

The Handbook of Critical Theoretical Research Methods in Education

Summary

Read a brief summary of this topic

Behaviourism Beginning in the 1930s, behaviourism flourished in the United States, with B.F. Skinner leading the way in demonstrating the power of operant conditioning through reinforcement. Behaviourists in university settings conducted experiments on the conditions controlling learning and "shaping" behaviour through reinforcement, usually working with laboratory animals such as rats and pigeons. Skinner and his followers explicitly excluded mental life, viewing the human mind as an impenetrable "black box," open only to conjecture and speculative fictions. Their work showed that social behaviour is readily influenced by manipulating specific contingencies and by changing the consequences or reinforcement (rewards) to which behaviour leads in different situations. Changes in those consequences can modify behaviour in predictable stimulus-response (S-R) patterns. Likewise, a wide range of emotions, both positive and negative, may be acquired through processes of conditioning and can be modified by applying the same principles. Get a Britannica Premium subscription and gain access to exclusive content. [Subscribe Now](#)

Freud and his followers Sigmund Freud Concurrently, in a curious juxtaposition, the psychoanalytic theories and therapeutic practices developed by the Vienna-trained physician Sigmund Freud and his many disciples "beginning early in the 20th century and enduring for many decades" were undermining the traditional view of human nature as essentially rational. Freudian theory made reason secondary: for Freud, the unconscious and its often socially unacceptable irrational motives and desires, particularly the sexual and aggressive, were the driving force underlying much of human behaviour and mental illness. Making the unconscious conscious became the therapeutic goal of clinicians working within this framework. Freud proposed that much of what humans feel, think, and do is outside awareness, self-defensive in its motivations, and unconsciously determined. Much of it also reflects conflicts grounded in early childhood that play out in complex patterns of seemingly paradoxical behaviours and symptoms. His followers, the ego psychologists, emphasized the importance of the higher-order functions and cognitive processes (e.g., competence motivation, self-regulatory abilities) as well as the individual's psychological defense mechanisms. They also shifted their focus to the roles of interpersonal relations and of secure attachment in mental health and adaptive functioning, and they pioneered the analysis of these processes in the clinical setting.

Reference

[Central Nervous System Tumours: WHO Classification of Tumours](#)

[Family Health Care Nursing: Theory, Practice, and Research](#)