

CIE Psychology A-level

Developmental Psychology

Notes



A01 Introduction and Assumptions:

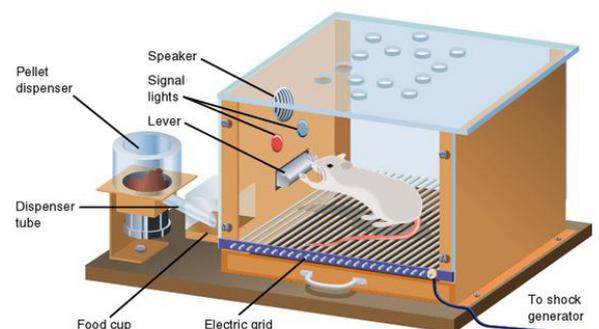
- The behaviourist approach is an approach to explaining behaviour which suggests that all behaviour is acquired and maintained through classical and operant conditioning. Hence, only behaviour which can be objectively measured and observed is studied, as demonstrated by Skinner's Box. This is due to the founders of behaviourism, Watson and Skinner, disagreeing with the subjective nature of Wundt's introspective methods, and the inability to formulate general laws and universal principles based on his observations.
- From a behaviourist perspective, the basic laws governing learning are the same across both non-humans and humans. Therefore, non-human animals can replace humans in behaviourist experimental research.

Classical Conditioning and Examples:

- Classical Conditioning = A type of learning which occurs through associations made between the unconditioned stimulus and the neutral stimulus. Before conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus (UCS) produces the unconditioned response (UCR). During conditioning, the neutral stimulus (NS) is repeatedly paired with the UCS, producing an UCR. After conditioning, the neutral stimulus becomes the conditioned stimulus, producing the conditioned response.
- Pavlov demonstrated that dogs could be conditioned to salivate upon hearing a bell, as follows:
 1. Before conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus (food) produced an unconditioned response (salivation).
 2. During conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus was repeatedly paired with a neutral stimulus (a bell), to produce the same unconditioned response of salivation.
 3. An association was made between the unconditioned stimulus and the neutral stimulus.
 4. After conditioning, the neutral stimulus became the conditioned stimulus, producing the conditioned response of salivation.
- Extinction occurs when the conditioned stimulus is no longer paired with the unconditioned stimulus, so the conditioned response becomes extinct/disappears.
- Spontaneous recovery occurs when the individual carries out the conditioned response some time after extinction has occurred.
- Generalisation occurs when slight changes in the conditioned stimulus, such as different pitches of the bell used in Pavlov's experiment, still produces the same conditioned response.

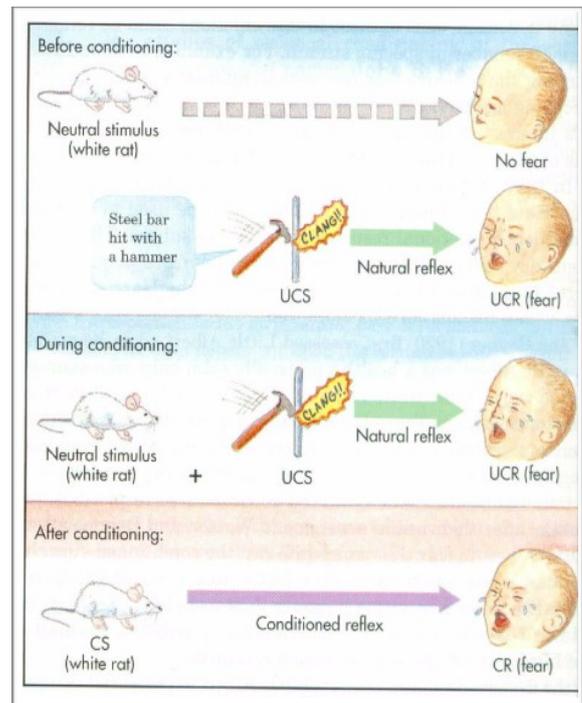
Operant Conditioning and Examples:

- Operant conditioning = A type of learning where behaviour is acquired and maintained based on its consequences. Reinforcement increases the likelihood of the observed behaviour being repeated, whilst punishment (an unpleasant consequence of behaviour) decreases this likelihood.
- There are two types of reinforcement - positive and negative. Positive reinforcement occurs when we carry out a behaviour to receive a reward e.g. completing homework to receive praise from a teacher. On the other hand, negative reinforcement



occurs when we carry out a behaviour to avoid negative consequences e.g. completing homework to avoid being given a detention.

- Skinner's Box = Skinner demonstrated, using a rat, the mechanisms of positive and negative reinforcement. Positive reinforcement was shown when the rats pressed down on a lever to receive food as a reward, and subsequently learnt to repeat this action to increase their rewards. Negative reinforcement was shown when the rat learnt to press down on the lever to avoid the unpleasant consequence of an electric shock.



A02 Potential Application Questions:

1. An understanding of the role of classical conditioning in the acquisition and maintenance of a phobia of white rats in Little Albert (Watson and Rayner, 1920). It would be particularly useful to discuss the extinction of Little Albert's phobia when the loud bang /conditioned stimulus no longer produced the conditioned response of crying (when the loud bang was not paired with the sight of the rat). Generalisations of his phobia to other white, fluffy objects may also be discussed.
2. Being able to differentiate between classical and operant conditioning. These two types of learning involve different mechanisms and have been demonstrated in different scenarios.

A03 Evaluation:

- + **Scientific Rigour** = In an attempt to objectively and systematically collect reliable data, the behaviourist approach makes use of highly scientific research methods, particularly the laboratory experiment. Strictly-controlled conditions reduce and control for the effects of confounding and extraneous variables, increasing the reliability and internal validity of the findings (as these are more likely to be replicated when research is conducted under the same conditions). By focusing on behaviour which is observable and can be measured, the behaviourist approach increases the scientific credibility of psychology.
- + **Real-Life Applications** = An increased understanding of classical and operant conditioning has led to the development of treatments and therapies for serious mental disorders. For example, token economies have been used as a way of dealing with offending behaviour: inmates who carry out socially-desirable behaviour (such as tidying their cell and avoiding conflicts) receive tokens (secondary reinforcers) which can be traded for privileges (primary reinforcers), such as extra TV-time. Therefore, behaviourist principles have had positive impacts on the lives of many.

— **Environmental Determinism** = The behaviourist approach sees all behaviour as the product of past reinforcement contingencies, leaving no room for free will or conscious choices. This hard deterministic stance may be a more appropriate explanation for animal behaviour, whereas explanations of human behaviour should also account for emotions,



motivations and reasoning skills (e.g. as social learning theory does). Hence, the behaviourist approach may be a limited explanation for human behaviour.

— **Cost-benefit analyses with the use of animals in experimental research** = Skinner's box caused considerable physical harm to the rats, breaching the BPS ethical guideline of protection from harm. Watson and Rayner's classical conditioning experiments on Little Albert failed to protect him from psychological harm, as well as not offering him the opportunity to withdraw. Therefore, much behaviourist research, at least by modern standards, would be viewed as unethical. However, a cost-benefit analysis may show that the benefit of increased understanding of the different types of learning (classical and operant conditioning) outweigh the ethical costs.

Part 2 — The Learning Approach: Social Learning Theory

A01 Introduction and Assumptions:

- Social learning theory (SLT) suggests that learning occurs both directly, through classical and operant conditioning, and indirectly, through vicarious reinforcement.
- Assumes that learning occurs through the following stages: An observer identifies themselves with a desirable role model. This role model displays or models a specific behaviour, which is imitated by the observer. The likelihood that the observed behaviour will be imitated is increased if the role model is seen to be 'vicariously reinforced' or rewarded. Therefore, the consequences of the observed behaviour are more important than observing the behaviour alone.
- Role Model = A person with whom the observer identifies with. The role model is usually attractive, has high social status, is of a similar age and the same gender to the observer. This model can exert influence indirectly by not being physically present in the environment but, for example, seen in the media.
- Identification = The process by which an observer relates to/ associates themselves with a role model and aspires to become more like that role model.
- Vicarious reinforcement = A type of indirect learning which occurs when an observer sees their role model being rewarded for displaying a certain behaviour. The observer is then motivated to imitate this behaviour, in an effort to receive the same reward.
- Mediation processes = Cognitive processes which mediate/intervene between stimulus and response. The 4 mediational processes are: Attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation.
- The first two mediational processes are involved with the observation and understanding of the behaviour, whilst the latter two are involved in the actual imitation of the behaviour. This separation means that observed behaviours do not always need to be reproduced at the same time.

A02 Potential Applications:

1. Bandura's Bobo Doll Study (Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1961) - 36 boys and 36 girls, aged between 3 and 6 years old, were tested. ¹There were three experimental groups, with the first being exposed to real-life aggressive models, a second group observing the same models displaying aggressive acts on film and a third group viewing an aggressive cartoon character. The researchers found that the children who'd observed an aggressive role model behaved more aggressively themselves towards the Bobo

¹ Bandura, Ross and Ross, Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Model, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1963, 66(1), 3-11.



doll compared to the non-aggressive role model control group. Links can be made to the process of social learning theory.

2. Questions may be based upon why some individuals are chosen as role models rather than others, why some children will not reproduce the observed behaviours (individual differences in the use of mediational processes) and the influence of the media on behaviour, according to SLT.
3. Comparisons with other approaches, specifically about why SLT may be a better explanation for human, rather than animal, behaviour.

A03 Evaluation:

— **Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment ignores the biological differences between boys and girls** = Social learning theory suggests that we learn from experience, and so ignores other biological or psychological factors, thus adopting environmental determinism. However, Bandura ignored the finding that ²“boys, in relation to girls, exhibited significantly more imitative aggression, more aggressive gun play, and more nonimitative aggressive behaviour”. This may be explained due to boys having higher levels of the hormone testosterone, which has been linked to increased aggressiveness. Therefore, this suggests that SLT may not be a complete explanation for gender differences in behaviour, due to not accounting for the biological and hormonal differences between the sexes.

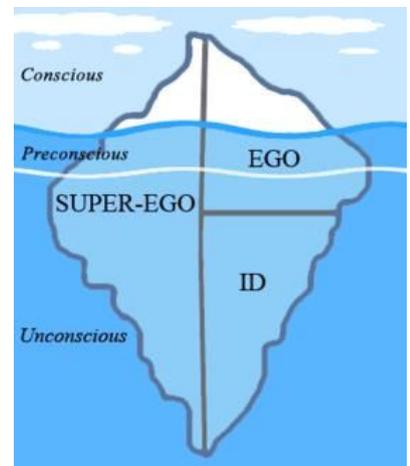
— **Demand characteristics in Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment** = Bandura's study may lack internal validity, due to not entirely investigating the effect of aggressive role models because the Bobo doll is specifically designed to be hit. The study may also lack mundane realism because it may not represent or measure how children would be aggressive in day-to-day situations, perhaps towards objects or people that are not meant to be struck. Therefore, participants may have deliberately acted more aggressively towards the doll in order to please the experimenter (the 'Please-U effect'). This reduces the generalisability of the findings.

+ **Acknowledges the role of human cognition** = Human cognitive and decision-making processes may be considered as more complex than that of animals. SLT has the advantage, over behaviourism, that it recognises the role of mediational processes as the conscious and cognitive insight that humans have into their behaviour. Therefore, SLT may be a better explanation of human behaviour, compared to behaviourism.

Part 3 — The Psychodynamic Approach

A01 Introduction and Assumptions:

- Freud adopted the use of psychic determinism = This is the idea that all behaviour is caused by unconscious internal conflicts, over which we have no control.
- There are 3 levels of consciousness: The conscious, preconscious and unconscious.
- We are only aware of our conscious. Contents of the preconscious are revealed through parapraxes, slips of the tongue and dreaming. Therefore, since we are completely unaware of our unconscious,



² Bandura, Ross and Ross, Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Model, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1963, 66(1), 3-11.



inferences of its workings can be made through the psychoanalysis (analysing symbols in dreams) and psychotherapy.

- The unconscious stores our biological drives and instincts (e.g. hunger, thirst and sex) as well as upsetting and disturbing thoughts repressed from the conscious.

Freud's Tripartite Personality:

- Freud viewed the personality as made up of three components i.e. 'tripartite'. These are the Id, ego and superego.
4. Id = This is the innate part of the personality, and operates on the pleasure principle. Therefore, the Id constantly demands instant gratification (e.g. to fulfill innate, biological instincts, such as hunger and thirst) and so is in conflict with the superego.

Stage	Ages	Focus of Libido	Major Development	Adult Fixation Example
Oral	0 to 1	Mouth, Tongue, Lips	Weaning off of breast feeding or formula	Smoking, Overeating
Anal	1 to 3	Anus	Toilet Training	Orderliness, Messiness
Phallic	3 to 6	Genitals	Resolving Oedipus/ Electra Complex	Deviancy, Sexual Dysfunction
Latency	6 to 12	None	Developing Defense Mechanisms	None
Genital	12+	Genitals	Reaching Full Sexual Maturity	If all stages were successfully completed then the person should be sexually matured and mentally healthy.

5. Ego = Formed during the first 3 years of life, and operates on the reality principle. The ego helps to resolve the conflict between the id and the superego through the use of defence mechanisms (repression, denial and displacement). The strength of the unconscious depends upon how efficiently the ego resolves this conflict.
6. Superego = Formed at the end of the phallic stage, and operates on the morality principle. This contains the child's internalised sense of right and wrong, based upon their same-sex parent. The superego is in constant conflict with the Id.

The Psychosexual Stages:

- Freud adopted a nomothetic approach by suggesting that there a series of developmental stages through which all children progress, and in the same order.
- Each stage is characterised by a conflict, which must be resolved to pass to the next stage, apart from latency.
- Failure to do so results in 'fixation' at that stage, where dysfunctional behaviours associated with that stage are carried forwards to adulthood.
- The ideas of the Oedipus and Electra Complexes were developed on the basis of case studies conducted on Little Hans, where Freud suggested that Little Hans' phobia of horses stemmed from a fear towards his father, due to having sexual desires for his mother.
- This is an example of the idiographic approach to research (i.e. the use of case studied), but with a nomothetic application (i.e. all boys experience the Oedipus Complex, whilst all girls experience the Electra Complex).

A02 Potential Application Questions:

1. Comparisons between the psychodynamic approach and humanism.
2. Explanation of the case of Little Hans, using the psychosexual stages.
3. Links between the psychodynamic approach and the current scientific status of Psychology (synoptic with Research Methods).



4. Psychodynamic explanations of mental disorders, making links with the tripartite personality and the role of the unconscious.

A03 Evaluation:

- **Unconscious Concepts** = Since we are unaware of the unconscious, then it is not possible to objectively and systematically measure it. Therefore, this means that, according to Karl Popper, that the psychodynamic approach does not meet the scientific criterion of falsification, leaving it unfalsifiable and a pseudoscience. This does little to improve the scientific credibility of psychology, and indeed has left many with an inaccurate view of psychology as a scientific discipline.
- **The use of an idiographic approach / Case studies** = Many of Freud's theories, most notably the Oedipus and Electra Complexes, were based on data from individual case studies and interviews. There are several problems with this. The first, is that participants selected to be subjects of case studies are often of some kind of special psychological interest, and so cannot represent the experiences of the general population, so the findings lack ecological validity. Secondly, mainly qualitative data is collected, which means that the researcher draws their own subjective conclusions. This is particularly the case if the researcher knows what they are looking for and/or the aims of the investigation, so the results will be affected by researcher bias. Therefore, Freud's data and theories suffer from limited applications and generalisability.
- **Psychic Determinism** = Freud suggested that all behaviour is the product of unconscious, internal conflicts (between the Id and the superego, whilst being mediated by the ego) over which we have no control. This means that every action, even 'accidental' slips of the tongue, has some kind of meaning and can give us insight into our unconscious. However, this adds to the subjectivity of interpretations of these meanings, and therefore is not in line with scientific methods of investigating behaviour. This is all in contrast to the hard determinism approach used by behaviourism, reciprocal determinism used by social learning theory, soft determinism used by the cognitive approach and biological determinism used by the biological approach.
- + **Practical Applications** = Psychotherapy and psychoanalysis are both rooted in the psychodynamic approach and still have modern uses. For example, Kohlenberg et al (2002) found that ³"FECT / Functional Analytic Cognitive Therapy produced a greater focus on the client-therapist relationship and is a promising approach for improving outcomes and interpersonal functioning. It also appears that a focus during sessions on clients' problematic cognitions about the therapist adds to the efficacy". Therefore, Freud's psychodynamic approach has made a long-lasting contribution towards treatment of various mental disorders, such as depression.

³ Robert J. Kohlenberg, Jonathan W. Kanter, Madelon Y. Bolling, Chauncey R. Parker, Mavis Tsai, Enhancing cognitive therapy for depression with functional analytic psychotherapy: Treatment guidelines and empirical findings, Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, Volume 9, Issue 3, 2002, Pages 213-229,

