**[Behaviorist Perspective](http://www.simplypsychology.org/behaviorism.html)**



If your layperson's idea of psychology has always been of people in laboratories wearing white coats and watching hapless rats try to negotiate mazes in order to get to their dinner, then you are probably thinking of behavioral psychology.

Behaviorism is different from most other approaches because they view people (and animals) as controlled by their environment and specifically that we are the result of what we have learned from our environment. Behaviorism is concerned with how environmental factors (called **stimuli**) affect observable behavior (called the **response**).

The behaviorist approach proposes two main processes whereby **people learn from their environment**: namely classical conditioning and operant conditioning. **Classical conditioning** involves learning by association, and **operant conditioning** involves learning from the consequences of behavior.

Behaviorism also believes in [scientific methodology](http://www.simplypsychology.org/science-psychology.html) (e.g. controlled experiments), and that only observable behavior should be studies because this can be objectively measured. Behaviorism rejects the idea that people have free will, and believes that the environment determines all behavior. Behaviorism is the scientific study of observable behavior working on the basis that behavior can be reduced to learned S-R (**Stimulus-Response**) units.

[Classical Conditioning](http://www.simplypsychology.org/classical-conditioning.html) (CC) was studied by the Russian psychologist [Ivan Pavlov](http://www.simplypsychology.org/pavlov.html). Though looking into natural reflexes and neutral stimuli he managed to condition dogs to salivate to the sound of a bell through repeated associated of the sound of the bell and food. The principles of CC have been applied in many therapies. These include [systematic desensitization](http://www.simplypsychology.org/Systematic-Desensitisation.html) for phobias (step-by-step exposed to feared stimulus at once) and [aversion therapy](http://www.simplypsychology.org/aversion-therapy.html).

**B.F. Skinner** investigated [Operant Conditioning](http://www.simplypsychology.org/operant-conditioning.html) of voluntary and involuntary behavior. Skinner felt that some behavior could be explained by the person's motive. Therefore behavior occurs for a reason, and the three main behavior shaping techniques are positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement and punishment.

Behaviorism has been **criticized** in the way it under-estimates the complexity of human behavior. Many studies used animals which are hard to generalize to humans and it cannot explain for example the speed in which we pick up language. There must be biological factors involved.

[**Psychodynamic Perspective**](http://www.simplypsychology.org/psychodynamic.html)

Who hasn't heard of **Sigmund Freud**? So many expressions from our daily life come from Freud's theories of psychoanalysis - subconscious, denial, repression and anal personality to name only a few.

**Freud** believes that events in our childhood can have a significant impact on our behavior as adults. He also believed that people have little free will to make choices in life. Instead our behavior is determined by the **unconscious mind** and childhood experiences.



Freud’s psychoanalysis is both a theory and a therapy. It is the original psychodynamic theory and inspired psychologists such as Jung and [Erikson](http://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html) to develop their own psychodynamic theories. Freud’s work is vast and he has contributed greatly to psychology as a discipline.

Freud, the founder of [Psychoanalysis](http://www.simplypsychology.org/psychoanalysis.html), explained the human mind as like an iceberg, with only a small amount of it being visible, that is our observable behavior, but it is the unconscious, submerged mind that has the most, underlying influence on our behavior. Freud used three main methods of accessing the [unconscious mind](http://www.simplypsychology.org/unconscious-mind.html): free association, dream analysis and slips of the tongue.

He believed that the unconscious mind consisted of three components: the '[id' the 'ego' and the 'superego'.](http://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html)  The 'id' contains two main instincts: '**Eros**', which is the life instinct, which involves self-preservation and sex which is fuelled by the '**libido**' energy force. '**Thanatos**' is the death instinct, whose energies, because they are less powerful than those of 'Eros' are channeled away from ourselves and into aggression towards others.

The 'id' and the 'superego' are constantly in conflict with each other, and the 'ego' tries to resolve the discord. If this conflict is not resolved, we tend to use [defense mechanisms](http://www.simplypsychology.org/defense-mechanisms.html) to reduce our anxieties. Psychoanalysis attempts to help patients resolve their inner conflicts.

An aspect of psychoanalysis is Freud's theory of [psychosexual development](http://www.simplypsychology.org/psychosexual.html). It shows how early experiences affect adult personality. Stimulation of different areas of the body is important as the child progresses through the important developmental stages. Too much or too little can have bad consequences later.

The most important stage is the phallic stage where the focus of the libido is on the genitals.  During this stage little boys experience the '**Oedipus complex**', and little girls experience the 'Electra complex'. These complexes result in children identifying with their same-sex parent, which enables them to learn sex-appropriate behavior and a morale code of conduct.

However it has been **criticized** in the way that it over emphasizes of importance of sexuality and under emphasizes of role of social relationships. The theory is not scientific, and can't be proved as it is circular. The sample was biased, consisting of middle-class, middle-aged neurotic women. Never the less psychoanalysis has been greatly contributory to psychology in that it has encouraged many modern theorists to modify it for the better, using its basic principles, but eliminating its major flaws.

[**Humanism**](http://www.simplypsychology.org/humanistic.html)

Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective that emphasizes the study of the **whole person** (know as holism).  Humanistic psychologists look at human behavior not only through the eyes of the observer, but through the eyes of the person doing the behaving. Humanistic psychologists believe that an individual's behavior is connected to his inner feelings and self-image. The humanistic perspective centers on the view that each person is unique and individual and has the free will to change at any time in his or her lives.

The humanistic perspective suggests that we are each responsible for our own happiness and well-being as humans. We have the innate (i.e. inborn) capacity for **self-actualization** which is our unique desire to achieve our highest potential as people. Because of this focus on the person and his or her personal experiences and subjective perception of the world the humanists regarded scientific methods as inappropriate for studying behavior.

Two of the most influential and enduring theories in humanistic psychology that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s are those of [Carl Rogers](http://www.simplypsychology.org/carl-rogers.html) and [Abraham Maslow](http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html).

[**Cognitive Psychology**](http://www.simplypsychology.org/cognitive.html)



Psychology was institutionalized as a science in 1879 by [Wilhelm Wundt](http://www.simplypsychology.org/wundt.html) who found the first psychological laboratory.

His initiative was soon followed by other European and American Universities. These early laboratories, through experiments, explored areas such as memory and sensory perception, both of which Wundt believed to be closely related to physiological processes in the brain. The whole movement had evolved from the early philosophers, such as Aristotle and Plato. Today this approach is known as **Cognitive Psychology**.

**Cognitive Psychology** revolves around the notion that if we want to know what makes people tick then the way to do it is to figure out what processes are actually going on in their minds. In other words, psychologists from this perspective study cognition which is ‘the mental act or process by which knowledge is acquired.’

The cognitive perspective is concerned with “mental” functions such as [memory](http://www.simplypsychology.org/memory.html), [perception](http://www.simplypsychology.org/perception-theories.html), [attention](http://www.simplypsychology.org/attention-models.html) etc. It views people as being similar to **computers** in the way we process information (e.g. input-process-output). For example, both human brains and computers process information, store data and have input an output procedures. This had led cognitive psychologists to explain that memory comprises of three stages: encoding (where information is received and attended to), storage (where the information is retained) and retrieval (where the information is recalled).

It is an extremely [scientific approach](http://www.simplypsychology.org/science-psychology.html) and typically uses lab experiments to study human behavior. The cognitive approach has many applications including [cognitive therapy](http://www.simplypsychology.org/cognitive-therapy.html) and [eyewitness testimony](http://www.simplypsychology.org/eyewitness-testimony.html).

[**Biological Psychology**](http://www.simplypsychology.org/biological-psychology.html)



We can thank **Charles Darwin** (1859) for demonstrating in the idea that genetics and evolution play a role in influencing human behavior through [natural selection](http://www.simplypsychology.org/natural-selection.html).

Theorists in the biological perspective who study behavioral genomics consider how genes affect behavior. Now that the human genome is mapped, perhaps, we will someday understand more precisely how behavior is affected by the **DNA** we inherit. Biological factors such as chromosomes, hormones and the brain all have a significant influence on human behavior, for example gender.The **biological approach** believes that most behavior is inherited and has an adaptive (or **evolutionary**) function. For example, in the weeks immediately after the birth of a child, levels of testosterone in fathers drop by more than 30 per cent. This has an evolutionary function. Testosterone-deprived men are less likely to wander off in search of new mates to inseminate. They are also less aggressive, which is useful when there is a baby around.

**Biological psychologists** explain behaviors in neurological terms, i.e. the physiology and structure of the brain and how this influences behavior.  Many biological psychologists have concentrated on abnormal behavior and have tried to explain it.  For example biological psychologists believe that schizophrenia is affected by levels of dopamine (a neurotransmitter).

These findings have helped psychiatry take off and help relieve he symptoms of the [mental illness](http://www.simplypsychology.org/abnormal-psychology.html) through drugs. However Freud and other disciplines would argue that this just treats the symptoms and not the cause. This is where health psychologists take the finding that biological psychologists produce and look at the environmental factors that are involved to get a better picture.