

Various Approaches in Psychology

Lecture 3
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Learning Objectives – Lecture 3

By the end of the lesson the learner should be able to:

- enumerate the salient approaches in psychology; and
- distinguish the approaches from the 'waves' or schools of psychology.

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Waves/Schools in Psychology Vs. Approaches in Psychology

- **Waves** – meta-theories that have persistent influence in the history of psychology; Basically, they also attempt to explain the underpinning factor in human behaviour (unconscious, response to stimuli, motivation, search for happiness and wellbeing).
- **Approaches** – include a focus or a perspective in the way cognitive, affective and behavioural factors are explained.
- **Note:** Often these two terms are used interchangeably!

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Cognitive Psychology

- **Cognitive Psychology** focuses on the mental processes – how the mind organises perceptions, processes information and interprets experiences - from observable phenomenon, and not as reported by the individual.
- It combines:
 - Behaviourism: stressing the objective, controlled laboratory studies focussing on the observable;
 - Gestalt: focussing on the active role of the mind in perception, processing information and interpreting experiences.

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Bio-psychological Perspective

- Stresses the relationship of physiological factors (nervous system, hormones, neurotransmitter) to mental and affective processes and behaviour.
- **Behavioural genetics** (a branch of Bio-psychological perspective) studies the effect of genes (heredity) on life-experiences;
- One major method of studying the genetic influence on behaviour: **TWIN STUDIES**.

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One classical question!

- Nurture or Nature?
- Environment or genes?
- Made or born?
- Nature: provides the potential (Genotype);
- Environment: triggers the potential (Phenotype)

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Evolutionary Psychology

Some basic principles of evolution in general:

- Organisms adapt themselves to the environment for survival – this happens through several generations;
- Availability of nutrients (food and water) and change in climatic conditions are the major factors in the environment that force adaptation;
- Adaptation provides a better advantage for survival;
- Organisms that are best adapted have better opportunity to survive (**survival of the fittest**);
- Organisms that have stronger adaptive genes have better opportunity to procreate (**natural selection**);
- The adaptations are passed from generation to generations (genetic influence);

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Evolutionary Psychology

- Is the human brain “hard-wired” for a certain behaviour?
- How does this behaviour contribute to the survival of the human species?
- Focuses on the evolution of human behaviour through natural selection.

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Socio-Cultural Perspective

- The psychological viewpoint that favours the scientific study of human behaviour in its socio-cultural context.
- **Cross-Cultural Psychology**: An approach that attempts to determine how far do research findings and psychological theories hold true across cultures.
- **Cultural Psychology**: an approach that studies how cultural factors affect human behaviour and cognitive and affective processes.

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Branches of Psychology: Specialisations

- **Developmental Psychology**: focuses on understanding life-long development of humans from childhood through adolescence and mid-life to later years.
- **Educational Psychology**: focuses on applying psychological principles in the context of education – improving teaching & learning;
- **Social Psychology**: focuses on people's behaviour in the society and its interaction with cognitive and affective processes;
- **Personality Psychology**: focuses on individual differences and enduring personal characteristics;
- **Comparative Psychology**: focuses on animal behaviour;

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Branches of Therapeutic Psychology Health Psychology

- **Clinical Psychology**: applies psychological principles to preventing, diagnosing and treating psychological disorder.
- **Psychiatry**: a field of medicine that diagnoses and treats psychological disorders by using medical and psychological interventions.
- **Counselling Psychology**: uses psychological principles in listening to and helping individuals deal with issues in daily life; less serious cases that don't need treatment by clinical psychologist or psychiatrist;
- **Psychotherapy**: similar to counselling but trained in a specific technique of therapy.
- **'Psychologist'**: a generic term - often one who focuses on research and might use some techniques for therapy.

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Professional Fields of Psychology Applied psychology

In addition to the above slide...

- **Industrial psychology**: applies psychological theories to improving performance and productivity in the work-place, focusing also on wellbeing of all.
- **Forensic psychology**: applies psychological theories and interventions in investigating and preventing crime.
- **Sport psychology**: applies psychological principles to help amateur and professional athletes improve performance.
- **Engineering psychology**: applies psychological theories to designing equipment and buildings.

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