Chapter 2

Contemporary Perspectives on Abnormal Behavior

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The Biological Perspective
• Focuses on the biological underpinnings of abnormal behavior and the use of biologically based approaches, such as drug therapy, to treat psychological disorders.
• Gave rise to development of medical model, which remains today a powerful force in contemporary understandings of abnormal behavior.

The Nervous System
• Nervous system is made up of neurons, nerve cells that transmit signals or "messages" throughout the body.
  • Dendrites - The rootlike structures at the ends of neurons that receive nerve impulses from other neurons.
  • Axon - The long, thin part of a neuron along which nerve impulses travel.
The Nervous System

- **Terminals** - The small branching structures at the tips of axons.
- **Neurotransmitters** - Chemical substances that transmit messages from one neuron to another.
- **Synapse** - The junction between the terminal knob of one neuron and the dendrite or soma of another through which nerve impulses pass.
- **Receptor site** - A part of a dendrite on a receiving neuron that is structured to receive a neurotransmitter.

The Anatomy of a Neuron

Neurons consist of cell bodies (or somas), dendrites, and one or more axons. The axon of this neuron is wrapped in a myelin sheath, which insulates it from the bodily fluids surrounding the neuron and facilitates transmission of neural impulses (messages that travel within the neuron).
**Parts of the Nervous System**

**Central Nervous System**

- **Medulla** - An area of the hindbrain involved in regulation of heartbeat and respiration.

- **Pons** - A structure in the hindbrain involved in respiration.

- **Cerebellum** - A structure in the hindbrain involved in coordination and balance.

**Central Nervous System**

- **Reticular activating system** - Brain structure involved in processes of attention, sleep, and arousal.

- **Thalamus** - A structure in the forebrain involved in relaying sensory information to the cortex and in processes related to sleep and attention.

- **Hypothalamus** - A structure in the forebrain involved in regulating body temperature, emotion, and motivation.
Central Nervous System

- **Limbic system** - Group of forebrain structures involved in learning, memory, and basic drives.
- **Basal ganglia** - Assemblage of neurons located between the thalamus and cerebrum, involved in coordinating motor (movement) processes.
- **Cerebrum** - Large mass of the forebrain, consisting of the two cerebral hemispheres.
- **Cerebral cortex** - Wrinkled surface area of the cerebrum responsible for processing sensory stimuli and controlling higher mental functions, such as thinking and use of language.
Peripheral Nervous System

- Somatic nervous system –
  - relays information from sense organs to the brain and transmits messages from the brain to skeletal muscles.

- Autonomic nervous system –
  - regulates activities of the glands and involuntary functions.
  - Sympathetic - Pertaining to the division of autonomic nervous system whose activity leads to heightened states of arousal.
  - Parasympathetic - Pertaining to division of autonomic nervous system whose activity reduces states of arousal and regulates bodily processes that replenish energy reserves.

Peripheral Nervous System

The Psychological Perspective
Psychodynamic Models

- **Psychoanalytic theory** - Theoretical model of personality developed by **Sigmund Freud**, also called psychoanalysis.

- **Conscious** - To Freud, part of mind that corresponds to our present awareness.

- **Preconscious** - To Freud, part of mind whose contents lie outside present awareness but can be brought into awareness by focusing attention.

- **Unconscious** - To Freud, part of mind that lies outside the range of ordinary awareness and that contains instinctual urges.

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The Structure of the Mind

**Conscious**

**Preconscious**

**Ego**

**Unconscious**

**Super Ego**

**Id**

*Figure 2.5 The parts of the mind, according to Freud.*

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The Structure of Personality

- **Id** - The *unconscious psychic structure, present at birth*, that contains *primitive instincts* and is regulated by the *pleasure principle*.

- **Pleasure principle** - The governing principle of the id, involving demands for immediate gratification of needs.
The Structure of Personality

- **Ego** - The psychic structure that corresponds to the *concept of the self*, governed by the *reality principle* and characterized by the *ability to tolerate frustration*.

- **Reality principle** - The governing principle of the ego, which involves considerations of *social acceptability and practicality*.

- **Superego** - The psychic structure that incorporates the values of the *parents* and important others and functions as a *moral conscience*.

  The superego serves as a *conscience*, or internal moral guardian, that monitors the ego and *passes judgment on right and wrong*.

Defense Mechanisms

- **Defense mechanisms** - The *reality-distorting strategies* used by the ego to shield the self from awareness of anxiety-provoking materials.

  These mechanisms *enable us to constrain impulses from the id* as we go about our daily business.

  Freud believed that *slips of the tongue* and ordinary *forgetfulness* could represent *hidden motives* that are kept out of consciousness by *repression*. 
Stages of Psychosexual Development

- Freudian view: stages of human development are psychosexual in nature because they correspond to transfer of libidinal energy from one erogenous zone to another.
- Freud proposed the existence of five psychosexual stages of development:
  - oral (first year of life),
  - anal (second year of life),
  - phallic (beginning during the third year of life),
  - latency (from around age 6 to age 12), and
  - genital (beginning in puberty).
Stages of Psychosexual Development

- Freud believed that phallic-stage children develop unconscious incestuous wishes for the parent of opposite gender and begin to view parent of the same sex as a rival.

- Freud dubbed this conflict the Oedipus complex, after the legendary Greek king Oedipus, who unwittingly slew his father and married his mother.

- Fixation - A constellation of personality traits associated with a particular stage of psychosexual development, resulting from either too much or too little gratification at the stage.

Other Psychodynamic Theorists

Margaret Mahler
Karen Horney
Erik Erikson

 andere Psychodynamic Theorists

- Archetypes - Primitive images or concepts that reside in the collective unconscious.

- Ego psychology - Modern psychodynamic approach that focuses more on the conscious strivings of the ego than on the hypothesized unconscious functions of the id.

- Object-relations theory - The psychodynamic viewpoint that focuses on the influences of internalized representations of the personalities of parents and other strong attachment figures (called “objects”).
Psychodynamic Views on Normality and Abnormality

- In the Freudian model, mental health is a function of the dynamic balance among the psychic structures of id, ego, and superego.
- Freud believed that the underlying conflicts that give rise to psychological disorders originate in childhood and are buried in the depths of the unconscious.
- Psychosis - Severe form of disturbed behavior characterized by impaired ability to interpret reality and difficulty meeting demands of daily life.

Learning Models

- Behavioral perspective is identified with the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936), the discoverer of the conditioned reflex, and the American psychologist John B. Watson (1878–1958), the father of behaviorism.
- Behaviorism - The school of psychology that defines psychology as the study of observable behavior.
- Watson and other behaviorists, such as Harvard University psychologist B. F. Skinner (1904–1990), believed that human behavior is the product of our genetic inheritance and environmental or situational influences.
Role of Classical Conditioning

- **Conditioned response** - In classical conditioning, a learned response to a previously neutral stimulus.
- **Unconditioned stimulus** - A stimulus that elicits an unlearned response.
- **Unconditioned response** - An unlearned response.
- **Conditioned stimulus** - A previously neutral stimulus that evokes a conditioned response after repeated pairings with an unconditioned stimulus that had previously evoked that response.
- **Classical conditioning** - A form of learning in which a response to one stimulus can be made to occur to another stimulus by pairing or associating the two stimuli.

The Classical Conditioning Model

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<tr>
<th>Before Conditioning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Stimulus (NS)</td>
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<td>US (Green)</td>
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<th>During Conditioning</th>
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<td>CS (Bell)</td>
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<td>US (Rabbits)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>After Conditioning</th>
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<tr>
<td>CS (Red)</td>
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<td>US (Rabbits)</td>
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FIGURE 2.7 Schematic diagram of the process of classical conditioning

Role of Operant Conditioning

- In operant conditioning, responses are acquired and strengthened by their consequences.
- **Operant conditioning** - A form of learning in which behavior is acquired and strengthened when it is reinforced.
- **Reinforcement** - A stimulus or event that increases the frequency of the response that it follows.
Role of Operant Conditioning

- **Positive reinforcers** - Reinforcers that, when introduced, increase the frequency of the preceding behavior.
- **Negative reinforcers** - Reinforcers that, when removed, increase the frequency of the preceding behavior.
- **Punishment** - Application of aversive or painful stimuli that reduces the frequency of the behavior it follows.

Social-Cognitive Theory

- **Social-cognitive theory** - A learning-based theory that emphasizes observational learning and incorporates roles for cognitive variables in determining behavior.
- **Modeling** - Learning by observing and imitating the behavior of others.
- **Expectancies** - Beliefs about expected outcomes.

Humanistic Models

- **Self-actualization** - In humanistic psychology, the tendency to strive to become all that one is capable of being. The motive that drives one to reach one's full potential and express one's unique capabilities.
- **Unconditional positive regard** - Valuing other people as having basic worth regardless of their behavior at a particular time.
- **Conditional positive regard** - Valuing other people on the basis of whether their behavior meets one's approval.
Humanistic Theorists

Cognitive Models
- Cognitive theorists study the cognitions — the thoughts, beliefs, expectations, and attitudes—that accompany and may underlie abnormal behavior.
- They focus on how reality is colored by our expectations, attitudes, and so forth, and how inaccurate or biased processing of information about the world—and our places within it—can give rise to abnormal behavior.
- Cognitive theorists believe that our interpretations of the events in our lives, and not the events themselves, determine our emotional states.

Information-Processing Models
- Information-processing theorists discuss human cognition in terms such as:
  - input (based on perception),
  - manipulation (interpreting or transforming information),
  - storage (placing information in memory),
  - retrieval (accessing information from memory), and
  - output (acting on the information).
- Psychological disorders are seen as disturbances in these processes.
  - Example: People with schizophrenia
Albert Ellis (1913 – 2007)

- Psychologist Albert Ellis (1977b, 1993), a prominent cognitive theorist, believed that troubling events in themselves do not lead to anxiety, depression, or disturbed behavior.
- Ellis used an “ABC approach” to explain the causes of the misery. Being fired is an activating event (A). The ultimate outcome, or consequence (C), is emotional distress.
- But the activating event (A) and the consequences (C) are mediated by various beliefs (B).

Aaron Beck (1921 –)

Aaron Beck proposes that depression may result from errors in thinking or “cognitive distortions,” such as judging oneself entirely on the basis of one’s flaws or failures and interpreting events in a negative light (through blue-colored glasses, as it were).

Beck stresses the four basic types of cognitive distortions that contribute to emotional distress:
1. Selective abstraction.
2. Overgeneralization.
3. Magnification.
4. Absolutist thinking.

The Sociocultural Perspective
Ethnicity and Mental Health

- A recent analysis of ethnic group differences in rates of mental disorders revealed an interesting pattern.
- Using data from a nationally representative sample of adult Americans, investigators found that traditionally disadvantaged groups (non-Hispanic Black Americans and Hispanic Americans) had either significantly lower rates of psychological disorders or comparable rates, as compared to European Americans (non-Hispanic Whites).

Ethnicity and psychological disorders in the United States

![Graph showing prevalence rates of mood and anxiety disorders among different ethnic groups in the United States.]

Evaluation of the Sociocultural Perspective

- Social causation model - Belief that social stressors, such as poverty, account for the greater risk of severe psychological disorders among people of lower socioeconomic status.
- Downward drift hypothesis - Theory that explains linkage between low SES and behavior problems by suggesting that problem behaviors lead people to drift downward in social status.
The Biopsychosocial Perspective

- Examines contributions of multiple factors representing biological, psychological, and sociocultural domains, as well as their interactions, in the development of psychological disorders.

- Even disorders that are primarily biological may be influenced by psychological factors, or vice-versa.

- For example, some phobias may be learned behaviors that are acquired through experiences in which particular objects became associated with traumatic or painful experiences.

The Diathesis–Stress Model

- Diathesis–stress model - Posits that abnormal behavior problems involve interaction of vulnerability or predisposition and stressful life events or experiences.

- Diathesis - Vulnerability or predisposition to a particular disorder.

- In some cases, people with a diathesis for a particular disorder, say schizophrenia, will remain free of the disorder or will develop a milder form of the disorder if the level of stress in their lives remains low or if they develop effective coping responses for handling the stress they encounter.

![Figure 2.8 The Diathesis-stress model.](image-url)