

Fairfield Public Schools- Summer Work
AP Psychology

Behaviors, Mental Processes and You

How have your behaviors and mental processes been shaped?

Part I: Collage and Reflection

Background

The extent to which we are all influenced by our nature versus how we are nurtured is a long standing debate in the field of psychology. When analyzing the behavior and mental processes of individuals, psychologists carefully consider the impact that nature, which is the biological makeup of a person, and nurture, which is the social-cultural, environmental and psychological forces a person is exposed to. As a new student of psychology you should begin to consider the extent to which nature and nurture contributes to the behavior and mental processes that people engage in.

Task

You are to design a collage which reflects how your own biology, your psychological makeup and the social and cultural environment in which you grew up in and currently exist in have influenced and continue to shape your behaviors and mental processes. Your collage should be a reflection of who you are.

Process

1. Using the attached textbook page, for background on the origins of psychology and the nature and nurture debate. Of particular note for this assignment is biopsychosocial approach as that is the focus of the assignment.
2. Consider the behaviors you typically engage in. These could be hobbies, routines, interests. Then consider how you think about a variety of stimulus such as food, school, family, home, friends, television and so on. This list is truly endless but essentially you need to think about your thinking so just pick a few things to narrow it down.
3. Then consider the social-cultural and psychological influences in your life.
4. Find images, words, symbols, quotes, etc. that reflect your biological, psychological and social-cultural makeup. You should have at least 4-5 images for each category. Now cut them out so they look neat and pretty.
5. You can use the 8½ x 14 inch legal paper provided to make.
6. **Find a picture of yourself** and organize your cut outs by the three different approaches.

7. For each of the images you choose please include a short caption explaining the image and how it connects to the category: biological, psychological, or social-cultural.

8. Make an awesome collage with you in the center that demonstrates an accurate application of the biopsychosocial approach to understanding you. This collage needs to be museum quality work. Your job is to impress both your psychology teacher, who will give you the grade and your parents who will be so proud and happy when we point out your fabulous work on our walls.

Reflection

Type a reflection, no more than 2 pages double-spaced, size 12 font (Times New Roman) that explains how completing this assessment helped you to better understand your behaviors and mental processes. Essentially what did you learn about yourself? In addition, think about the growth you have made throughout high school and what are the most and least influential components of your biopsychosocial analysis.

Assessment Value

This assessment will be counted as 100 formative points so the equivalent of a quiz grade and since our quizzes will be hard you want to get all 100 points here.

Due Dates

Please be prepared to discuss your summer work on the first day your class meets.

Psychology's Three Main Levels of Analysis



What are psychology's levels of analysis and related perspectives?

Each of us is a complex system that is part of a larger social system. But each of us is also composed of smaller systems, such as our nervous system and body organs, which are composed of still smaller systems—cells, molecules, and atoms.

These tiered systems suggest different **levels of analysis**, which offer complementary outlooks. It's like explaining why horrific school shootings have occurred. Is it because the shooters have brain disorders or genetic tendencies that cause them to be violent? Because they have been rewarded for violent behavior? Because we, in the United States, live in a gun-promoting society that accepts violence? Such perspectives are complementary because "everything is related to everything else" (Brewer, 1996). Together, different levels of analysis form an integrated **biopsychosocial approach**, which considers the influences of biological, psychological, and social-cultural factors (FIGURE 2.1).

levels of analysis the differing complementary views, from biological to psychological to social-cultural, for analyzing any given phenomenon.

biopsychosocial approach an integrated approach that incorporates biological, psychological, and social-cultural levels of analysis.

Biological influences:

- natural selection of adaptive traits
- genetic predispositions responding to environment
- brain mechanisms
- hormonal influences

Psychological influences:

- learned fears and other learned expectations
- emotional responses
- cognitive processing and perceptual interpretations

Behavior or mental process

Social-cultural influences:

- presence of others
- cultural, societal, and family expectations
- peer and other group influences
- compelling models (such as in the media)

AP® Exam Tip

You will see versions of Figure 2.1 throughout the text. Spend some time right now familiarizing yourself with how the figure's three corners might contribute to behavior or mental processes, the very stuff of psychology.

Figure 2.1
Biopsychosocial approach This integrated viewpoint incorporates various levels of analysis and offers a more complete picture of any given behavior or mental process.

Each level provides a valuable vantage point for looking at a behavior or mental process, yet each by itself is incomplete. Like different academic disciplines, psychology's varied approaches, or perspectives, ask different questions and have their own limits. One perspective may stress the biological, psychological, or social-cultural level more than another, but the different perspectives described in **TABLE 2.1** on the next page complement one another. Consider, for example, how they shed light on anger.



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Views of anger How would each of psychology's levels of analysis explain what's going on here?

Table 2.1 Psychology's Approaches

Perspective	Focus	Sample Questions
<i>Behavioral</i>	How we learn observable responses	How do we learn to fear particular objects or situations? What is the most effective way to alter our behavior, say, to lose weight?
<i>Biological</i>	How the body and brain enable emotions, memories, and sensory experiences; how genes combine with environment to influence individual differences	How do pain messages travel from the hand to the brain? How is blood chemistry linked with moods and motives? To what extent are traits such as intelligence, personality, sexual orientation, and depression attributable to our genes? To our environment?
<i>Cognitive</i>	How we encode, process, store, and retrieve information	How do we use information in remembering? Reasoning? Solving problems?
<i>Evolutionary</i>	How the natural selection of traits has promoted the survival of genes	How does evolution influence behavior tendencies?
<i>Humanistic</i>	How we meet our needs for love and acceptance and achieve self-fulfillment	How can we work toward fulfilling our potential? How can we overcome barriers to our personal growth?
<i>Psychodynamic</i>	How behavior springs from unconscious drives and conflicts	How can someone's personality traits and disorders be explained by unfulfilled wishes and childhood traumas?
<i>Social-cultural</i>	How behavior and thinking vary across situations and cultures	How are we alike as members of one human family? How do we differ as products of our environment?

AP® Exam Tip

These perspectives will come up again and again throughout your AP® Psychology course, and they will be on the exam. You need to become very comfortable with the meaning of terms like cognitive, behavioral, and psychodynamic. Ask your teacher for clarification if you are the least bit unclear about what the perspectives mean.

behavioral psychology the scientific study of observable behavior, and its explanation by principles of learning.

biological psychology the scientific study of the links between biological (genetic, neural, hormonal) and psychological processes. (Some biological psychologists call themselves *behavioral neuroscientists*, *neuropsychologists*, *behavior geneticists*, *physiological psychologists*, or *biopsychologists*.)

- Someone working from the **behavioral** perspective might attempt to determine which external stimuli trigger angry responses or aggressive acts.
- Someone working from a **biological** perspective might study brain circuits that cause us to be “red in the face” and “hot under the collar,” or how heredity and experience influence our individual differences in temperament.
- Someone working from the **cognitive** perspective might study how our interpretation of a situation affects our anger and how our anger affects our thinking.
- Someone working from the **evolutionary** perspective might analyze how anger facilitated the survival of our ancestors’ genes.
- Someone working from the **humanistic** perspective (a historically important approach) might have been interested in understanding how angry feelings affect a person’s potential for growth. As we will see, modern-day *positive psychology* incorporates humanistic psychology’s emphasis on human flourishing.
- Someone working from the **psychodynamic** perspective (which evolved from Freud’s psychoanalysis) might view an outburst as an outlet for unconscious hostility.
- Someone working from the **social-cultural** perspective might explore how expressions of anger vary across cultural contexts.

The point to remember: Like two-dimensional views of a three-dimensional object, each of psychology’s perspectives is helpful. But each by itself fails to reveal the whole picture.

