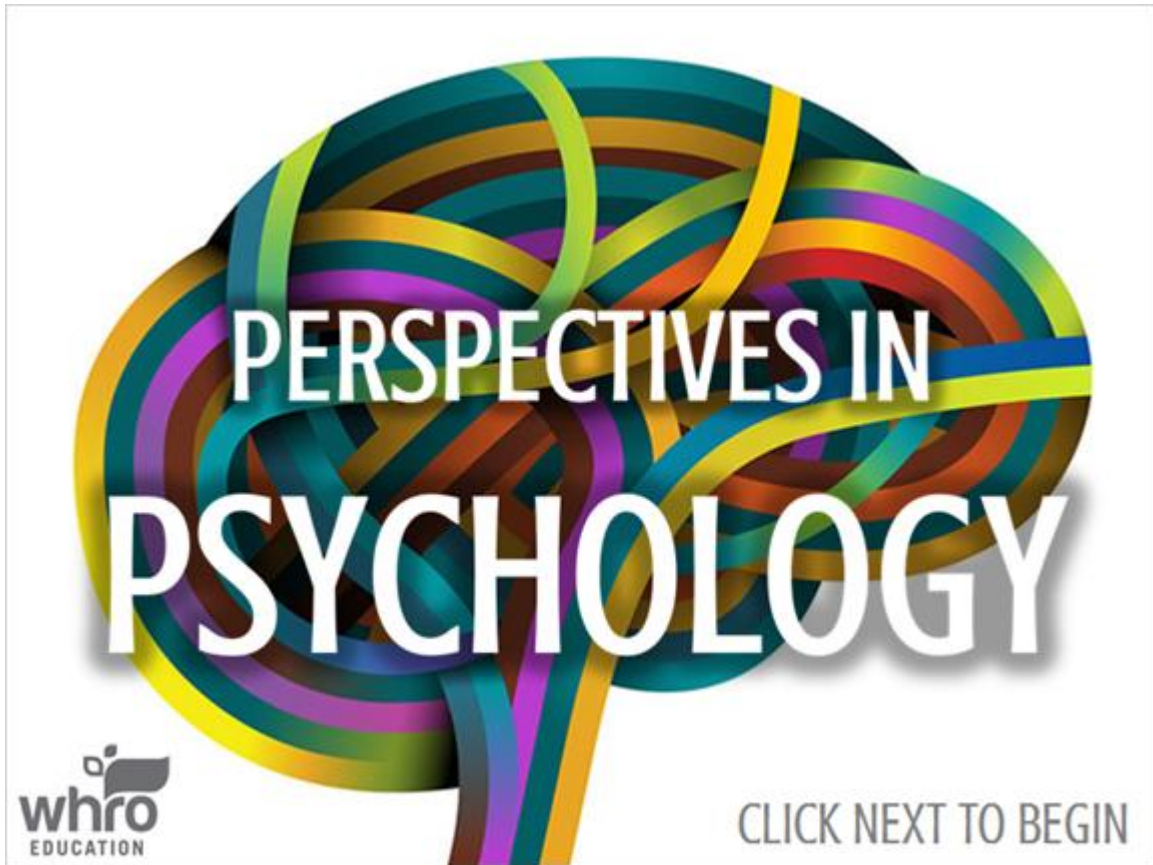


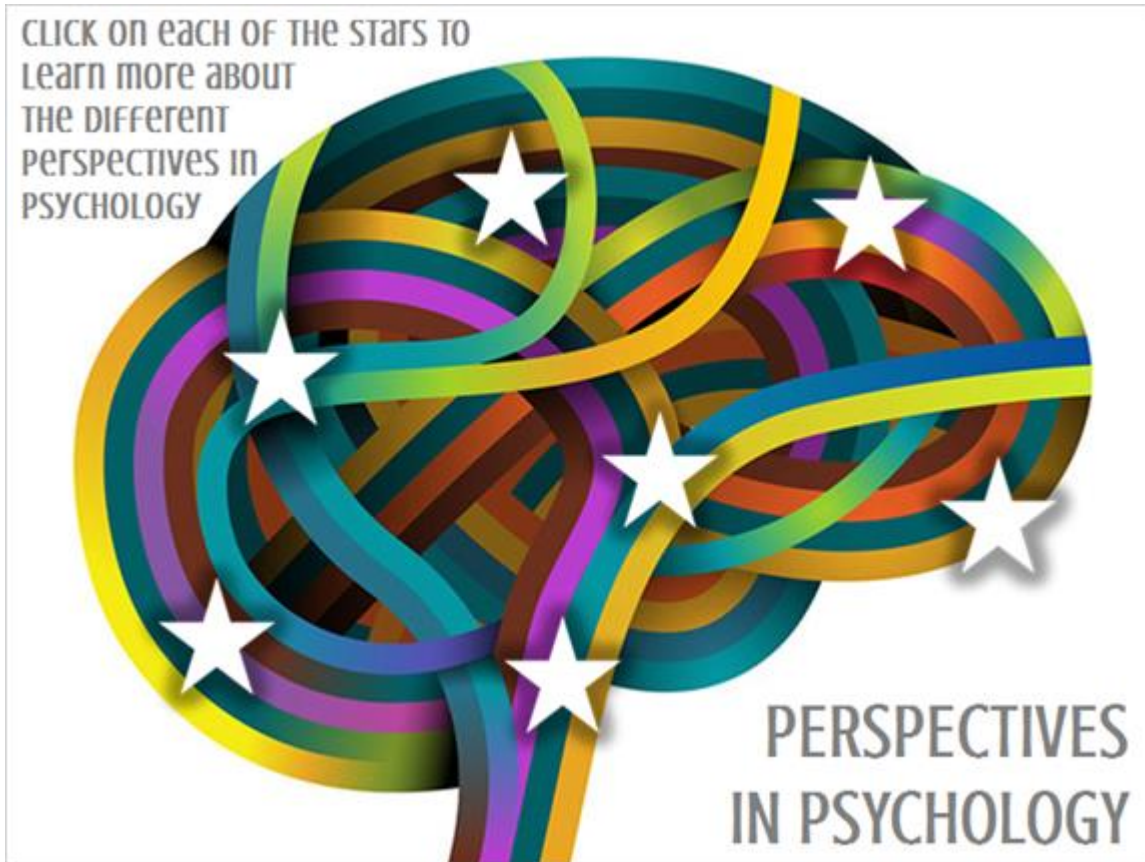
**Module 1: Introduction to Psychology**  
**Topic 2 Content: Perspectives in Psychology Notes**



**Perspectives in Psychology**

Click ***NEXT*** to begin.

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Not all psychologists view psychology in the same way. Click on each of the stars to learn more about the different perspectives in psychology.

# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

## Topic 2 Content: Perspectives in Psychology Notes

### Psychoanalytic Perspective



The psychoanalytic perspective is one of the earliest perspectives in psychology, and is most closely associated with Sigmund Freud and his followers, such as Carl Jung. These psychologists believed that much of human behavior is the result of either unconscious inner drives constantly in conflict or repressed emotions stemming from early childhood experiences.

Psychoanalytic theory asserts that the self, or psyche, can be divided into three parts: id, ego, and superego. The id is completely unconscious, and seeks to gain pleasure and avoid pain. The ego is the conscious self that tries to mediate between the id and the superego in determining what actions to take. The superego is one's conscience, a product of what society says is right, moral, or just. The psychoanalytic approach focuses on uncovering unconscious or repressed urges or traumas that might be causing emotional distress or destructive behaviors.

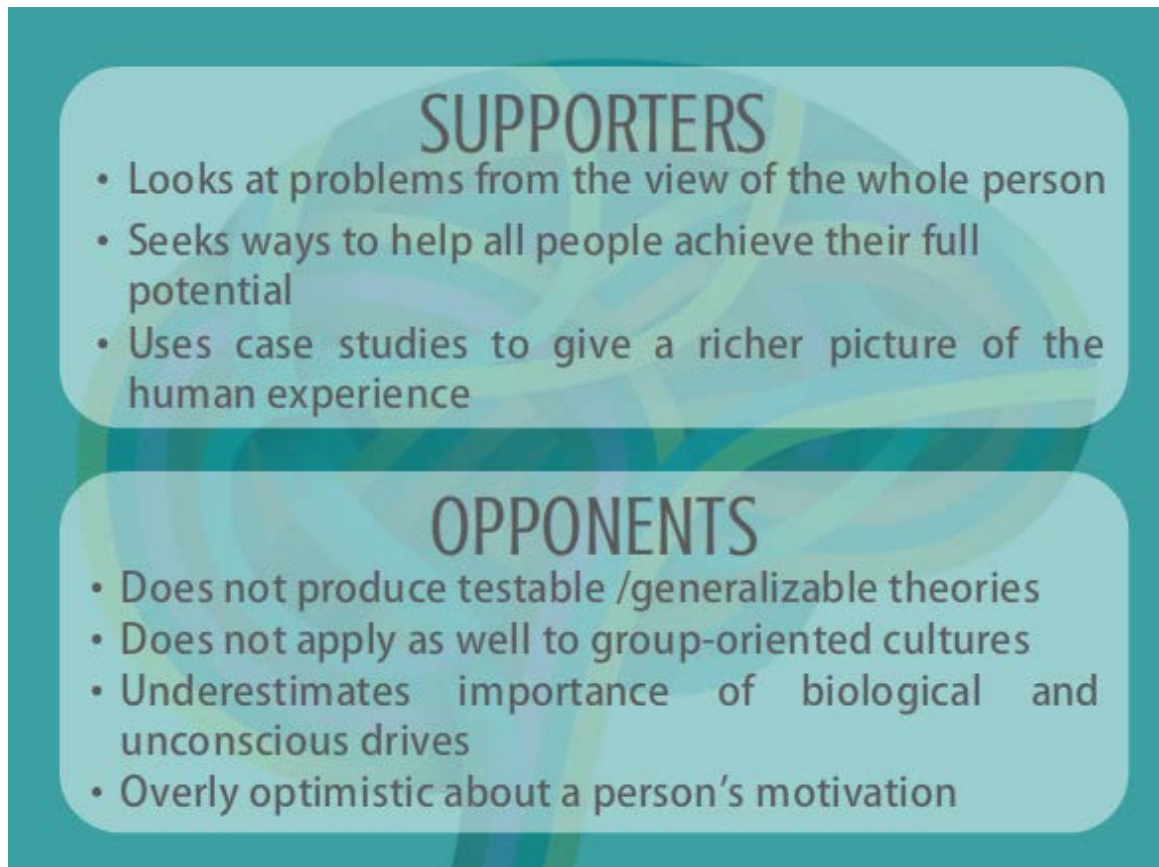
Supporters of the psychoanalytic perspective say that it highlights the ways in which the unconscious can influence behaviors. In addition, it helps demonstrate the importance of early childhood experiences on development.

Opponents of the psychoanalytic perspective say that it relies too much on case studies and does not produce many theories that are testable. In addition, they believe that it overemphasizes the influence of base drives and instincts, such as sexual desire, aggression, or cravings. While insights into one's past or unconscious desires will help resolve conflicts, but conflicts may remain even after being revealed.

## Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

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#### Humanistic Perspective



Humanists sought to take an approach that emphasized the importance of the whole person and his or her subjective experience, even if this prevented them from being able to make generalizable theories or experiments that could be replicated. Abraham Maslow and others assumed that humans are basically good and are motivated to reach their full potential.

Supporters of this perspective say that it looks at problems from the view of the whole person and seeks ways to help all people achieve their full potential rather than conforming to social norms. In addition, it uses case studies to give a richer picture of the human experience.

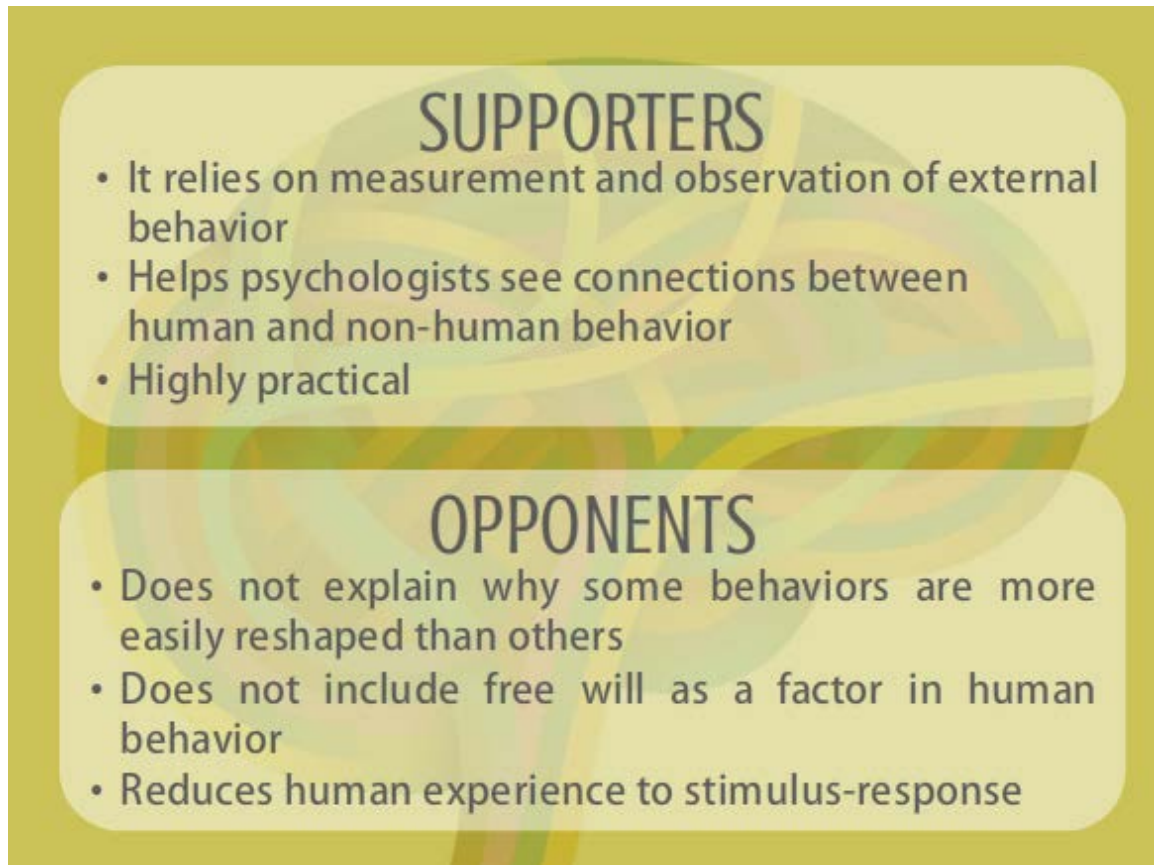
Opponents of the humanist perspective say that it does not produce many theories that are testable or generalizable. Also, it does not apply as well to group-oriented cultures as it does to individualistic, Western cultures. It underestimates the importance of biological and unconscious drives, and it may be overly optimistic about a person's motivation.



# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

## Topic 2 Content: Perspectives in Psychology Notes

### Behaviorist Perspective



The behaviorist perspective developed out of a desire to make psychology as scientific as possible. Many of the earlier approaches that had been used to investigate psychology were difficult to test reliably or scientifically. The earliest behaviorists, like John B. Watson and Ivan Pavlov, believed that emotions and thoughts were impossible to measure objectively, and so they decided to focus only on observable behaviors. Behaviorists believe that there are few, if any, important differences between how animals and humans learn. Behaviorists assume that humans are all born essentially as "blank slates," and that the external environment shapes one's experience.

According to behaviorists, you are more likely to repeat behaviors that are reinforced. Behaviorists seek not only to predict behavior but also to shape it, using rewards and punishments to increase positive behaviors and reduce or extinguish negative behaviors.

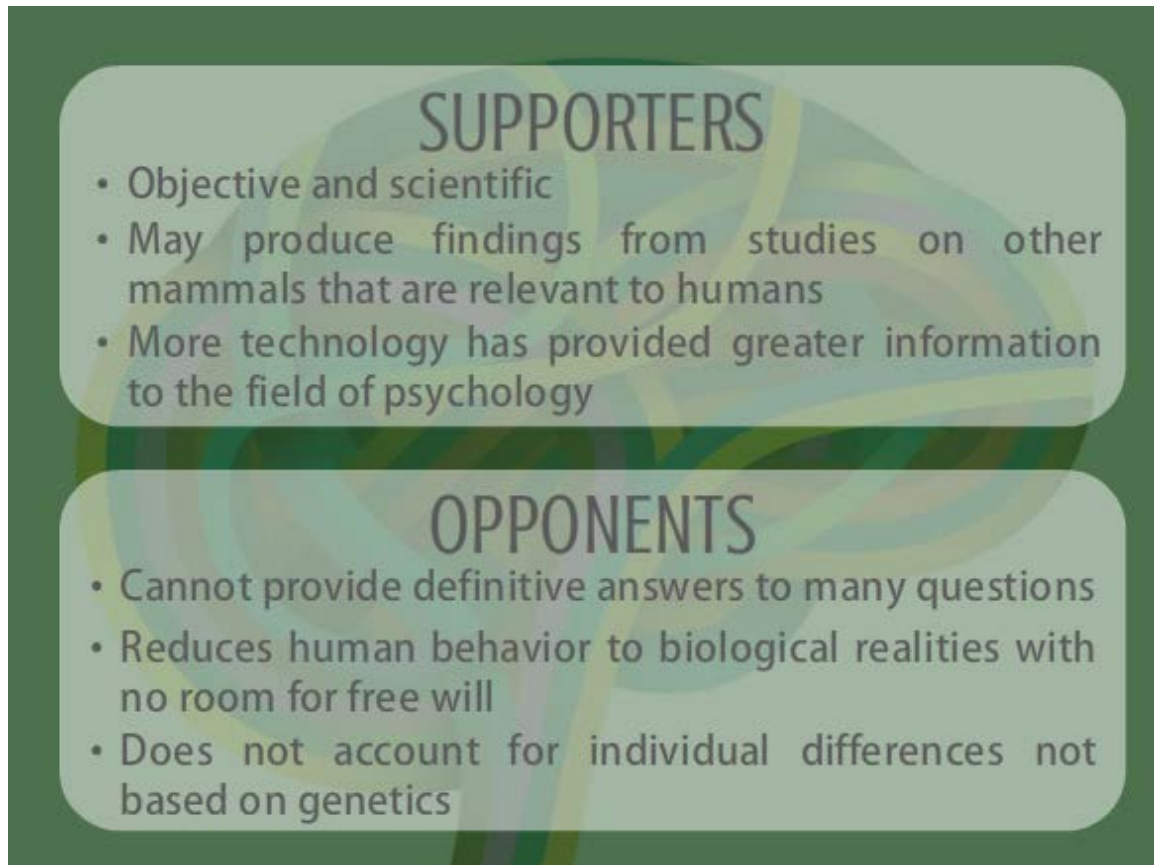
Supporters of the behaviorist perspective say that it relies on measurement and observation of external behavior. They believe that this helps psychologists see connections between human and non-human behavior. In addition, it is highly practical and helps teachers, therapists, and counselors promote positive behavior.

Opponents of the behaviorist perspective say that it does not explain why some behaviors are more easily reshaped than others. It also does not include free will as a factor in human behavior, which makes moral judgments difficult. In addition, it reduces human experience to stimulus-response.

# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

## Topic 2 Content: Perspectives in Psychology Notes

### Biological Perspective



The biological perspective has been present throughout the existence of psychology as a scientific field of study. This makes sense when you consider that although psychology seeks to explain behavior and mental processes, these all have to take place in real bodies and brains made up of genes, cells, and tissues that can be studied.

Genes and basic biology play an important role in human development, shaping not just physical bodies but behaviors and personality as well. In recent decades, scientific advancements, such as machines that scan brain activity, have allowed psychologists to objectively view what the brain is doing during certain tasks. This was impossible during the period in which behaviorists were dominant.

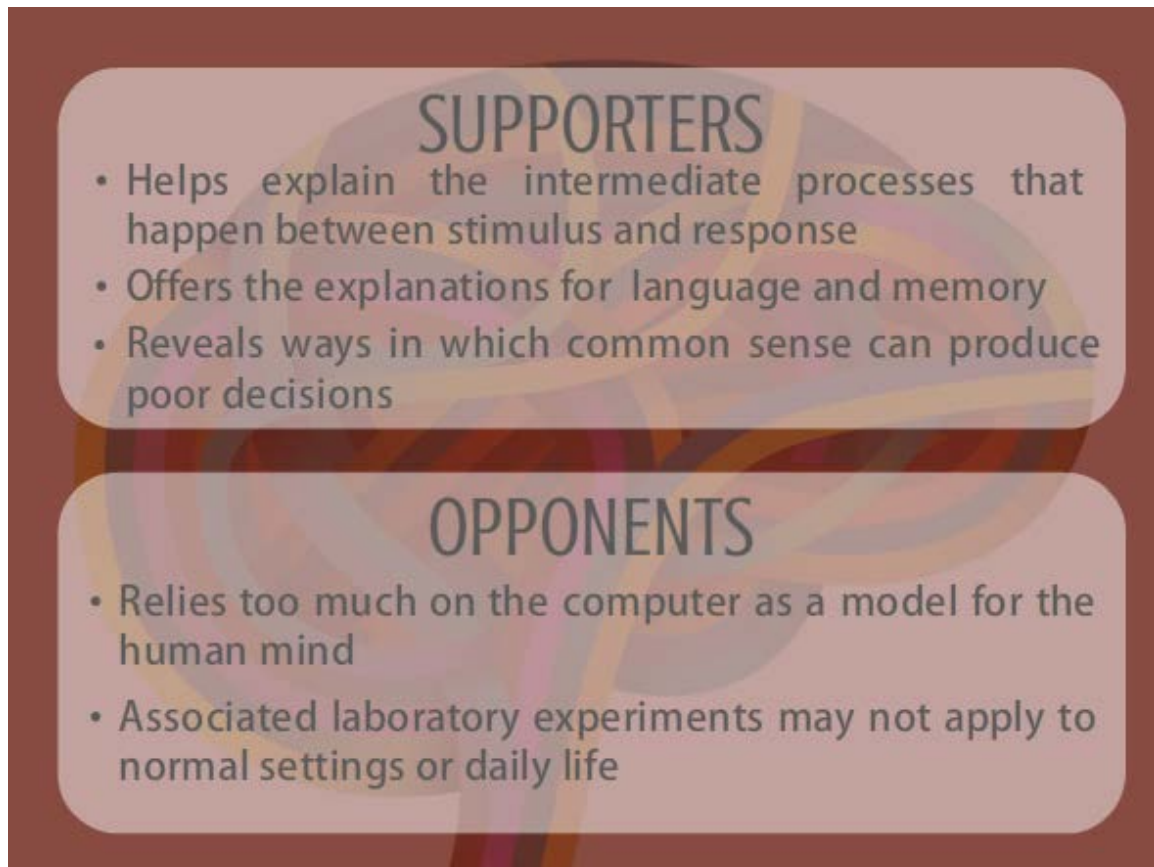
Supporters of this perspective say that it is objective and scientific, and may produce findings from studies on other mammals that are relevant to humans. Because it uses technology, such as brain scans, to answer questions that people have been unable to answer for centuries, it has provided greater information to the field of psychology.

Opponents of the biological perspective say that it cannot offer definitive answers to many questions, since genes do not determine all aspects of behavior. In addition, it reduces human behavior to biological realities with no room for free will, and it does not account for individual differences not based on genetics.

# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

## Topic 2 Content: Perspectives in Psychology Notes

### Cognitive Perspective



The cognitive perspective focuses on the internal processes of the mind, such as memory, problem solving, language, and decision making. Early psychology studies from the 1800s, such as those using introspection or memory, might now be viewed as being cognitive in their approach. In the 1920s, an early pioneer in child development, Jean Piaget, studied how young children develop increasingly cognitive abilities at different stages in their growth. The cognitive perspective came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, when the emergence of computers gave psychologists a way of describing human thought processes similar to how computers operated. The cognitive perspective has been utilized in several therapeutic approaches to discover the patterns of thinking that might be at the root of problems like depression or phobias. By training people to change negative patterns of thinking, cognitive psychologists seek to improve people's lives and decision making.

Supporters of the cognitive approach say that it helps explain the intermediate processes that happen between stimulus and response. In addition, this approach may offer the best explanations for important aspects of psychology, like language and memory. Supporters assert that the cognitive perspective reveals many ways in which common sense can produce poor decisions.

Opponents of the cognitive perspective say that it relies too much on the computer as a model for the human mind, and that associated laboratory experiments may not apply to normal settings or daily life.

# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

## Topic 2 Content: Perspectives in Psychology Notes

### Evolutionary Perspective



In some ways the evolutionary perspective might be viewed as part of the biological perspective. Still, the emphasis here is less on specific genes, cells, or brain functions and more on the process of evolution that might explain how and why certain patterns of behavior exist as they do. This perspective owes its existence to the theories of evolution first proposed by Charles Darwin. As you may remember, a group of early psychologists called functionalists were inspired by Darwin's theories to explore the ways that evolution helps explain the purpose of certain aspects of psychological experience.

Nowadays, those seeking to apply evolutionary theories to psychology call themselves evolutionary psychologists. Those who utilize this perspective view behaviors and thought processes as adaptive. Patterns of thinking and behaviors that helped your ancestors survive and reproduce, such as being scared of heights, have been passed down to the present generation. Patterns that did not help humans survive or reproduce, such as a desire to cuddle with snakes, are less likely to have been passed down.

Supporters of the evolutionary perspective believe that it helps understand possible reasons for patterns of behavior that might not make sense in modern society and that it can be applied more or less equally to all humans regardless of culture.

Opponents of this perspective say that it cannot be tested empirically, since the process of evolution cannot be replicated. In addition, it can seem to excuse behavior that is immoral in modern society, such as killing others to reduce competition for limited resources.



# Module 1: Introduction to Psychology

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### Sociocultural Perspective



The sociocultural perspective seeks to examine the important ways in which social settings and the culture in which a person is raised can affect his or her behavior and thought processes. This is an area of research that many studies often do not consider, as they assume that an individual's behaviors and patterns of thought will be the same, regardless of the situation.

Much of psychology has been developed and studied in Western (European and American) nations, so it is possible that some aspects of psychology that make sense in Western countries might not explain behaviors or thought processes equally well in non-Western societies. The sociocultural perspective reminds psychologists that it is important to keep in mind the ways that social settings and culture might influence behavior, thought patterns, and perceptions.

Supporters of the sociocultural perspective say that it helps psychologists view individuals as part of a larger system rather than an interchangeable unit. Also, it balances against the dangers of ethnocentrism, or the belief that one's own culture or ways of thinking and behaving, are superior to those of other cultures.

Opponents of the sociocultural perspective believe that it underemphasizes the importance of individual differences or character traits, and that it should fall in other fields of study, such as sociology or anthropology.