

## Causes of Behavior: A Case Study

Read the selection below, and answer the questions that follow. Be prepared for class discussion.

Billy was the third child of loving but busy parents. When he was growing up, he thought that his parents favored his older siblings. When Billy was four, his parents divorced, and he remained with his father. His brother and sister moved with his mother to a distant city. Billy rarely saw them. Feeling inadequate in raising his son alone, Billy's father responded by providing the child with costly toys and frequent trips to amusement parks. As Billy grew older and attended school, he had trouble focusing and was taken to a doctor for an appraisal of his abilities and disabilities. Billy's medical evaluation showed symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, but Billy's father dismissed the diagnosis. Because of these difficulties in school, Billy had trouble making friends and was ridiculed by his classmates. This diminished his self-confidence. By the time Billy was an adolescent, he had difficulty forming lasting relationships despite his expertise in athletics. He was capable of high academic achievement, but his grades were below average. Teacher reports frequently cited his excessive need for attention. Personally, he felt lost and doomed to failure.

### 1. Psychoanalytic Approach

The psychologists of the psychoanalytic approach believe that a person's behavior is determined by primal drives and the experiences of early childhood. This school of psychology emphasizes the unconscious mind. Some psychoanalytic theorists focus on the relevance of feelings of inferiority, while others stress the resolution of psychosocial or psychosexual conflicts.

### 2. Behaviorist Approach

Behaviorist psychologists stress the connection between stimulus/response and behavior/reward. These theorists view the environment, rather than internal states, as instrumental in behavior. According to behaviorists, a person's behavior is determined by the actions that were rewarded or punished. Through this process, the person learns to associate certain acts with the response it produced.

### 3. Humanist Approach

The psychologists that subscribe to the humanist approach emphasize the concept that people are in control of their own destiny. According to this view, one tries to satisfy both basic and enriching needs, always striving for personal achievement. A person's self-concept is important. Humanists emphasize the inherent worth of the individual.

### 4. Cognitive Approach

Cognitive theorists feature the mental processing of the individual. To these psychologists, a person's difficulties often stem from false perceptions of reality. Cognitive theorists believe that people develop ideas of the world and base their judgments upon these perceptions. Some theorists of this school view intellectual growth as stage-related.

### 5. Biological Approach

The advocates of the biological approach stress the genetic, medical, and neurological components of the person. These theorists believe that these biological factors influence behavior. Hormonal changes, brain anomalies, and neurochemical differences help determine a person's actions and subsequent changes in behavior.

## Part B.

Answer the following question from the perspective of the approach you have been assigned. Draft your individual response before conferring with your group. Be prepared to share your group's explanation and to take notes on the reports given by the other groups.

How would each of the five major approaches to psychology describe the causes of Billy's problems?