

Lecture Two:

Psychological Approaches continued

Recap: Lecture one

Psychological approaches

- Behaviourist
 - Focuses on the role of the external environment in governing our actions
 - Watson, Skinner, Pavlov
- Psychodynamic
 - Focuses on the forces within the personality that motivate behaviour
 - Freud

Lecture two outline

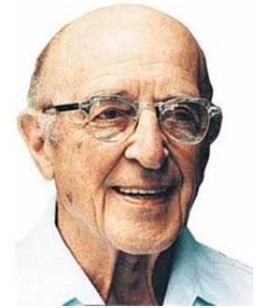
- Psychological approaches continued
 - Humanistic
 - Cognitive
 - Social Constructionist
 - Evolutionary
 - Biological
- Where do these approaches fit in psychology?

The Humanistic Approach





The Humanistic Approach



- Term 'humanistic psychology – Cohen (1958) – British psychologist
- Grew during 1960s
- Key names: **Abraham Maslow** and **Carl Rogers**
- Challenged the deterministic nature of both the psychodynamic and behaviourist perspectives
- Who people are and what they do is not determined...
 - by internal drives (Freud)
 - by the environment (Watson, Skinner...)
 - Freud considered too negative
 - Behaviourist approach considered too mechanistic

The Humanistic Approach

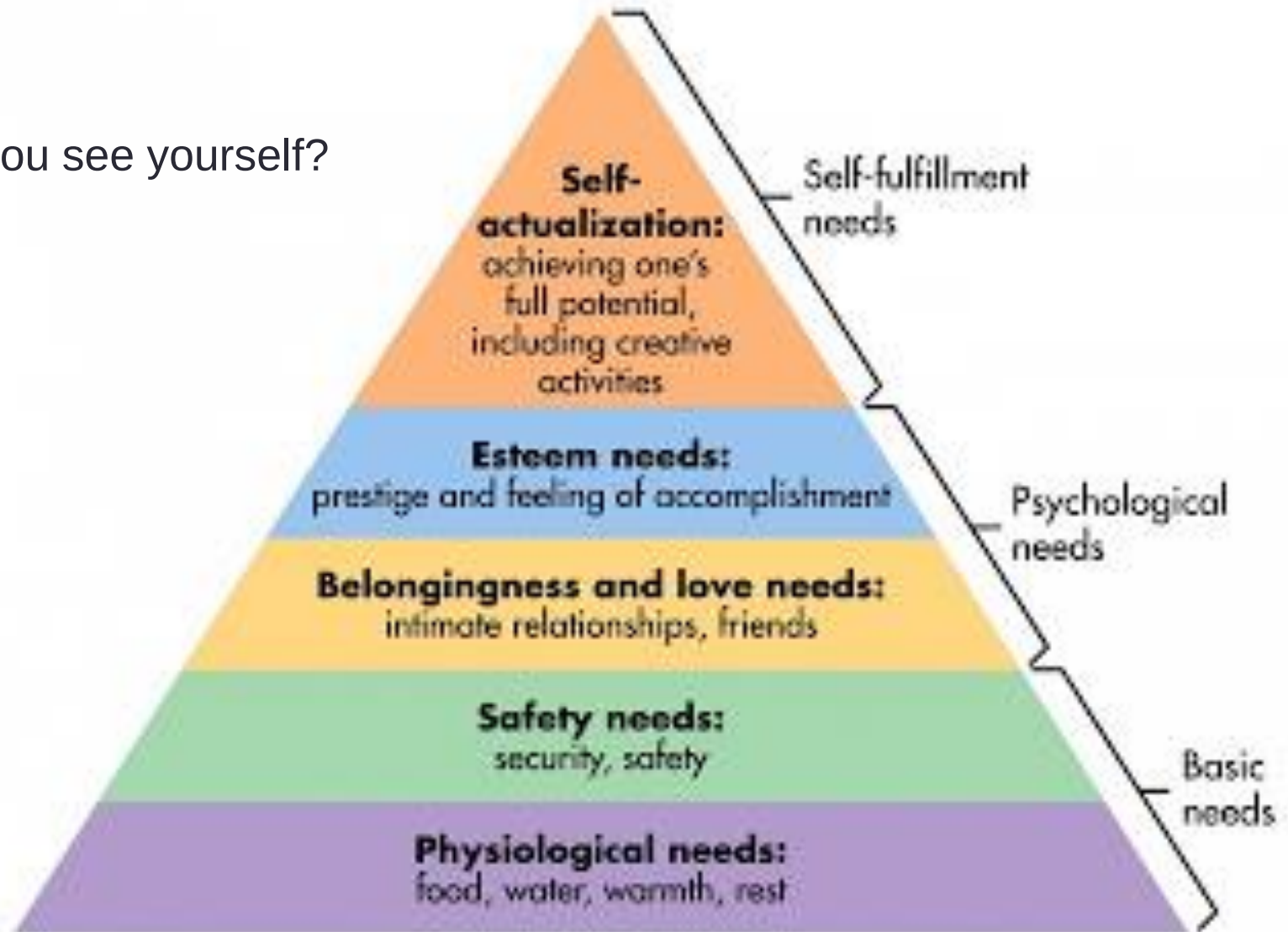
- Emphasises the need to understand 'the whole person'
 - Brings together elements of psychodynamic and behavioural approaches
- Belief in free will, choice, and agency: people's ability to choose how they act
- Innate tendencies towards growth
- Behaviour must be understood from a person's subjective experience
 - It is the person's perception of reality that is important not reality itself

The Humanistic Approach

- Maslow – Self-actualisation and the Hierarchy of needs
- Rogers – Actualising tendency
- Humans have a basic desire to grow, develop and enhance themselves.

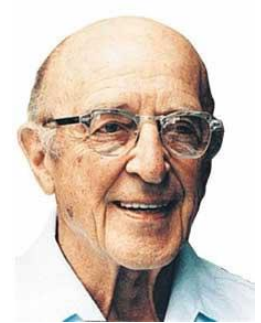
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Where do you see yourself?



The Humanistic Approach in real-life

- Carl Rogers proposed that we:
 - Create and live in our own worlds
 - Have a unique perception of the world
- Our own **perception** of external reality shapes our lives
- Sense of self – “an organised, consistent gestalt, constantly in the process of forming and reforming” (Rogers, 1959)
- Gestalt Psychology: ‘The whole is greater than, and often very different from, the sum of its parts’



‘Gestalt’ = a structure/pattern of phenomena that are so integrated as to constitute a functional unit. It is a product of this integration rather than any individual part/s

The Humanistic Approach in real-life

- Central to Roger's theory – 'the self'
- "An organized and consistent set of perceptions and beliefs about oneself"
- Consistency not always achieved – self-image may differ from the image held by others

e.g.

You are a good student, but consider yourself a failure

This is **incongruence**

The Humanistic Approach in real-life

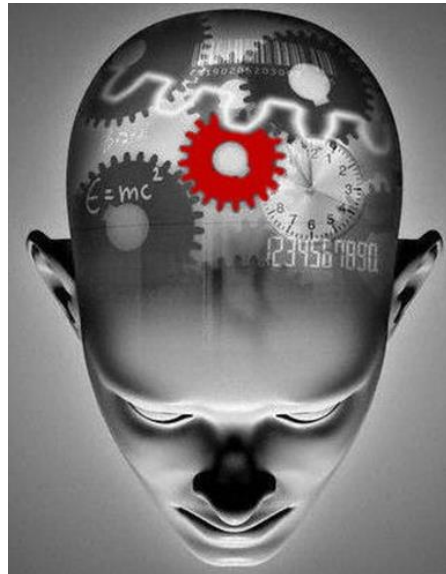
- Rogers – **person-centred therapy** (was 'client-centred therapy')
- Life problems stem from:
 - Inability to accept own feelings and experiences
 - Belief that in order to obtain love and acceptance, have to feel and behave in distorted or dishonest ways - denying part of the self
- Understood as **conditional positive regard**
- Results in the development of **conditions of worth**
- Therapist needs to create conditions of **unconditional positive regard** (non-judgemental - to value the person for who they really are)
- Allows freedom to move towards self-actualisation

Evaluation of Humanism

- Not considered a comprehensive theory of personality, but it can contribute to the therapeutic tool box
- Difficult to test empirically many concepts of Humanism
 - e.g. self-actualisation – naming it is descriptive, but does not provide an explanation for the origins of personality (nominal fallacy)
- + Highlights the individual as active and constructive, rather than as a passive product – the self has choice, free will, agency, responsibility

Change is possible

THE COGNITIVE APPROACH

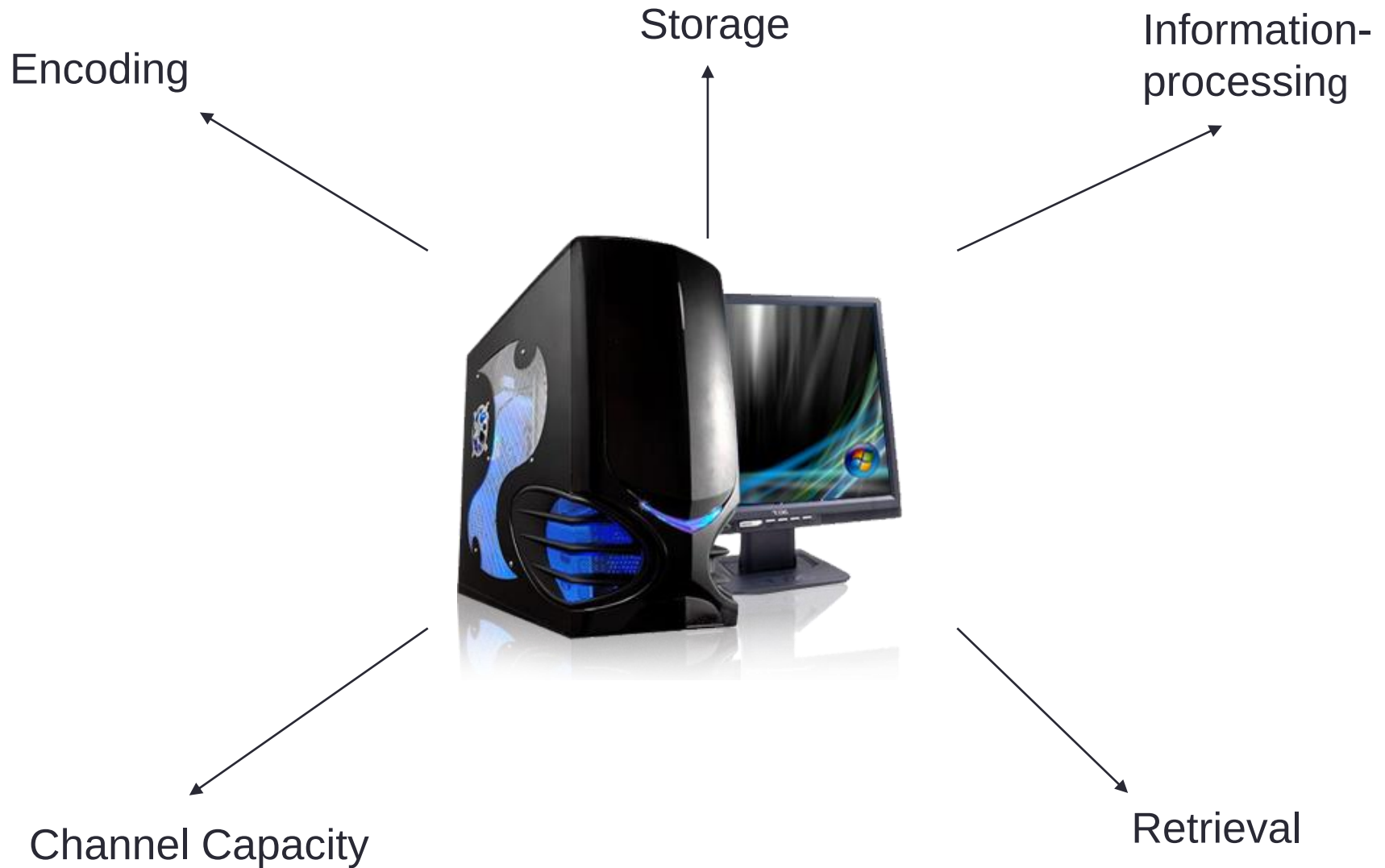


The Cognitive Approach

- The mind as an information processing system
 - The use of analogies and metaphors when trying to explain how the brain works
- Huge influence on many areas of psychology but no one major theory/theorist
 - Social learning theory (Bandura)
 - Social cognition
 - Cognitive development
- Channel Capacity: Most of our cognitive systems are 'capacity-limited'.



The Cognitive approach - Analogies



What does cognitive psychology focus upon?

- **Attention**

Selectively focusing on particular stimulus element, typically those deemed most significant

- Models of attention based on information processing approach
- Models have developed along with developments in computer technology

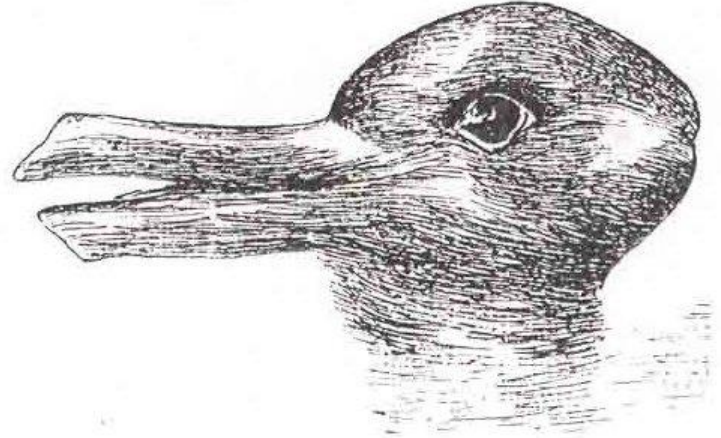
- **Memory (and forgetting)**

Different types of memory identified

- Memory seen as information processing system
- Focus on computer analogies of storage, encoding and retrieval

- **Perception**

- How we organise and interpret sensory information



- Top-down v Bottom-up Information Processing approach

Top-down: breaking down of a system to learn about how the component parts operate

Bottom-up: piecing together systems to create an overarching system

- Marr's computational theory of object recognition – bottom up processing
 - series of representations with increasing detail

The Cognitive approach in real-life

Counselling & Psychotherapy

- Cognitive model = an information-processing model of psychopathology
- Cognitive errors result from a relatively stable set of cognitive structures that contain dysfunctional beliefs

Rational Emotive Therapy (Ellis, 1955)

- First form of behaviourally oriented cognitive therapy
- To change a client's maladaptive thought processes on which maladaptive emotional responses and behaviours depend

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

- Addresses both maladaptive thoughts and related behaviours

Cognitive Neuropsychology

- Explores functioning in individuals with acquired cognitive deficits (brain damage) to better understand cognitive processes

Evaluation of the Cognitive Approach

- + The computer analogy has helped psychologists understand how we process information and how it can be disrupted
- Specific models of information processing address very specific aspects of mental processes – no one all encompassing theory
- Nomothetic view – assumption that models apply to each person equally - but individual differences impact upon the efficacy of the models
- Rationality? Do humans always reason with absolute rationality and predictability? Information processing models - insight rather than explanation?



THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH

The Social Constructionist approach

- Challenged mainstream psychology
- Role of environment
- “A theory of knowledge concerned with how social phenomena develop in particular social settings. Research focuses on uncovering how individuals and groups participate in creating what they perceive as social reality”



The Social Constructionist approach

- Understanding of the world - not objective reality but constructed through social processes and interactions
- Language is important in constructing a particular cultural world
e.g. Gender is a social construction

Tuffin (2005):

- If something is socially constructed it does not mean it is not real
- Meanings result from the ways in which they are talked about or responded to
- Knowledge is constructed whenever topics are discovered, labelled or talked about

Assumptions of social constructionism

- A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge – no objective ‘reality’
- Historical and cultural specificity – how we commonly understand our world



- Knowledge - sustained by social processes
- ‘Truth’ - constructed via everyday interactions
- Knowledge and social action – different constructions invite different action
e.g. ‘man’, ‘woman’, immigrant’, ‘war’, ‘education’, music....

(Burr, 2003)

The Social Constructionist Approach

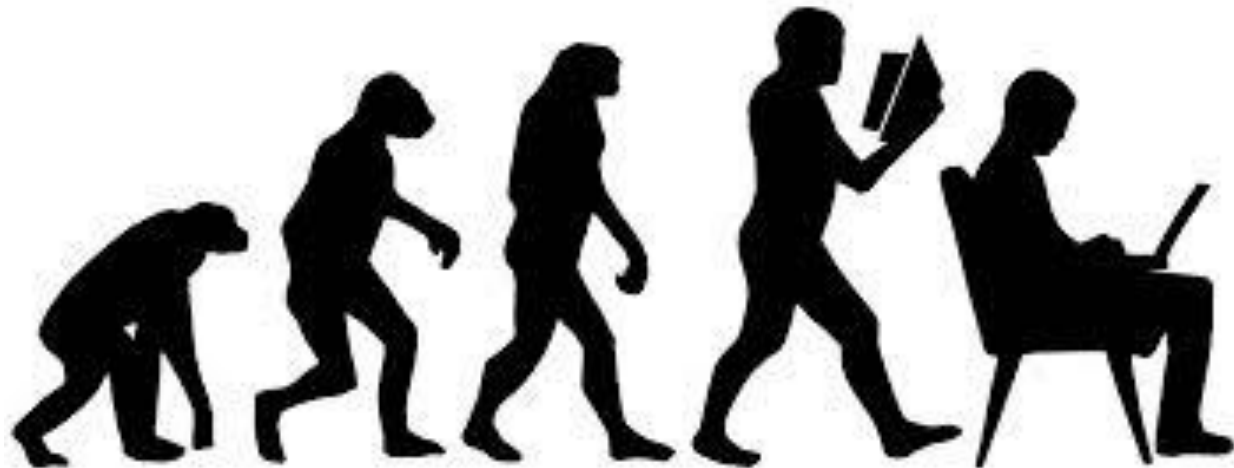
- Social constructionism - all knowledge is historically and culturally specific
 - Social, political and economic factors
 - Psychological theories - time and culture bound
 - A focus on lab-based behaviour (..... validity?)



The Social Constructionist Approach

- Social Representations Theory (Moscovici, 1961; 1976; 1984)
- Within the social constructionist tradition
 - Explanations for human behaviour explained by interactions between people
 - Understanding of social world by way of images and social representations shared by members of that group
 - Social representations
 - shared understandings within a social group
 - common-sense thinking e.g. mental illness ('madness', Jodelet, 1991)
- Mainstream psychology seeks to identify overall rules/laws/processes
- SRT emphasises groups/culture/society

THE EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH



The Evolutionary approach

- Derived from sociobiology & Darwinism
 - Natural selection
 - Humans are animals
- Influence of mind as mediator between genes and behaviour
- Human social behaviour understood in terms of its basis in past survival and reproduction
- The mind – specialised modules (mechanisms) resulting from natural selection
- Problems usually faced through emotions e.g. anger, fear, lust.
 - mechanisms plus emotions = human nature



The Evolutionary approach

Violence – the result of past contributions to
obtaining resources, status and females
Best potential father?



Violence amongst females?



Fear – an adaptive response to threatening stimuli “fight or flight response”

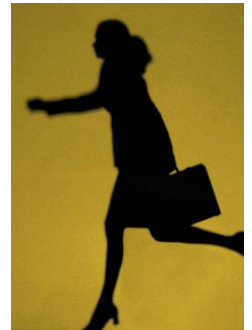
Anxiety and the stress response:

Harmful effects of modern-day stress is due to
“fight or flight” now being an inappropriate
physiological response?

The Evolutionary approach

Why is the flight or fight response often an inappropriate modern day response?

- Work stress:
 - Implications of “running away” from source of fear or stress?
- Implications of “fighting” source of fear or stress?



The Evolutionary approach - Evaluation

- 'Predispositions', not 'causes' – less deterministic?
- Recognition that not every behaviour is an adaptation to environment
- Recognition that EP provides a contribution not an answer

BUT

- It is difficult to determine how current thinking processes have evolved from the past, as present thought influences how we interpret the past

THE BIOLOGICAL APPROACH



The Biological Approach

- Assumption that behaviour is caused by activity in the nervous system of the body, particularly in the brain.
- Many biopsychologists also agree that the development of the brain is (somewhat) determined by the genes a person inherits.

Key areas of study include:

- Aggression
- Memory
- Learning
- Emotion
- Language



The Biological Approach

- The biological perspective has grown considerably in recent years
 - Technology to study the brain & nervous system
- **Positron emission tomography (PET)**
 - an imaging technique that produces a three-dimensional image or picture of functional processes in the body
- **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)**
 - radiologists used MRI techniques to visualise internal structures of the body in detail (magnetic fields, radio waves)
- **Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)**
 - can allow researcher to visualise directly how information is being processed by areas of the brain (monitors blood flow)

Genetics & twin studies

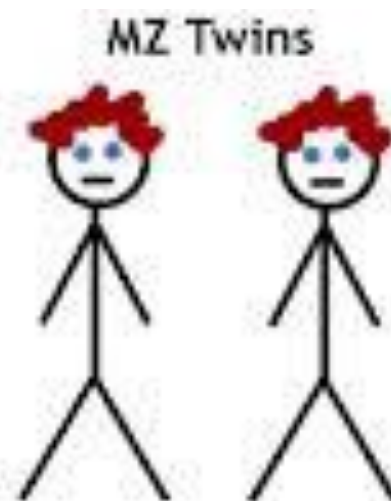
Allow for varying environments and genetic make up
monzygotic(identical) (MZ) and dizygotic (non-identical) (DZ) twins



Different DNA
Same Environment

If intelligence is the **same** it
must be due to the **environment**.

If intelligence is **different** it
must be due to **genetics**.



Same DNA
Different Environment

If intelligence is the **same** it
must be due to **genetics**.

If intelligence is **different** it
must be due to the **environment**.

Biological approach - Evaluation

- + High scientific rigour
- + Applications include well supported treatments

BUT

- Reductionist approach – reduces humanity to chemical and neurological processes
- Deterministic – behaviour is primarily determined by biology – cause and effect
- Minimises the influence of environmental stimuli

Consider - How do these different approaches explain specific behaviours?

Behaviourist

Psychodynamic

Humanistic

Social constructionist

Evolutionary

Biological



Take notes when you read

What does each have in common with another/others? (e.g. perhaps more than one is deterministic or reductionist....)

What are the key differences? (e.g. major focus, explanations of the basis of humanity, method, influence of the social world....)

- All offer explanations of human behaviour
- Some are more defined/led by particular theorists than others
- Some are better at explaining particular elements of behaviour than others
- May share common elements with each other or be incongruent
- Always consider the approach taken by theorists and researchers

Where can you find these theoretical approaches?

- Behaviourism:
 - Learning, memory, forgetting, language development, gender development, abnormal psychology
- Psychodynamic:
 - Motivation, sleep & dreams, attachment, gender development, aggression, personality, abnormal psychology
- Humanism:
 - Motivation, personality, attachment, stress & coping
- Cognitive:
 - Memory, attention, perception, attitudes, intelligence, abnormal psychology
- Social constructionism:
 - Language & moral development, attitudes, feminist psychology
- Evolutionary Psychology:
 - Gender development, aggression, emotion, stress & coping

Reading

Gross, R. D. (2010). *Psychology: The science of mind and behaviour*. (6th ed)
London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Passer, M., Smith, R., Holt, N., Bremner, A., Sutherland, E., & Vlieg, M. (2009).
Psychology: The science of mind and behaviour (European Edition). London:
McGraw-Hill.

- Make clear notes on these approaches.
- Be prepared to discuss theories in the seminar

Avoidance of seminars: a BAD idea that you are highly likely to regret