

# **Perspectives, Theories and Personality Psychology**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Psychology as a discipline is concerned with studying, understanding and explaining both human and animal overt and covert behaviours; and ultimately modifying such behaviours when there is a need. To study and understand these behaviours, authorities in the discipline have propounded perspectives and theories to guide the endeavours. The perspectives and theories in turn help to guide the understanding of human personality development. This chapter will discuss the perspectives, theories and personality development and how they help our understanding of human behaviours.

## **PERSPECTIVES IN PSYCHOLOGY**

There are many different approaches to thinking about why and how people and animals behave the way they do. In psychology, these approaches are known as schools of thought or perspectives. A psychological perspective is a viewpoint that involves conjecture or educated guess about human and animal behavior. It is important to note that there is no perspective that is considered correct or incorrect. Each perspective, with its strengths and weaknesses, brings unique insights to the understanding of behaviour. For this reason, it is essential that psychology engages different perspectives in studying and understanding human and animal behavior.

Sometimes psychologists engage one perspective in their research. For example, behavioural psychologists engage environmental influence in understanding and

explaining behaviour. However, psychologists are usually eclectic in their approach; incorporating several perspectives for a more robust understanding and explanation of behaviour.

Below are the ten (10) psychological perspectives:

### **EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE**

Charles Darwin (1859) demonstrated that genetics and evolution play a role in influencing human behavior through natural selection. The evolutionary perspective centres on the idea that most behavior is inherited and has an adaptive (or evolutionary) function. The major idea about this perspective is that the mind and brain evolved to solve problems encountered by our hunter-gatherer ancestors during the upper Pleistocene period over 10,000 years ago. This perspective explains behavior in terms of the need for selection that shapes our behavior. Most behaviors that we exhibit are developed during EEA (environment of evolutionary adaptation) to help us survive. Behavior is likely to have developed because it is adaptive, that is, it has been naturally selected.

Selected behaviours give individuals best chances of survival and are passed from generation to generation. For example, an extroverted behaviour can be explained to have an evolutionarily advantage because it helps individuals have confederates that increase their chances of survival. Also for example, in the weeks immediately after the birth of a child, levels of testosterone in fathers drop by more than 30 per cent. This has an evolutionary function. Testosterone-deprived men are less likely to wander off in search of new mates to inseminate. They are also less aggressive, which is useful when there is a baby around. Evolutionary perspective has however been criticized for not acknowledging the influence of learning and cognition in determining behaviour.

According to Hagen (1999) evolutionary psychology attempts to explain the functional organization of the brain even though researchers currently cannot (with very few exceptions) directly study complex neural circuits. He believed that this is like attempting to discover the functions of the lungs, heart, and so on without being able to conduct dissections.

## **STRUCTURALISM**

Structuralism is a historical school of thought in psychology inspired by Charles Darwin.

Structuralism was discovered and Psychology was institutionalized as a science in 1879 by a German scientist, Wilhelm Wundt, at the Institute for Psychology research at University of Leipzig. At Leipzig, Wundt and his students conducted studies on "elements" of consciousness: sensation and perception, memory, attention, emotion, cognition, learning, and language.

Structuralists conduct research using introspection which some critics say it is subjective and not empirical. Introspection is a self-mental examination of one's mind, including feelings, thoughts and motives. With the use of introspection, the structure of the mind is understood by discerning its basic components such as sensations, images and emotions. Structuralism is the interaction of these basic components; that is, consciousness is the accumulation of all experiences throughout life. Put differently, structuralism sought to organize the components of subjective experiences in hierarchy from simplest to most complex. The perspective thus deals with components of the mind, rather than what the consciousness of the mind is capable of doing.

## **FUNCTIONALISM**

Functionalism is a historical school of psychology founded by William James, a critic of Wilhem Wundt. James (1878) argued that structuralism was boring and that psychology should include the function of consciousness and not just structure of the brain. Hence, functionalism does not just focus on the structure, but also functions of consciousness. James (1878) posited that the brain is a stream of consciousness that never stops running, like a river that picks up new materials (information) as it continues to flow. Functionalists were the first applied psychologists; they compare consciousness to Darwin's evolutionary perspective, and emphasise that mental process has adaptive purposes and functions. Thus, it helps people adapt to new situations, develop learned habits and emotions.

The brain is inherently neutral, and only produces different behaviors based on the signal it receives. Using a computer as an analogy; it receives a set of data, the computer analyzes it and creates output. In the same vein, the brain receives different data in the form of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and touching. The brain analyses the data and creates behavior as a response to the environment. Therefore, functionalism, sees the brain as chemically causing conscious awareness and behavior.

## **GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY**

Gestalt (pronounced gush-TAWLT) psychology is also a historical school of thought in psychology founded by Max Wertheimer. Opposite of structuralism, a gestalt is something in its entirety. Thus, Gestalt psychology looks at the mind as a whole, independent of the individual parts. In the words of Gestalt psychologist Kurt Koffka, the whole is other than the sum of its parts. Gestalt psychologists believe that much of perception is shaped by innate factors built into the brain. They sought to understand

how the brain works by studying perception and perceptual learning, and believe that percepts consist of meaningful wholes.

Using the theory that we perceive concepts as a whole rather than perceiving the individual parts, Gestalt psychologists are interested in how the mind turns the individual stimuli of experiences into a greater whole that is entirely unique. For instance, we look at a picture and recognize a human being, not individual parts of leg, nose, hair and so on. We also see a group of people as an entity, and not individuals.

### **PSYCHODYNAMIC**

The psychodynamic school of thought was founded by Sigmund Freud (1896). The psychodynamic (or psychoanalytic) perspective is based on how past experiences affect individual's psychological states and behaviour. Psychodynamic psychologists believe that childhood experiences majorly determine what make up our unconscious mind which in turn, plays a critical role in shaping our personality. Thus, psychodynamic psychologists believe that anything we do today is informed by our past experiences. To understand the present, the individual simply has to understand what has happened to them in the past. For example, a psychodynamic psychologist would conclude that an adult introvert must have had embarrassing childhood experience with social interactions. The psychodynamic perspective is the simplest, yet, the most controversial. According to Freud, human behavior is stimulated by an energy he called the *libido*. The *libido* is the driving force of personality part known as the *id*. The *id* is the most primal part of personality present from birth and strives to satisfy the basic urges without recourse to societal standards. As people age, the *ego* part of the personality develops and mediate between the demands of the *id* and reality (societal standards). The *super*

*ego* is last and most developed component of personality to emerge, and it strives to make us behave according to moral standards.

## **BEHAVIOURISM**

Behaviorism is a psychological school of thought that emerged in the early 20th century in response to the psychoanalytic theory because the latter had difficulty making predictions that could be tested using rigorous experimental methods. Behaviorists maintain that behaviors can be described scientifically without recourse to either internal physiological processes or to hypothetical constructs such as thoughts and beliefs. Rather than underlying conflicts, behaviorism focuses on observable, overt behaviors that are learned from the environment, and that can be measured and modified.

According to this perspective, two of the ways that behaviors are learned is classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning was discovered by Russian physiologist, Ivan Pavlov. It is a learned response to a new stimulus by pairing it repeatedly with a stimulus for which there is a biological reflex. Operant conditioning was discovered by American psychologist BF Skinner. It is the process of using reinforcement or punishment as a consequence for a behavior. Behaviours closely followed by reinforcement is likely to be repeated in future, while those followed by punishment is not likely to be repeated in future.

For example, according to behaviourists, an individual may be introverted because he/she gets punished for certain social activities or reinforced/rewarded for being reserved.

## **HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY**

Humanistic psychology is a school of thought in psychology discovered in the mid-20th century. Humanistic ideology was drawn from existentialism which is the philosophical movement centered on individual existence that denies that the universe has any intrinsic meaning or purpose and requires people to take responsibility for their own actions and shape their own destinies. Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers are some of the major proponents of humanistic psychology. They both introduced this positive, humanistic psychology in response to what they viewed as the overly pessimistic view of psychoanalysis, (Schacter, Gilbert & Wegner, 2011).

Rather than focus on dysfunction, humanistic psychologists emphasize holism, that is, studying the whole person, and consider behaviour from the actor's perspective rather than the observer. Humanists believe that people are innately good with capacity for self-actualization, which is the desire to achieve ones potential. Humanists also believe that an people's behavior is connected to their inner feelings and self-image; that everyone is unique; has free-will to be whoever he/she want to be; change at any time in his/her life; and each person responsible for his/her happiness or otherwise. Because of the emphasis on the whole person, personal experiences and subjective perception of the world, humanists regard scientific methods as inappropriate for studying behavior.

According to humanists, for example, an extroverted individual may be so because having large social circle is a resource they can rely on for support, while introverted individuals may be so because they find large social circle distracting, and are able to stay more focused on their goals with smaller social circle.

Humanistic psychology contributes to advances in counseling, positive, educational, and industrial/organizational psychology, and psychotherapy. It has also been criticized for subjectivity and difficulty to test with scientific method.

### **BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The biological perspective is also known as the neuroscience perspective. René Descartes is one of the earliest figures in this field. He proposed physical models to explain animal and human behavior. Descartes suggested that the pineal gland, a midline unpaired structure in the brain of many organisms, was the point of contact between mind and body. Descartes also expounded a theory in which the pneumatics of bodily fluids could explain reflexes and other motor behavior, (Carlson, 2007). Bio-psychologists explain human behavior based on individual's biological processes. The three main causes of thoughts and behaviors according to bio-psychologists are genetics, hormones, and neurotransmitters. Thus, behaviors are not exhibited out of the actor's will, but a result of genetic background, nervous system, and immune system. Bio-psychologists studying behavioral genomics are interested in how genes affect behavior. With the mapping of human genome, we might someday understand more precisely how behavior is affected by our DNA. Bio-psychologists believe that biological factors such as chromosomes, hormones and the brain all have a significant influence on human behavior.

Bio-psychologists are also interested in how brain damage and disease influence personalities and consequently, behaviours. For example, they find that schizophrenia is affected by levels of brain neurotransmitter dopamine. Such findings aid the treatment of schizophrenia and other mental illnesses with chemotherapy. However, Freud and other psychoanalysts would argue that chemotherapy as treatment option for mental

illnesses merely treats the symptoms and not the cause. According to bio-psychologists, introversion/extroverted is a personality trait inherited from parents genetic makeup, and the subsequent effect of such genes on certain brain neurotransmitters.

### **COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE**

While the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanism, cognitive psychology is one of the more recent additions to psychological perspectives in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The cognitive perspective was heavily influenced by contemporary advancements in technology and computer science. Ulric (Dick) Neisser was the “father of cognitive psychology” and an advocate for ecological approaches to cognitive research. With the publication of *Cognitive Psychology* (1967), Neisser brought together research concerning perception, pattern recognition, attention, problem solving, and remembering, (Association for Psychological Science, 2012). Jean Piaget is another early figure of cognitive psychology. From 1926 to the 1950s and into the 1980s, he studied the thoughts, language, and intelligence of children and adults, (Smith, 2000).

The cognitive perspective is concerned with mental functions such as memory, perception, attention, etc. Cognitive psychologists view people as being similar to computers in the way they process information. For example, both human brains and computers process information, store data and have input and output procedure. This perspective calls attention to how our actions are influenced by the way we process information streaming in from our environment. This had led cognitive psychologists to explain that memory comprises of three stages: encoding (where information is received and attended to), storage (where the information is retained) and retrieval (where the information is recalled). Cognitive psychology adopts a strictly scientific approach, and

uses laboratory experiments to study human and animal behavior. Its applications include cognitive therapy and eyewitness testimony.

Cognitive psychologists see people's behavior as a result of the way they perceive, interpret, and remember the events and occurrences around them. Essentially, in order to understand people's behavior and actions, one has to understand how they are processing the world around them and also why they are processing it in the way they are. According to cognitive psychologists for example, an introverted individual may have taken on a quiet lifestyle and keep to him/herself because he/she perceives around as aggressive and unfriendly.

### **SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

The pioneer of sociocultural psychology the Soviet psychologist, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896-1934). He believed that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large were responsible for developing higher order functions. According to Vygotsky, learning has its basis in interacting with other people. Once this has occurred, the information is then integrated on the individual level. He proposed that interactions made by children can shape and influence both the way in which they perceive the world and their cognitive processes. The way children learn and develop varies from culture to culture and is sometimes specific to each individual society. While the resulting cognitive processes may be unique to each culture, the way in which they are handed down from generation to generation is often similar.

According to the sociocultural perspective, sociocultural factors are the forces within cultures and societies that influence the thoughts, feelings, mental states and behaviors of people. These include forces such as attitudes; child-rearing practices; discrimination

and prejudice; ethnic and racial identity; gender roles and norms; family and kinship structures; power dynamics; regional differences; religious beliefs and practices; rituals; taboos and do on. This view emphasizes how social interaction, social learning, and culture are important determinants in personality development.

Sociocultural psychologists understand individual's behavior based on the influence on his/her sociocultural interactions with other individuals and groups. According to this perspective, an individual's introverted/extroverted is seen as a result of the cultural rules of social interaction. Thus, a seemingly introverted individual may only be conforming to the norms of his/her culture.

## **THEORIES IN PSYCHOLOGY**

Throughout psychology's history, a number of theories have been proposed to explain and predict various aspects of human behavior. Some of these theories have stood the test of time and remain well-accepted today. Others have not held up under close scientific scrutiny and may have been rejected altogether or only partially accepted by researchers today. However, each theory has helped contribute to our knowledge base of the human mind and behavior (Cherry, 2018) by bringing unique insights to the understanding of behaviour with their strengths and weaknesses.

## **PSYCHODYNAMIC THEORIES**

Psychodynamic theory was founded in 1874 with the works of German scientist Ernst von Brucke. Brucke believe that all living organisms are energy systems governed by the principle of the conservation of energy. During the same year, medical student Sigmund Freud adopted this new “dynamic” physiology and expanded it to create the original concept of “psychodynamics,” in which he suggested that psychological processes are

flows of psychosexual energy (libido) in a complex brain. Freud also coined the term “psychoanalysis.”

Psychodynamic theory is an approach to psychology that studies the psychological forces underlying human behavior, feelings, and emotions, and how they are related to early childhood experiences. Freud believes that events in our childhood can have a significant impact on our behavior as adults. The theory is especially interested in the dynamic relations between conscious and unconscious motivation, and asserts that behavior is the product of underlying conflicts over which people often have little awareness; that people have little free will to make choices in life. Instead, our behavior is determined by the unconscious mind and childhood experiences.

### **The Role of the Unconscious**

Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis holds two major assumptions: that much of mental life is unconscious (outside of awareness), and that past experiences, especially in early childhood, personality development. The concept of the unconscious was central: Freud postulated a cycle in which ideas are repressed but continue to operate unconsciously in the mind, and then reappear in consciousness under certain circumstances. Much of Freud’s theory was based on his investigations of patients suffering from “hysteria” and neurosis. Hysteria was an ancient diagnosis that was primarily used for women with a wide variety of symptoms, including physical symptoms and emotional disturbances with no apparent physical cause. The history of the term can be traced to ancient Greece, where the idea emerged that a woman’s uterus could float around her body and cause a variety of disturbances. Freud theorized instead that many of his patients’

problems arose from the unconscious mind. In Freud's view, the unconscious mind was a repository of feelings and urges of which we have no awareness.

### **The Id, Ego, and Superego**

According to Freud, structural model of personality consist of three components: the 'id' the 'ego' and the 'superego.' The id is the unconscious part that is the cauldron of raw drives, such as for sex or aggression. The 'id' contains two main instincts: 'Eros', which is the life instinct, which involves self-preservation and sex which is fuelled by the 'libido' energy force. 'Thanatos' is the death instinct, whose energies, because they are less powerful than those of 'Eros' are channeled away from ourselves and into aggression towards others. The ego, which has conscious and unconscious elements, is the rational and reasonable part of personality. Its role is to maintain contact with the outside world to keep the individual in touch with society, and to do this it mediates between the conflicting tendencies of the id and the superego. The superego is a person's conscience, which develops early in life and is learned from parents, teachers, and others. Like the ego, the superego has conscious and unconscious elements. The 'id' and the 'superego' are constantly in conflict with each other, and the 'ego' tries to resolve the discord. When all three parts of the personality are in dynamic equilibrium, the individual is thought to be mentally healthy. However, if the ego is unable to mediate between the id and the superego and the conflict is not resolved, an imbalance is believed to occur in the form of psychological distress, and we tend to use defense mechanisms to reduce the distress and our anxiety.

## **Psychosexual Theory of Development**

Freud's theories also placed a great deal of emphasis on psychosexual development and how early experiences affect adult personality. Stimulation of different areas of the body is important as the child progresses through the important developmental stages. Freud believed that each of us must pass through a series of stages during childhood, and that if we lack proper nurturing during a particular stage, we may become stuck or fixated in that stage. Too much or too little can have bad consequences on personality development.

Freud's psychosexual model of development includes five stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital. According to Freud, children's pleasure-seeking urges are focused on a different area of the body, called an erogenous zone, at each of these five stages. The most important stage is the phallic stage where the focus of the libido is on the genitals. During this stage little boys experience the 'Oedipus complex,' and little girls experience the 'Electra complex.' These complexes result in children identifying with their same-sex parent, which enables them to learn sex-appropriate behavior and a moral code of conduct. The five stages of the theory is summarized below:

### **5 Stages of Freud's Psychosexual Theory of Development**

According to this theory, a child passes through a series of life psychosexual stages which affect the personality of a child, this theory is unique in focusing each stage on a major biological function which Freud believes to be the focus of pleasure in given time. The stages are as follows.

#### **Oral Stage**

In the oral stage (from birth to 18 months) the libido is localized in the mouth region. A baby's mouth is the main point of pleasure. Infant derives pleasure by sucking,

manipulating mouth lips and tongue, and biting everything that fits into his mouth. Thus mouth is the first sexual zone of pleasure and satisfaction.

### **Anal Stage**

Anal stage starts from 18 month to 3 years where the main emphasis is on toilet training. This training leaves a great and deep effect on the personality and socialization process of a person/child. The major source of pleasure changes from mouth to the anal region and children derives considerable pleasure from both retention and expulsion of feces.

**Personality Development during Anal Stage:** If toilet training is particularly demanding, there may be fixation. If fixation occurs, Freud suggests that adult may show unusual rigidity orderliness, generosity, punctuality or extreme disorderliness or sloppiness stinginess and miserliness.

### **Phallic Stage**

From 3 to 6 years the child's attention focuses on the genitals and the pleasure of folding them. According to Freud, the child begins to enjoy touching his or her own genitals and he finds out genital differences between male and female, a discovery that creates Oedipal conflicts which Freud sees critical in a child psychological development.

**Oedipal Complex:** the male child love for his mother but this love is repressed due to the fear of father. The tension and complex situation is called oedipal complex.

### **Latency Stage**

From 6 to 11 years the child enters age of latency throughout this period the child represses his/her sexual feelings, making their sexuality latent and relatively inactive. The child takes interest in school work, new thing, playing, etc. Thus the sexual concerns are more or less put to rest even in the unconscious.

### **Genital Stage (Puberty Onwards)**

The Genital stage starts with the arrival of puberty. In this level there is a renewed interest in obtaining sexual pleasure through the genitals. During genital, the sexual intercourse becomes the focus of sexual pleasure.

Freud's psychosexual theory of personality development seems to revolve round the basic drive the sex which has a significant effect in the personality over the course of child life. Over the period of personality, growth are distinct, but Freud never proposed that children shift abruptly from one stage to the other. Sigmund Freud believes that the transitions are gradual and the ages only approximate.

### **Jungian Psychodynamics**

Carl Jung was a Swiss psychotherapist who expanded upon Freud's theories at the turn of the 20th century. A central concept of Jung's analytical psychology is individuation: the psychological process of integrating opposites, including the conscious with the unconscious, while still maintaining their relative autonomy. Jung focused less on infantile development and conflict between the id and superego and instead focused more on integration between different parts of the person. Jung created some of the best-known psychological concepts, including the archetype, the collective unconscious, the complex, and synchronicity.

Psychodynamic therapy, in which patients become increasingly aware of dynamic conflicts and tensions that are manifesting as a symptom or challenge in their lives, is an approach to therapy that is still commonly used today. However, it has been criticized in the way that it over emphasizes the importance of sexuality and under emphasized of the role of social relationships; and that the theory is not scientific, and can't be proved. Nevertheless, psychoanalysis has been greatly contributory to psychology in that it has

encouraged many modern theorists to modify it for the better, using its basic principles, but eliminating its major flaws.

## **BEHAVIOURAL THEORIES**

Behavioural theorists view people and animals as controlled by environment. Thus, that we are the result of what we have learned from our environment. Behaviorism is concerned with how environmental factors i.e. stimuli affect observable behavior i.e. response. The primary developments in behaviorism came from the work of Ivan Pavlov, John B. Watson, Edward Lee Thorndike, and B. F. Skinner.

The behaviorist approach proposes two main processes whereby people learn from their environment: namely classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning involves learning by association, and operant conditioning involves learning from the consequences of behavior.

### **Ivan Pavlov and Classical Conditioning**

Classical conditioning (CC) was studied by the Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov. In his famous 1890s experiment, though looking into natural reflexes and neutral stimuli he managed to condition dogs to salivate to the sound of a bell through repeated association with the sound of the bell and food. As Pavlov's work became known in the West, particularly through the writings of John B. Watson, the idea of conditioning as an automatic form of learning became a key concept in the development of behaviorism.

### **Watson's "Little Albert" Experiment**

John B. Watson was an American psychologist who is best known for his controversial "Little Albert" experiment. In this experiment, he used classical conditioning to teach a

nine-month-old boy to be afraid of a white toy rat by associating the rat with a sudden loud noise. This study demonstrated how emotions could become conditioned responses.

### **Thorndike's Law of Effect**

Edward Lee Thorndike was an American psychologist whose work on animal behavior and the learning process led to the "law of effect." The law of effect states that responses that create a satisfying effect are more likely to occur again, while responses that produce a discomforting effect become less likely to occur.

### **Skinner's Operant Conditioning**

"Operant conditioning," a term coined by psychologist B. F. Skinner, describes a form of learning in which a voluntary response is strengthened or weakened depending on its association with either positive or negative consequences. The strengthening of a response occurs through reinforcement. Skinner described two types of reinforcement: positive reinforcement, which is the introduction of a positive consequence such as food, pleasurable activities, or attention from others, and negative reinforcement, which is the removal of a negative consequence such as pain or a loud noise. Skinner saw human behavior as shaped by trial and error through reinforcement and punishment, without any reference to inner conflicts or perceptions. In his theory, mental disorders represented maladaptive behaviors that were learned and could be unlearned through behavior modification.

In the second half of the 20th century, behaviorism was expanded through advances in cognitive theories. While behaviorism and cognitive schools of psychological thought may not agree theoretically, they have complemented each other in practical therapeutic

applications like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which has been used widely in the treatment of many different mental disorders, such as phobias, PTSD, and addiction. Some behavior therapies employ Skinner's theories of operant conditioning: by not reinforcing certain behaviors, these behaviors can be extinguished.

Behaviorism also believes in scientific methodology (e.g., controlled experiments), and that only observable behavior should be studied because this can be objectively measured. Behaviorism rejects the idea that people have free will, and believes that the environment determines all behavior. Behaviorism is the scientific study of observable behavior working on the basis that behavior can be reduced to learned S-R (Stimulus-Response) units.

Behaviorism has been criticized in the way it under-estimates the complexity of human behavior. Many studies used animals which are hard to generalize to humans, and it cannot explain, for example, the speed in which we pick up language. There must be biological factors involved.

Its application to the treatment of mental problems is known as behavior modification. Learning is seen as behavior change molded by experience; it is accomplished largely through either classical or operant conditioning. The principles of CC have been applied in many therapies. These include systematic desensitization for phobias (step-by-step exposed to a feared stimulus at once) and aversion therapy.

## **COGNITIVE THEORIES**

Cognitive psychologists study cognition which is 'the mental act or process by which knowledge is acquired. Cognitive psychology is radically different from previous psychological approaches in that it is characterized by scientific method and rejects

introspection as method of investigation unlike psychoanalysts, and acknowledges the existence of internal mental states such as belief, desire, and motivation, unlike behaviorists.

### **Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development**

Swiss biologist and psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) observed his children (and their process of making sense of the world around them) and eventually developed a four-stage model of how the mind processes new information encountered, (Piaget, 1976). The theory outlines how children become able to think logically and scientifically over time. As they progress to a new stage, there is a distinct shift in how they think and reason. Piaget posited that children progress through 4 stages and that they all do so in the same order. The four stages are:

#### **Sensorimotor Stage (birth to 2 years old)**

The infant builds an understanding of himself or herself and reality (and how things work) through interactions with the environment. It is able to differentiate between itself and other objects. Learning takes place via assimilation (the organization of information and absorbing it into existing schema) and accommodation (when an object cannot be assimilated and the schemata have to be modified to include the object).

#### **Preoperational Stage (ages 2 to 4)**

The child is not yet able to conceptualize abstractly and needs concrete physical situations. Objects are classified in simple ways, especially by important features.

#### **Concrete Operations (ages 7 to 11)**

As physical experience accumulates, accommodation is increased. The child begins to think abstractly and conceptualize, creating logical structures that explain his or her physical experiences.

**Formal Operations (beginning at ages 11 to 15)**

Cognition reaches its final form. By this stage, the person no longer requires concrete objects to make rational judgments. He or she is capable of deductive and hypothetical reasoning. His or her ability for abstract thinking is very similar to an adult.

The cognitive approach is extremely scientific and typically uses lab experiments to study human behavior. The cognitive approach has many applications including cognitive therapy and eyewitness testimony.

**HUMANISTIC THEORIES**

Humanistic theorists attribute human characteristics and actions to free will and an innate drive for self-actualization. This approach focuses on maximum human potential and achievement rather than psychoses and symptoms of disorder. It emphasizes that people are inherently good and pays special attention to personal experiences and creativity. Humanistic psychology is holistic in nature: it takes whole persons into account rather than their separate traits or processes. In this way, people are not reduced to one particular attribute or set of characteristics, but instead are appreciated for the complex beings that they are. Humanistic psychology allows for a personality concept that is dynamic and fluid and accounts for much of the change a person experiences over a lifetime. It stresses the importance of free will and personal responsibility for decision-making; this view gives the conscious human being some necessary autonomy and frees them from deterministic principles. Perhaps most importantly, the humanistic perspective emphasizes the need to strive for positive goals and explains human potential in a way that other theories cannot.

## **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) is considered the founder of humanistic psychology, and is noted for his conceptualization of a hierarchy of human needs. He believed that every person has a strong desire to realize his or her full potential—or to reach what he called “self-actualization.” Unlike many of his predecessors, Maslow studied mentally healthy individuals instead of people with serious psychological issues. Through his research he coined the term “peak experiences,” which he defined as “high points” in which people feel at harmony with themselves and their surroundings. Self-actualized people, he believed, have more of these peak experiences throughout a given day than others.

To explain his theories, Maslow created a visual, which he termed the “hierarchy of needs.” This pyramid depicts various levels of physical and psychological needs that a person progresses through during their lifetime. At the bottom of the pyramid are the basic physiological needs of a human being, such as food and water. The next level is safety, which includes shelter and needs paramount to physical survival. The third level, love and belonging, is the psychological need to share oneself with others. The fourth level, esteem, focuses on success, status, and accomplishments. The top of the pyramid is self-actualization, in which a person is believed to have reached a state of harmony and understanding. Individuals progress from lower to higher stages throughout their lives, and cannot reach higher stages without first meeting the lower needs that come before them.

## **Rogers' Person-Centered Therapy**

Carl Rogers (1902–1987) is best known for his person-centered approach, in which the relationship between therapist and client is used to help the patient reach a state of realization, so that they can then help themselves. His non-directive approach focuses more on the present than the past and centers on clients' capacity for self-direction and

understanding of their own development. The therapist encourages the patient to express their feelings and does not suggest how the person might wish to change. Instead, the therapist uses the skills of active listening and mirroring to help patients explore and understand their feelings for themselves.

Rogers is also known for practicing “unconditional positive regard,” which is defined as accepting a person in their entirety with no negative judgment of their essential worth. He believed that those raised in an environment of unconditional positive regard have the opportunity to fully actualize themselves, while those raised in an environment of conditional positive regard only feel worthy if they match conditions that have been laid down by others.

This perspective has led to advances in positive, educational, and industrial psychology, and has been applauded for its successful application to psychotherapy and social issues. However, critics have taken issue with many of the early tenets of humanism, such as its lack of empirical evidence (as was the case with most early psychological approaches). Because of the inherent subjective nature of the humanistic approach, psychologists worry that this perspective does not identify enough constant variables in order to be researched with consistency and accuracy. Psychologists also worry that such an extreme focus on the subjective experience of the individual does little to explain or appreciate the impact of external societal factors on personality development. In addition, major tenet of humanistic personality psychology—namely, that people are innately good and intuitively seek positive goals—does not account for the presence of deviance in the world within normal, functioning personalities.

## **PERSONALITY THEORIES AND DEVELOPMENT**

Personality is the relatively permanent consistent pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors especially in social situations. Gordon Allport (1937) described two major ways to study personality: the nomothetic and the idiographic. Nomothetic psychology seeks general laws that apply to different people, such as the principle of self-actualization or the trait of extraversion, idiographic psychology seeks to understand the unique aspects of individuals.

### **Assumptions on Personality Development**

The following according to Engler (2008) are the assumptions on personality development that generate controversies among theorists:

**Freedom versus determinism** – is a debate on whether behaviour is influenced by forces outside of individual's control, or whether people understand the basis of, and can manage their behaviours. Some behaviours are largely influenced by uncontrollable forces while some are within the control of the individual.

**Heredity versus environment** – this is debate about nature nurture controversy. The argument is on whether personality is determined by biogenetic factors or by environmental experiences. Researchers however agree that personality development is influenced by the combination of biogenetic and environmental factors.

**Uniqueness versus universality** – this is a debate on the individual uniqueness versus universality of human personality. Trait and humanistic psychologists emphasize individual uniqueness, while, behaviorists and cognitive psychologists emphasize learning principles in personality development.

**Active versus reactive** – this debate is on whether people act based on individual initiative (i.e. active) or based on outside stimulation (i.e. reactive). Traditional behavioural theorists opined that individual personality is passively shaped by the environment, while humanistic and cognitive theorists believe that personality is determined by the active role of the individual. Most modern theorists take an eclectic approach.

**Optimistic versus pessimistic** – this is a debate among theorists on whether individuals are important in determining their personality development.

## **Personality Theories**

### **Psychoanalytic Theories**

Psychoanalytic theories describe behaviour as an interaction of various personality components. Sigmund Freud was the founder of this school of thought.

Freud divides human personality into three significant components: the id, ego and super-ego. The id acts according to the pleasure principle, demanding immediate gratification of its needs regardless of external environment; the ego then emerges in order to realistically meet the wishes and demands of the id in accordance with the societal expectations, adhering to the reality principle. Finally, the superego (conscience) inculcates moral judgment upon the ego, thus forcing the demands of the id to be met not only realistically but morally. The superego is the last function of the personality to develop, and is the embodiment of parental/social ideals established during childhood. According to Freud, personality is based on the dynamic interactions of these three components, (Carver & Scheier, 2004).

According to Freud, individuals release sexual (i.e. all kinds of pleasurable feelings experienced by the human body) and aggressive energies, which ensues from the "Eros" (sex; instinctual self-preservation) and "Thanatos" (death; instinctual self-annihilation) drives respectively, are major components of his theory. Freud also put forward five psychosexual stages of personality development. He believed adult personality is dependent upon early childhood experiences, largely determined by age five, (Carver & Scheier, 2004) and that fixations that develop during the infantile stage contribute to adult personality.

Alfred Adler, a Freud's associate agree that early childhood experiences are important, but also believed birth order influence personality development. According to Adler, oldest children set high achievement goals to gain attention lost at the instance of younger siblings' births. He believed middle children are competitive and ambitious, which is informed by the desire to outdo the firstborn's achievements. However, he believed that middle children are usually not as concerned about the glory attributed to their achievements. Adler also believed the youngest is usually more dependent and sociable, and that an only child loves being the center of attention and matures quickly but in the end fails to become independent.

Another important figure in the world of personality theory is Karen Horney. She is credited with the development of the "real self" and the "ideal self". She believes all people have these two views of their own self. The "real self" is how humans act with regard to personality, values, and morals; but the "ideal self" is a construct individuals implement in order to conform to social and personal norms.

## **Behavioural Theories**

Behaviourists explain personality in terms of the effects external stimuli have on behaviour. This perspective is a radical shift from Freudian philosophy and emphasizes the scientific method in studying behaviour. Behaviourism school of thought was developed by B. F. Skinner who put forth a model which emphasized the mutual interaction between the person and environment in explaining personality development. Skinner put forward a "three term contingency model" which helped promote analysis of behaviour based on the "Stimulus - Response - Consequence Model". The focus thus is, understanding the circumstances (stimuli) the organism/individual engage in a particular behavior (response), which in turn produces a particular consequence, (Cheney, Pierce, & Carl, 2008). For instance, Skinner believed children behave badly because such behaviours are usually reinforced with attention. The bad behaviour is the response, while attention is the consequence rewarding/reinforcing the behaviour to occur again, thereby molding a child's personality.

## **Social Cognitive Theories**

Cognitive theories are perspectives of personality development that emphasize cognitive processes, such as thinking, interpreting, judging etc. While, social learning theories are those perspectives that emphasize that memory and emotions work with environmental factors to influence personality development. Albert Bandura was known mostly for his "Bobo doll experiment". During these experiments, Bandura video-taped a college student kicking and verbally abusing a bobo doll. He then showed this video to a class of kindergarten children who were getting ready to go out to play. When they entered the playroom, they saw bobo dolls, and some hammers. The people observing these children

at play saw a group of children beating the doll. He called this study and his findings observational learning, or modeling.

Thus, according to social cognitive psychologists, personality development is determined by what individuals learn socially through observing their environments as well as the expectations they have of the world by interpreting such learning through cognitions.

### **Humanistic Theories**

Humanistic psychology emphasizes that people have free will and that this plays an active role in determining their personality development. Hence, humanistic psychology focuses on subjective experiences of persons as opposed to forced, definitive factors that determine their personality.

Abraham Maslow spent much of his time studying what he referred to as "self-actualizing persons", those who are "fulfilling themselves and doing the best they are capable of doing". Maslow believes all who are interested in growth move towards self-actualization. According to Maslow (1999), self-actualizers four major characteristics:

**Awareness** – maintaining constant enjoyment and awe of life. These individuals often experienced a "peak experience". A peak experience is one in which an individual perceives an expansion of themselves, and detects a unity and meaningfulness in life.

**Reality and problem centered** – having a tendency to be concerned with "problems" in ones surroundings.

**Acceptance/Spontaneity** – accepting surroundings and what cannot be changed.

**Unhostile sense of humor/democratic** – do not take kindly to joking about others, which can be viewed as offensive. They have friends of all backgrounds and religions and hold very close friendships.

Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers emphasized a view of the person as an active, creative, experiencing human being who lives in the present and subjectively responds to current perceptions, relationships, and encounters. They disagree with the dark, pessimistic views of the psychoanalysts, but stress the tendency of individuals toward growth and self-actualization. This progressing self will remain the center of its constantly changing world; a world that will help mold the self but not confine it. Rather, the self has opportunity for maturation based on its encounters with the world. This understanding attempts to reduce the acceptance of hopeless redundancy and sees personality development as a result of individual efforts towards being the best they can be.

## **Bio-Psychological Theories**

The study of the biological basis of personality psychology focuses primarily on identifying the role of genetic determinants and how they mold individual personalities. Some of the earliest thinking about possible biological bases of personality grew out of the case of Phineas Gage. In an 1848 accident, a large iron rod was driven through Gage's head, and his personality apparently changed as a result (Damasio, 1994), although descriptions of these psychological changes are usually exaggerated.

In the 1990s, researchers began to use electroencephalography (EEG), positron emission tomography (PET), and more recently functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which is now the most widely used imaging technique to help localize

personality traits in the brain, and which has shown that biological dispositions have correlation with specific personality traits.

### **Genetic Basis of Personality**

Ever since the Human Genome Project allowed for a much more in depth understanding of genetics, there has been an ongoing controversy involving heritability, personality traits, and environmental vs. genetic influence on personality. The human genome has been found to play a role in the development of personality. Previously, genetic personality studies focused on specific genes correlating to specific personality traits. Today's view of the gene-personality relationship focuses primarily on the activation and expression of genes related to personality and forms part of what is referred to as behavioural genetics. Genes provide numerous options for varying cells to be expressed; however, the environment determines which of these are activated. Many studies have noted this relationship in varying ways in which our bodies can develop, but the interaction between genes and the shaping of our minds and personality is also relevant to this biological relationship.

DNA-environment interactions are important in the development of personality because this relationship determines what part of the DNA code is actually activated into proteins that will become part of an individual personality makeup. It has been noted that while different choices are made available by the genome, in the end, the environment is the ultimate determinant of what becomes activated. Small changes in DNA in individuals are what lead to the uniqueness of every person as well as differences in looks, abilities, brain functioning, and all the factors that culminate to develop a cohesive personality.

Cattell and Eysenck have proposed that genetics have a strong influence on personality. A large part of the evidence collected linking genetics and the environment to personality have come from twin studies. This "twin method" compares levels of similarity in personality using genetically identical twins. One of the first of these twin studies measured 800 pairs of twins, studied numerous personality traits, and determined that identical twins are most similar in their general abilities. Personality similarities were found to be less related for self-concepts, goals, and interests.

Twin studies have also been important in the creation of the five factor personality model: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Neuroticism and extraversion are the two most widely studied traits. A person that may fall into the extravert category can display characteristics such as impulsiveness, sociability, and activeness. A person falling into the neuroticism category may be more likely to be moody, anxious, or irritable. Identical twins, however, have higher correlations in personality traits than fraternal twins. One study measuring genetic influence on twins in five different countries found that the correlations for identical twins were .50, while for fraternal they were about .20., (Loehlin & Nichols, 1976). It is suggested that heredity and environment interact to determine one's personality.

## **Evolutionary Theory**

Charles Darwin is the founder of the theory of species evolution. The evolutionary approach to personality psychology is based on this theory. This theory examines how individual personality differences are based on natural selection. Natural selection influence organisms changing over time through adaptation. Traits are developed and certain genes become expressed based on an organism's environment and how these

traits aid in an organism's survival and reproduction. The unique development of survival mechanisms is what informs personality development according to the evolutionists.

## **Drive Theories**

In the 1930s, John Dollard and Neal Elgar Miller met at Yale University, and began an attempt to integrate drives, into a theory of personality, basing them on the work of Clark Hull. They began with the premise that personality could be equated with the habitual responses exhibited by an individual – their habits. From there, they determined that these habitual responses were built on secondary, or acquired drives.

According to Dollard & Miller (1941), secondary drives are internal needs directing the behaviour of an individual that results from learning. Acquired drives are learned, by and large in the manner described by classical conditioning. When we are in a certain environment and experience a strong response to a stimulus, we internalize cues from the said environment. When we find ourselves in an environment with similar cues, we begin to act in anticipation of a similar stimulus. Thus, we are likely to experience anxiety in an environment with cues similar to one where we have experienced pain or fear e.g. hospital.

Secondary drives are built on primary drives, which are biologically driven, and motivate us to act with no prior learning process – such as hunger, thirst or the need for sexual activity. However, secondary drives are thought to represent more specific elaborations of primary drives, behind which the functions of the original primary drive continue to exist. Thus, the primary drives of fear and pain exist behind the acquired drive of anxiety. Secondary drives can be based on multiple primary drives and even in

other secondary drives. This is said to give them strength and persistence. Examples include the need for money, which was conceptualised as arising from multiple primary drives such as the drive for food and warmth, as well as from secondary drives such as imitateness (the drive to do as others do) and anxiety.

Secondary drives vary based on the social conditions under which they were learned – such as culture. Dollard and Miller used the example of food, stating that the primary drive of hunger manifested itself behind the learned secondary drive of an appetite for a specific type of food, which was dependent on the culture of the individual.

Secondary drives are also explicitly social, representing a manner in which we convey our primary drives to others. According to Friedman et. al. (2015), indeed, many primary drives are actively repressed by society (such as the sexual drive). Dollard and Miller believed that the acquisition of secondary drives was essential to childhood development. As children develop, they learn not to act on their primary drives, such as hunger but acquire secondary drives through reinforcement. Friedman and Schustack describe an example of such developmental changes, stating that if an infant engaging in an active orientation towards others brings about the fulfillment of primary drives, such as being fed or having their diaper changed, they will develop a secondary drive to pursue similar interactions with others – perhaps leading to an individual being more gregarious. Dollard and Miller's belief in the importance of acquired drives led them to reconceive Sigmund Freud's theory of psychosexual development. They found themselves to be in agreement with the timing Freud used but believed that these periods corresponded to the successful learning of certain secondary drives.

Dollard and Miller gave many examples of how secondary drives impact our habitual responses – and by extension our personalities, including anger, social conformity,

imitativeness or anxiety, to name a few. In the case of anxiety, Dollard and Miller note that people who generalize the situation in which they experience the anxiety drive will experience anxiety far more than they should. These people are often anxious all the time, and anxiety becomes part of their personality. This example shows how drive theory can have ties with other theories of personality – many of them look at the trait of neuroticism or emotional stability in people, which is strongly linked to anxiety.

## **CONCLUSION**

As stated earlier, no school of thought is deemed as the “correct” or “incorrect” one. Each school of thought has left an indelible mark on psychology, helping to mold it into the respected discipline that it now is. Further, the perspectives help us understand behaviour in their unique ways by informing the development of psychological theories. Contemporarily, most psychologists adopt an eclectic approach to studying and explaining behaviour – instead of clinging to one particular perspective or theory, they carefully choose from each school of thought those ideas and methods they believe are most appropriate for achieving their objectives. Psychology has continued to evolve in its agenda to explain personality development and behaviours. Till now, there are new theories being written, new topics being studied and new ideas yet to be explored, (Coomarsingh, 2012) all towards the ultimate goal of studying, understanding, explaining and modifying human and animal behaviours.

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