Psychology Perspectives Essay, Research Paper

In psychology there are six modern psychological perspectives. These perspectives are behavioral, psychodynamic, humanistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and biological. Each perspective has its own unique way of explaining the human behavior. I believe to truly explain the complex mental processes and behavior, each perspective must be examined and not limited to just one. The following is my explanation and comparisons between two of these perspectives: psychodynamic and behavioral perspectives pertaining to the article in the American Psychologist October 2000, Hunger, Eating, and I11 Health, by John P. J. Pinel, Sunaina Assanand, and Darrin R. Lehman.

The behavioral view is defined as the psychological perspective that emphasizes the power of the environment to influence behavior (pg 41). The behavioral view is often referred to as behaviorism and was developed by psychologists who disagreed with the cognitive view. Instead of looking at the mental processes, behaviorists look at humans externally by observing the effects of people, objects, and events on behavior. The stimulus-response connection, developed by behaviorists, explains human behavior by stating that each response has a stimulus. An example would be a hunger (the stimulus) causing a person to eat (the response). True behaviorists claim that thoughts, feelings, and motives do not play a role in determining behavior. Thoughts and feelings are not the cause, but the result. B. F. Skinner is quoted as saying, The crucial age-old mistake is the belief that what we feel as we behave is the cause of our behaving (pg 94).

The psychodynamic view is defined as a psychological perspective that emphasizes unconscious memories, needs and conflicts as the causes of behavior (pg 114). Psychodynamic psychologists look at the cause and mental conflict that trigger behavior. Freud explained the mind as having pressures that build up and when these can no longer be contained, then the unconscious mind releases these pressures. These pressures might be jealousy and desires from early childhood relationships or even stress. For the troubled mind, this release must be more dramatic than the release normal people get from everyday activities. This may result in anorexia or other behaviors.

The behavioral and psychodynamic viewpoints seem to differ more than they overlap. An example of a situation where psychologists from both disciplines might agree is with anorexia. The behavioral viewpoint would claim that something had to have stimulated this feeling for it to result in a response of a not eating. Psychodynamic psychologists would believe that something from the past childhood experiences or even stress is causing pressure that the mind is having a hard time releasing. In this case the behavioral stimulus is the psychodynamic pressure and the response is the releasing of the pressure as low self-esteem.

While examining these two very different psychological perspectives, I have come to the conclusion that no situation or particular behavior can be attributed to just one reason. If a situation is looked at through only one perspective, then many questions are left unanswered.

The difficulty in determining whether one is hungry or lonely, hungry or tired, hungry or afraid, greatly increases the chance that such a person will not eat instead of meeting the emotional need in a healthier way.