

## The Biological Area of Psychology

The biological area of psychology is concerned with how **physical factors** within our bodies affect our thought processes, emotions, behaviour and development. Therefore, this area is concerned with the actions of **genes**, the **nervous system** (including the **brain**) and **hormones**.

- We can understand differences in behaviour in terms of brain differences and changes. The brain is the most complicated structure within the nervous system and has a regulatory function in multiple behaviours. E.g. it is thought that a faulty **hypothalamus** is involved in eating disorders, such as anorexia.
- This area suggests that we may inherit, through our **genes**, a predisposition to behaving in a certain way. For example, having a malfunctioning MAO-A gene is thought to make people behave and act more aggressively.

## The Behaviourist Perspective of Psychology

This perspective sees all behaviour as **learnt** through our environment in three ways: Classical Conditioning, Operant Conditioning and Social Learning. **Classical conditioning** is learning through **association**, because certain things frequently occur together. E.g. your dog has learnt that the sound of a can being opened means that it is about to get fed.

**Operant conditioning** is learning through **reinforcement**; a behaviour that brings about a **pleasurable** outcome is more likely to be repeated and has therefore been reinforced, because the behaviour has been associated with the pleasurable outcome. E.g. use of star charts.

**Social learning** is referred to as **observational** learning and is learning through the **imitation** of behaviour of role models. We are more likely to imitate behaviour that we see rewarded, than that we see punished and we are more likely to imitate people that have power or are similar to us.

## The Psychodynamic Psychology

This perspective describes how we are strongly influenced by the structure and drives of *our unconscious mind*. According to the psychodynamic perspective we are constantly affected by unconscious mental processes. **Freud** believed that the unconscious mind is composed of three distinct parts: the **Id**, the **Ego** and the **Super-ego** and that these unconscious elements should be in balance otherwise they can negatively affect the way someone behaves.

Our development is also affected by early relationships. According to Freud the most crucial factor affecting our psychological development is our *early childhood experiences*, and the most important, centre around the quality of relationships with our parents

## The Social Area

This area looks at how behaviour can be explained in terms of social *context*. The *situation* we are in affects how we behave. Social psychology involves studying how people *interact* with one another and attempts to explain how the *thoughts, feelings, and behaviors* of individuals are influenced by other people. We are affected by both *individuals and groups*. E.g. we may go along with the views of others even if we disagree with them, we conform to fit in, and we may be more likely to obey someone who is in a position of authority.