Psychological Models of Abnormality

Psychology 311
Abnormal Psychology

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Several Different Models
- Psychoanalytic Models
- Learning Models
- Cognitive Models

Psychoanalytic Models
- Freud
- All problems are related to systems in the unconscious.
  - ID
  - Ego
  - Superego

Unconscious vs. Conscious
- Conscious
  - Is all things you are aware of.
- Unconscious
  - Are things that influence or control your behavior but you are not aware of them.
- Had three conflicting mechanisms
  - Were not really separate entities but were names for three different reaction patterns.

ID
- Is the most basic
- Most Primitive
- Consists of basic biological urges
- Eating
- Drinking
- Elimination of wastes
- Be comfortable and warm
- Gain sexual pleasure

Id's Purpose
- Sole purpose is to seek:
  - Immediate gratification of impulses
  - Reduce tension
- Operates on the pleasure principle.
  - Seek pleasure and avoid pain.
  - Hedonism
- Other divisions develop from the ID
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**Ego**
- Is derived from the ID
- Is concerned with objective reality.
- Id has the impulsive drives,
- Ego is the system that pursues the drives.
- Problem – Has to deal with the reality of the world.
- Solution – Postpone gratification
- Operates on the reality principle.

**At birth**
- Infant is all ID
- Over time ID must dealt with facts.
- Some gratification only comes after a delay
  - Bottle isn’t always available
  - So infant cries.

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**Superego**
- Is the internalized representation of the values and morals of parents and society
- Is your conscience.
- Judges if acts are right or wrong.
- Is concerned with moral issues.
- When ideas are broken, anxiety can develop

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**All Systems are Interrelated**
- Id has the monopoly on psychic energy
  - Uses it for pleasure
  - Ego and Superego
  - Postpone the energy and block it

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**Result**
- Id, Ego and Superego are in conflict
- Id wants something
- Ego is trying to delay or figure out how to get it.
- Superego is making sure how you get it is morally correct

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**Causes Problems and Anxiety**
- Forbidden acts by a child are associated with anxiety as the child is scolded or disciplined
- Child feels threatened with the loss of love by the parent and becomes anxious.
- Next time it is about to do something bad, it becomes anxious
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**Anxiety**

- Is unpleasant
  - So the child tries to remove it
- If the cause is external – the child runs away.
- If the cause is internal – the child must suppress the cause of the anxiety.

**Repression**

- Is the primary defense mechanism
  - However, is often incomplete
  - Often thoughts or urges refuse to stay repressed
- Other defense mechanisms develop
  - Projection
  - Displacement
  - Reaction Formation
  - Regression
  - Rationalization
  - Identification

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**Ultimately**

- Abnormal behavior is caused by anxiety due to conflicts between Id, Ego, Superego.
- Defense mechanisms appear at abnormal behavior
  - Causes problems

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**Remember**

- All of these conflicts are in the unconscious.
- So the cause of the abnormal behavior lies in the unconscious.
- To resolve the problem, must bring the problem causing the anxiety to the conscious level.
- When the problem becomes conscious and is dealt with, the abnormal behavior goes away.

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**Conclusion and Problems**

- Is difficult to test
- Even testing of things that should occur does not provide good results
  - E.g. symptom substitution
- Generally, has poor reliability and validity.

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**Learning Models**

- Abnormal behavior is caused by learning
  - Two major methods
  - Classical Conditioning Models (Pavlov)
  - Operant Conditioning Models (Skinner)
Classical Conditioning Models

- UCS → UCR
- CS → UCR
- CS → CR

Abnormal Behavior

- Occurs through two methods
- Generalization
  - New things similar to the original CS cause the same CR
- Higher Order (Secondary) Conditioning

Higher Order Conditioning

- UCS → UCR
- CS → UCR
- CS → CR
- CS2 → CS1 → CR
- CS2 → CR
- CS3 → CS2 → CR
- CS3 → CR

Example

- Criticism → Embarrassment/Pain
- Teacher Crit. → Embarr./Pain
- Teacher Embarr. → Pain
- School Teacher → Embarr. Pain
- School → Embarr. Pain
- Bus School → Embarr. Pain
- Bus → Embarr. Pain

Note

- Symptoms are not as strong at level 3 as the first association
- Cause anxiety, apprehension, etc.
- Classic way phobias can develop

Operant Conditioning

- Different from Classical Conditioning.
- Look at consequent stimuli following a response

\[ S \rightarrow R \rightarrow S \]

Consequent stimuli can be reinforcing or punishing
Reinforcement and Punishment

- If abnormal behavior is followed by a reinforcing stimulus, you will repeat the behavior.
- Thus, abnormal behavior increases
- Also get generalization,
  - If similar responses are reinforced, you will do those as well.

Example

- Child throws CD’s across the room
- Parent punishes the child
- Child throws even more CD’s across the room.
- Child is behaving abnormally?

Head banging behavior

- Child acts out
- Gets parents attention
- Extinction occurs
- Child does something more traumatic to get attention. – Hits themselves
- Gets parents attention
- Extinction occurs
- Child hits head on the wall
- Gets lots of parent attention.

Conclusion

- Abnormal behavior is learned.
- Does not rely on a genetic component
- Can be accurately measured
- Treatment for some problems is very effective.
- Has significantly more validity than psychoanalytic models

Cognitive Models

- Stimulus causes organism to think.
- The organism makes a response
- The organism is rewarded or punished
- Influences the thinking
- Next time, the organism makes a different behavioral response.
- What influences the thinking – Personality variables

Personality variables

- Locus of control
- Borderline personality
- Gender specific variables
- Many others
Conclusions

- Abnormality is linked to some thinking problem.
- Change the thinking, you change the behavior that is abnormal.
- Doesn’t always work

Final conclusions

- Many types of psychological models for abnormality.
- Some have more reliability and validity than others.
- Thus, treatments differ in respect to changing the behavior.

Conclusions of all models

- All models have some aspects that may influence abnormal behavior.
- Does not mean _____ caused the abnormal behavior.
- May be a combination of things or it may be one thing alone
- Remember the science behind the model you are using.
  - Correlations
  - Case studies
  - Experiments
  - Other

Cognitive M