



PERGAMON

New Ideas in Psychology 21 (2003) 121–140

NEW IDEAS IN
PSYCHOLOGY

www.elsevier.com/locate/newideapsych

Universal Selection Theory: Implications for multidisciplinary approaches to clinical psychology and psychiatry

Warren Mansell

Department of Psychology, Institute of Psychiatry, University of London, De Crespigny Park, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AF, UK

Abstract

Universal Selection Theory claims that the increases in the fit of a system to its environment are achieved through a process of blind variation and cumulative selection that is analogous to evolution by natural selection. The process is proposed to occur in many domains, including the gene, behavior, cognition, and culture (meme). This paper reviews the background for the theory and explains how it may contribute to clinical psychology and psychiatry. It is suggested that the theory provides: A framework for integrating biological, psychological and cultural perspectives; an account for why problem-solving and cognitive reappraisal prove to be effective interventions; and an understanding of why psychological disorders can be resistant to change. Implications for psychological treatments, theoretical integration, and future research are discussed.

© 2003 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Evolution; Darwinism; Memes; Cognitive therapy; Psychopathology

1. Introduction

Universal Selection Theory (Campbell, 1974; Cziko, 1995; Plotkin, 1994) claims that increases in the fit of a system to its environment are achieved through a process of blind variation and selective retention that is analogous to evolution by natural selection (Darwin, 1859; Wallace, 1891). In particular, the approach has been proposed to apply to the functioning of the immune system (Jerne, 1955), the development of complex behavior (Cziko, 1995, 2000; Powers, 1973) and the growth of human culture (Blackmore, 1999; Cloak, 1975; Dawkins, 1976).

E-mail address: w.mansell@iop.kcl.ac.uk (W. Mansell).

The current paper has several aims: To explain how adopting Universal Selection Theory can help to integrate knowledge of psychopathology at several levels of explanation (e.g., genetic, psychological, cultural); to help to explain how psychological disorders develop and are maintained; and to help explain how the processes of variation and selection are involved in psychological treatments. Earlier writers have explored several of the themes described in this review (Blackmore, 1999; Den Boer, 1997; Langs, 1996; Preti & Miotto, 1997; Ross, 1999), but this paper offers new insights and it is the first to bring together the implications of using Universal Selection Theory to understand psychopathology.

The first section of the paper will begin by describing the history and development of Universal Selection Theory (for a detailed review, see Cziko, 1995) and will follow by highlighting four important levels of selection: Gene, behavior, cognition, and culture (meme). The first section may cover areas that are familiar to most readers, but it is important to clarify them here. The second half of the paper then explores the many implications of the theory for understanding psychological disorders.

2. The history and development of Universal Selection Theory

2.1. Natural selection

The development of Universal Selection Theory was inspired by the theory of evolution by natural selection. Darwin's theory aimed to provide a feasible and scientifically testable resolution to the debate concerning the origins of living organisms. Until Darwin presented his theory, among the many accounts of the origins of living organisms, two alternative accounts had been particularly popular. Either living creatures were created directly by an intelligent designer, namely God, or else they developed gradually over generations through the process of Lamarckian evolution (Lamarck, 1809, in Burkhardt, 1977). Lamarck had suggested that organisms pass on the characteristics they had acquired during their lifetime directly to their offspring at conception. For example, the giraffe who stretches its neck to reach high branches was thought to pass this new characteristic to the next generation of giraffes through its genes. We now know that this explanation is unfeasible because the genetic information passed from parent to offspring in the gametes is fixed shortly after the birth of the parent, and there is no way for the body to constructively alter this genetic information.

According to Darwin, living organisms evolved in a very different manner to that proposed by Lamarck. His theory of evolution by natural selection can be considered to involve four conditions: (a) natural variation of individuals (b) superfecundity, that is the production of many more individuals than can be sustained by the environment, (c) selection, that is in a competitive environment with access to finite resources, certain individuals will be more likely to survive and leave more offspring than others, and (d) inheritance, that is individuals will pass on their characteristics to their offspring. Owing to the four conditions, over generations the individuals

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات