called pull motivation because incentives are said to pull in contrast with the push associated with drives. Kenneth Spence, well known

for his work in incentive motivation, suggested that the incentive value of the reward strengthens the response” (CliffNotes, 2009).

The behavioral perspective is mainly focused on the idea that psychology should only be concerned with the measurable physical responses one has to certain environmental stimuli. This certain perspective was first introduced to the world by John Broadus Watson who lived from 1878 to 1958. He was a great student at the University of Chicago and worked to get his doctorate at the same time. He strongly believed that the science of psychology was meant to be a hard science as the rest of the sciences were therefore psychology should seek out observable behavior. Watson thought that psychology was not meant to deal with mental events because to him they are un-measurable in every way except to the actual organism experiencing them.