

**Fairfield Public Schools- Summer Work**  
**AP Psychology**

**Behaviors, Mental Processes and You**

How have your behaviors and mental processes been shaped by your environment, your culture, and your biology?

**Collage with explanations**

**Background**

The extent to which we are all influenced by our nature, what's in your genes, versus nurture, what's in your environment, is a long standing debate in the field of psychology. When analyzing the behavior and mental processes of individuals, psychologists carefully consider the impact of the biological makeup of a person and 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 have contributed to your own personal development.

**Task**

You are to design a collage which reflects how you have been shaped by your **biological** make-up, your **psychological** makeup and the **social and cultural** environment in which you grew up and currently exist in. Your collage should show how your behaviors and mental processes have influenced and continue to shape who you are. You are showing how a psychologist applying the **bio-psycho-social approach** would explain your personality.

**Materials needed**

- 11 x 17 size poster or cardboard paper - NO BIGGER! We only have so much space.
- Photo of you to place in the center
- Magazines or online images
- Glue, scissors and markers
- Your typed explanations
- Any additional decor you want to add to your collage to make it stand out

**Process**

1. Read the attached textbook page for background on the origins of psychology and the nature and nurture debate. Of particular note for this assignment is the biopsychosocial approach.

2. Psychology is the study of behavior and mental processes. Consider the behaviors you typically engage in. These could be hobbies, routines, work, habits, activities with friends, etc. Then consider how you think about a variety of stimulus such as food, school, family, home, friends, television and so on.
3. Find images that reflect how your behavior and mental processes are shaped by your biological, psychological and social-cultural makeup. You **should have 4-5 images for each category**.
4. On your 11 x 17 poster place the photo of yourself in the center and organize your images by the three different approaches. Each category of approach should be clearly labeled and delineated from the other category. That means there should be a biological section with images pertaining to that, a psychological section with image pertaining to that and lastly a socio-cultural section.
5. 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. **See the section below on captions for more details and examples.**
6. 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.

### **Captions**

The captions for **each of your images** must be typed and at least 4-5 sentences in length. In your captions, explain **why** the specific image was chosen and **how** the image is a reflection of the biological, psychological, or social-cultural approach.

### **Student Examples:**

Social-Cultural: This is a picture of my varsity letter that I've earned for track and represents the impact that being on a team has had on my development. The team has served as a social influence for me because it gave me something to be part of and passionate about. The sport and my teammates have taught me a lot about hard work and grit. This team has served as a peer group that has shaped my development throughout adolescence.

Psychological: This is a picture of my desk, which is extremely cluttered and disorganized. It represents my usual disorganized way of thinking. I am usually pretty scattered in my thinking and struggle to stay focused. My desk is covered in papers that I have started and projects that need finishing. This highlights my psychological influences as my disorganized thinking is illustrated in my messy room.

Biological: This picture of a bed represents my need for sleep. I notice that I need to get a lot more sleep than my friends and cannot function on only four hours of sleep like they sometimes do. I prioritize sleep more than my friends do and I believe that my need to sleep is driven by my biological make-up. There is research to suggest that while there are averages regarding the amount of sleep needed, each person may be genetically geared toward needing a particular amount to function properly.

### **Assessment Value**

This assessment will be counted as 50 summative points which is approximately the equivalent of a quiz grade and since our quizzes will be hard you want to get all 50 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

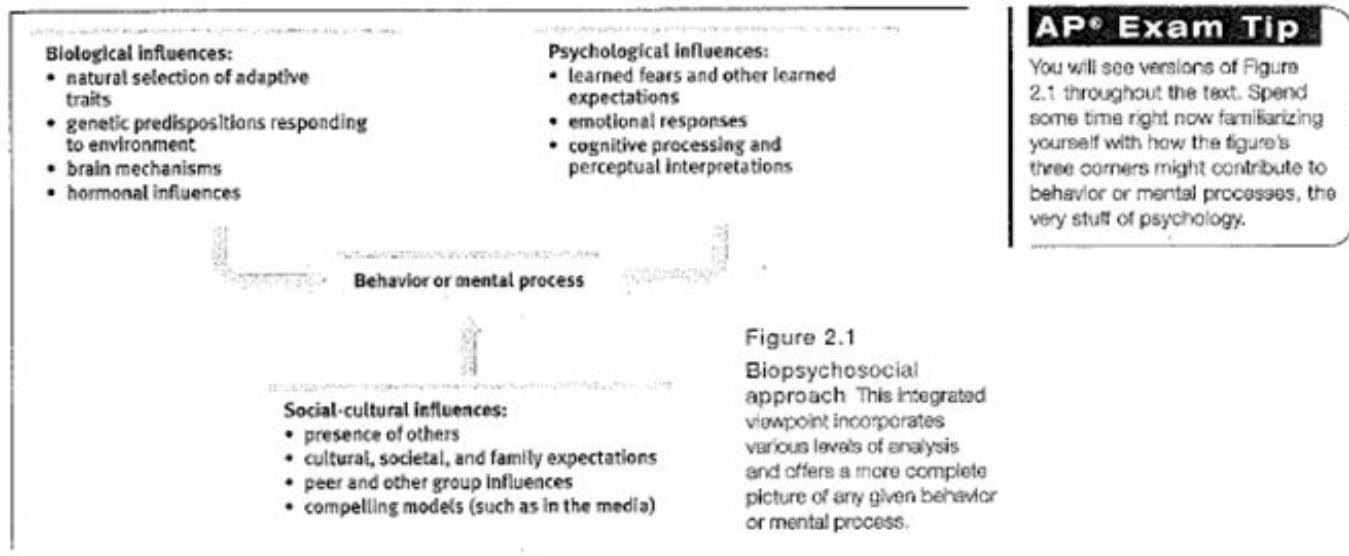
### What are psychology's levels of analysis and related perspectives?

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.



**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.



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
Behavioral	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?
Biological	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?
Cognitive	How we encode, process, store, and retrieve information	How do we use information in remembering? Reasoning? Solving problems?
Evolutionary	How the natural selection of traits has promoted the survival of genes	How does evolution influence behavior tendencies?
Humanistic	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?
Psychodynamic	How behavior springs from unconscious drives and conflicts	How can someone's personality traits and disorders be explained by unfulfilled wishes and childhood traumas?
Social-cultural	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.

- 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.

**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*.)

