**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY**

**Monday 1st March, 2010 Dr. Maathai**

**THE FOUNDATIONS HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

**Objectives**

* To understand normal and abnormal psychology
* It is a study that forms a prerequisite to understanding self and others; patients and colleagues

**Introduction**

* Behavior can be said to be the observable activity of living things
* It can be said to be the actions or reactions of an organism to the environment
* In humans behavior can be conscious or subconscious. It can be overt (for the public to see) or covert (done in private), voluntary or involuntary
* The most basic form of behavior is that seen in unicellular organisms
* In higher animals, behavior is controlled by the endocrine system and the nervous system
* The complexity of the behavior of an organism is related to the complexity of its nervous system
* The capacity to learn new responses to environmental triggers and adjust reactions to these changes

**Human Behavior**

* Human behavior can be common (within accepted norms) or unusual, acceptable or unacceptable
* Because human beings are social animals there are social norms that dictate behavior and social control is used to regulate behavior

**Forces behind human behavior**

* What we see as behavior are products of mental processes
* Human behavior cannot be seen in isolation to the mental processes
* Psychology is defined as the study of human behavior and mental processes

**Historical background in the study of human behavior**

* An interest in human behavior goes far back as Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greek
* In the 16th Century psychology referred to this study as the study of soul (religious guided)
* By 19th century it became a scientific study
* Early 20th century became study of human behavior

**Hereditary Vs Environment, Nature Vs Nurture**

* According to Plato (427-437BC); human beings enter the world with in-born knowledge of reality-Nativsm
* According to Aristotle, knowledge is acquired, not congenital; empiricism

**Nature Vs Nurture in age enlightment**

* According to John Locke 1634-1704; knowledge is acquired through life – ‘tabula rasa’
* Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804); knowledge is acquired in birth but also acquired in life

**The modern rationalists**

* 19th century, the study of the brain began – Herman von Helmholtz
* Brain function research began led by Broca (1824-1880)
* Sir Francis Galton, the cousin to Darwin, the people with highly developed abilities survive more hence natural selection is based on human abilities

**Behaviorism**

* Nurture reached its peak in Behaviorism; study of observable behavior
* J.B Watson (1878-1958); Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), Skinner (1904-1990)

‘Give me a dozen healthy infant, well formed and my own specified world to bring them up and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select; doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant etc’ J.B.Watson

**Psychoanalysis and the unconscious**

* Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
* Psychoanalytical theory emphasizes the importance of early childhood experiences to shape personality
* Described the 3 instances of the psyche they ID the ego and the super ego
* And the structural psyche; conscious, subconscious and unconscious
* Erik Erikson (1902-1994)
* Described identities as personal and developing from heritage and history
* He described identity as developing through stages of crisis and resolution – 8 stages of psychosocial development
* Alfred Adler; individual psychology

**Humanistic Theories of Behavior**

* Humanistic perspective; Abraham Maslow 1908-1970; Human behavior is geared towards satisfaction of needs; hierarchy of needs, physical needs, safety needs, love needs, aesthetic needs
* Carl Rogers 1902-1987; Human beings have through free will the capacity to overcome the influences of unconscious motive and environmental experiences. Human beings have a natural tendency for self-actualization (the attainment of one’s potential)

**Social Learning; Social Influences**

* As we grow and develop in our lives, we also develop social attitudes which strongly influence our behavior
* Children internalize the values of their parents attitudes of the society and cultural expectations about how to behave – socialization
* Peer pressure; an important aspect of social influences; human tendency to adapt behavior in order to fit in with a particular group

**Cognitive behavioral theories**

* Cognitive perspective (Gardner 1985); the brain has an active role in organizing perceptions, in processing information and in interpreting experiences
* Cognitive perspective; Jean Piaget (1896-1980); cognitive development
* Thoughts shape emotions and behavior
* Unwanted behavior can be changes by changing the way we interpret the environment

**Instinct, basic drives and motives**

* Earlier attempts to explain human behavior on the basis of instincts as in other animals was replaced by the drives theory
* Drive; a driving force originates from a natural need, like thirst or hunger. Such a situation stimulates the organism to comply with the need
* Motivation on the other hand corresponds to the state of the organism to start or to contribute an act e.g. the type of food available or seen

**The return of nature/hereditary**

* Behavioral genetics; based on increasing knowledge on the human genome
* Polygenic behavior of human abilities and behavior
* Identification of genes related to specific personality types and even disorders in psychiatry is on the move

**The psycho-biological basis of human behavior**

* The nervous system allows us to perceive, to interpret and to respond to events from the environment
* Hormones regulate human behavior as in quantities of food eaten
* Closely related are the complex psycho-biological states; emotions

Emotions include a wide range of observable behaviors, expressed feelings and changes in the body state

**Conclusion**

* Human behavior is complex and cannot be explained on the basis of any single theory
* New and interesting questions in this and the last century has been the role of remote external influence like the media and the cyber
* Thought for the day: Does violence in the media; television in computer games or cyber result in actual acts of violence?