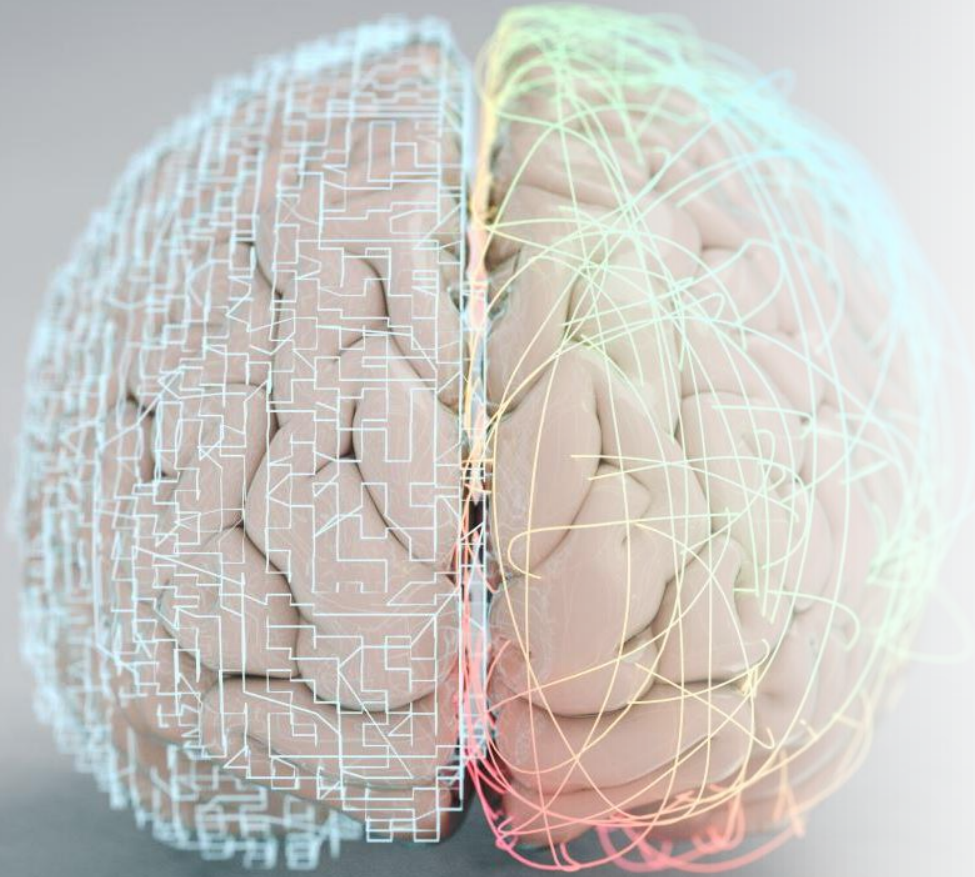




Conceptual and Historical Issues in Psychology

Dr Kate Williams

Session Outline:



Module Structure, Overview, and Assessment



Mind map activity: What is Psychology?



Definition and Goals of Psychology – Psychology as a Science



Applications of Psychology and Career routes



Approaches in Psychology



Essential Reading

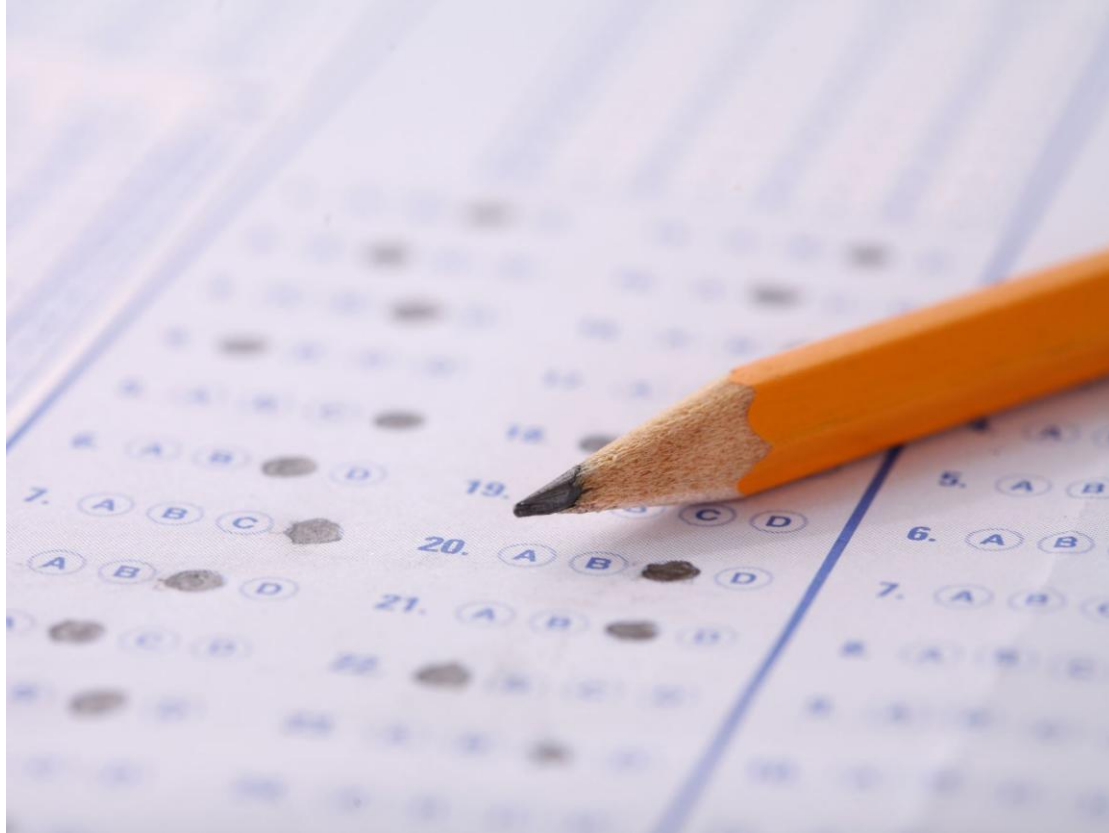
See Online Leganto Reading List on Module Moodle page in Module Information tile

- Gross, R. (2020).
 - *Psychology: the science of mind and behaviour.*
 - **Available online.**
- Holt, N., Bremner, A., Sutherland, E., Vliek, M., Passer, M. W., & Smith, R. E. (2024).
 - *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour.*



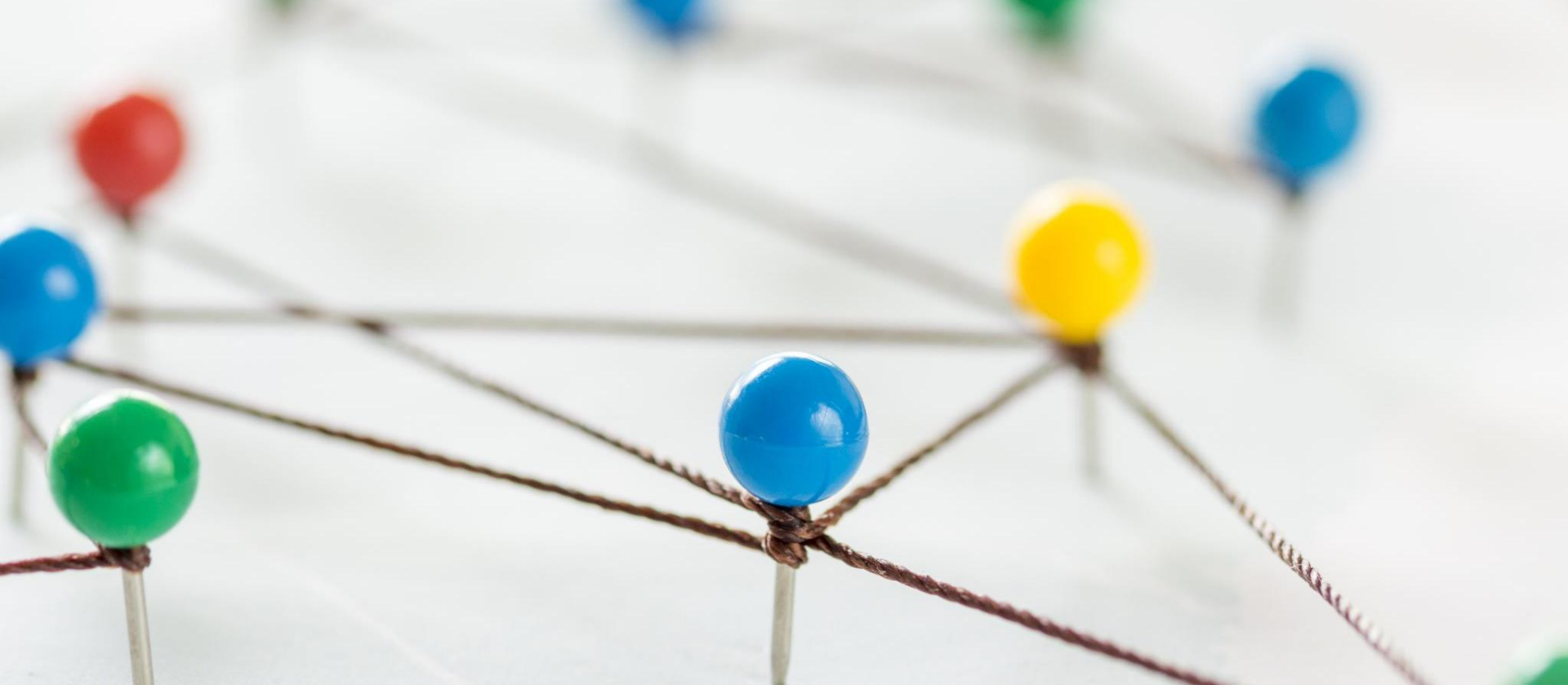
Module Structure

Review on
moodle



Module Assessments

Review on
moodle



Mind Map Activity

- Work in groups to create a mind map to answer this question:
- **What is Psychology?**

Defining Psychology



Psychology is the **scientific study of the mind and behaviour**



Seeks to understand how we think, feel, and act; individually and in groups



Word psychology
derived from Greek:

Psyche: soul/mind

Logos: to study

Defining Psychology



Behaviour:

Actions/responses we directly observe



Mind:

**Internal states and processes
(thoughts) - cannot be directly seen**



**Workings of mind inferred from
observable and measured responses**



Goals of Psychology

1. Describe

Systematically observe and record behaviour and describe it in clear/precise manner.

Involves answering "what" of behaviour.

2. Understand

Go beyond description and explain *why* behaviour occurs.

Involves identifying causes or factors that contribute to particular behaviour.

3. Predict

Determine conditions under which behaviour is likely to occur.

Involves using gathered information to forecast future behaviors.

4. Influence

To prevent or control through its causes, undesirable behaviour and promote positive outcomes.

5. Apply

Apply principles of psychological knowledge in ways to enhance welfare.



Interactive Task: What would a Psychologist do?

- A colleague keeps checking their phone during a work meeting.
- In your groups, discuss how a psychologist would:
 - Describe this behaviour
 - Understand this behaviour
 - Predict this behaviour
 - Influence this behaviour
 - Apply knowledge to improve the situation

To do this, Psychology is seen as a Science!

But what do we mean by Science?

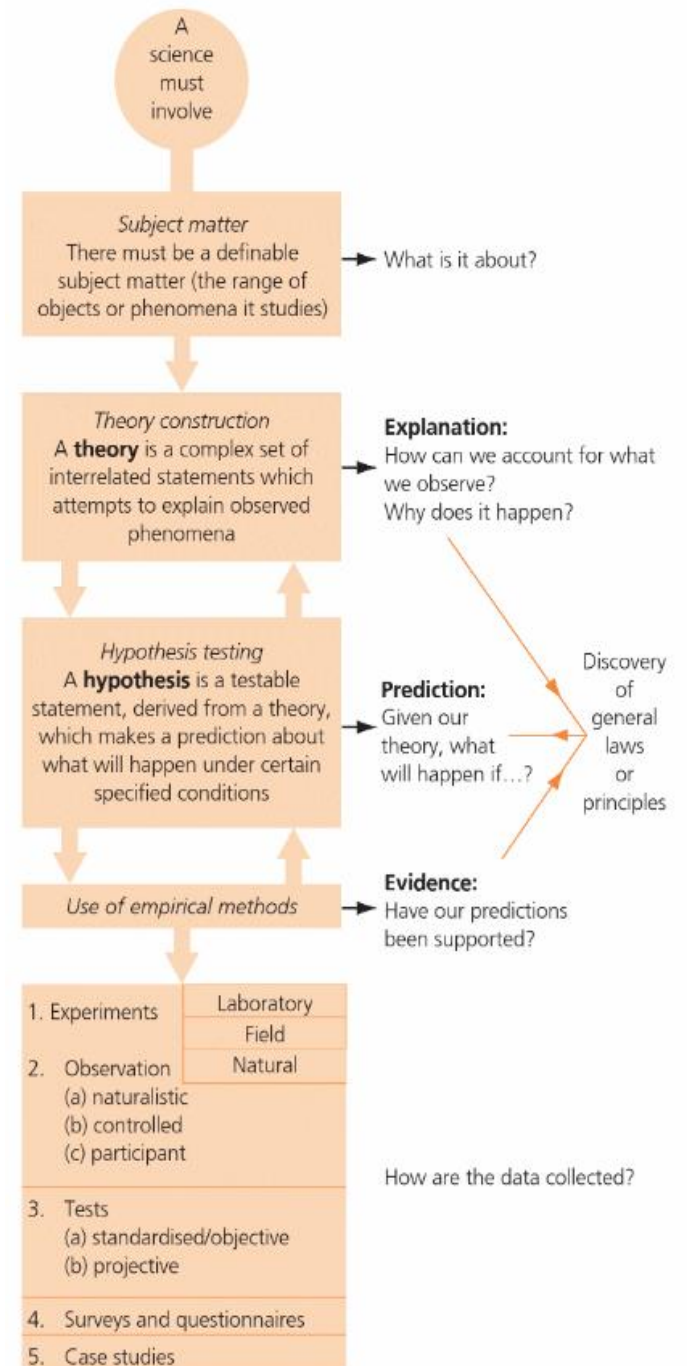
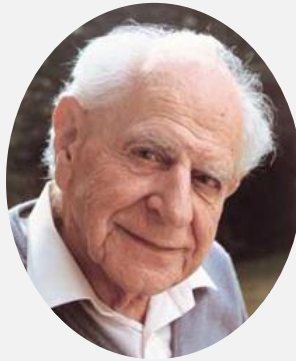


Figure 3.7 A summary of the major features of a science

Key characteristic of scientific theory is that it is.....



Falsifiable:

deductive standard of evaluation introduced by philosopher Karl **Popper** *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*



Theory or hypothesis is falsifiable if it can be logically contradicted by an empirical test.....



Empirical:

based on, concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic



Psychology involves thinking critically – What does this mean?

Information must be evaluated:

- What is being presented?
- What is the evidence?
- Are there other explanations?
- What is a reasonable conclusion?
- Why should we believe the information?

Psychology as a Science



Can be broadly categorised into two main branches:
1.) Basic (pure) Science and 2.) Applied Science.



Both contribute to our understanding of human behaviour in different ways.



Basic science focuses on exploration and understanding of fundamental principles or theories.



Applied science uses basic research findings to address real-world issues and solve practical problems.

Basic Science in Psychology

Example - Robber's Cave Study:

Conducted by Muzafer Sherif et al. (1954)

Aimed to understand intergroup conflict and cooperation.

Involved dividing group of boys into two separate groups, fostering competition and hostility between them, and then attempting to reduce tensions and promote cooperation.

Contribution to Basic Science:

Revealed insights into nature of group dynamics, conflict resolution, and formation of social identity.

Contributed to understanding social psychology principles, such as in-group/out-group dynamics and role of competition in shaping intergroup relations.

Applied Science in Psychology

Example - Jigsaw Classroom:

- Developed by Aronson et al. (1978) - intervention in education.
- Involves dividing classroom into small, diverse groups, with each member responsible for mastering one aspect of material.
- Students collaborate to share knowledge and complete overall learning task.

Contribution to Applied Science:

- Addresses issues such as prejudice, discrimination, and lack of cooperation by promoting interdependence among students and fostering positive intergroup relations.
- Has been shown to reduce stereotypes and improve academic performance and social skills.

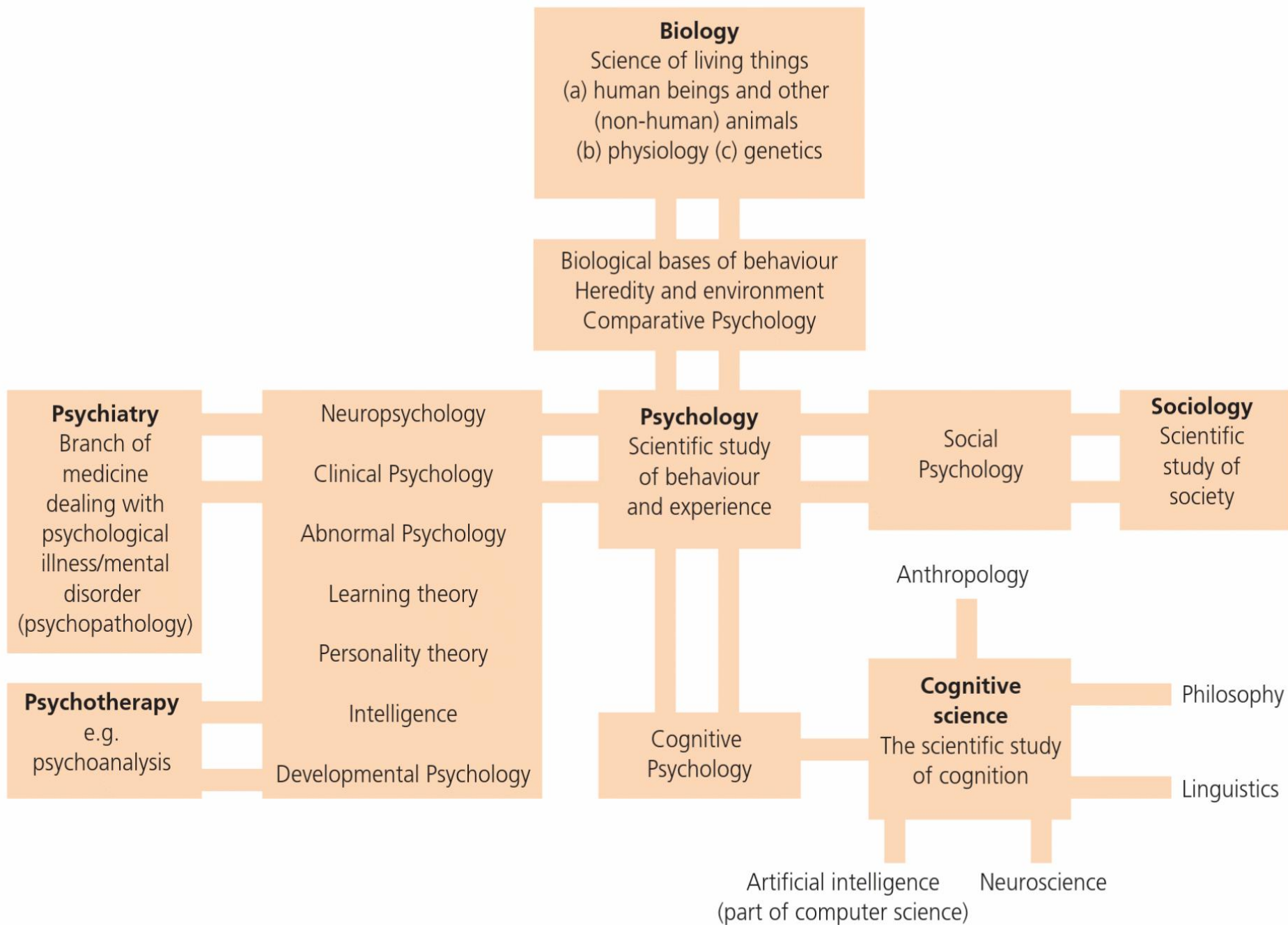
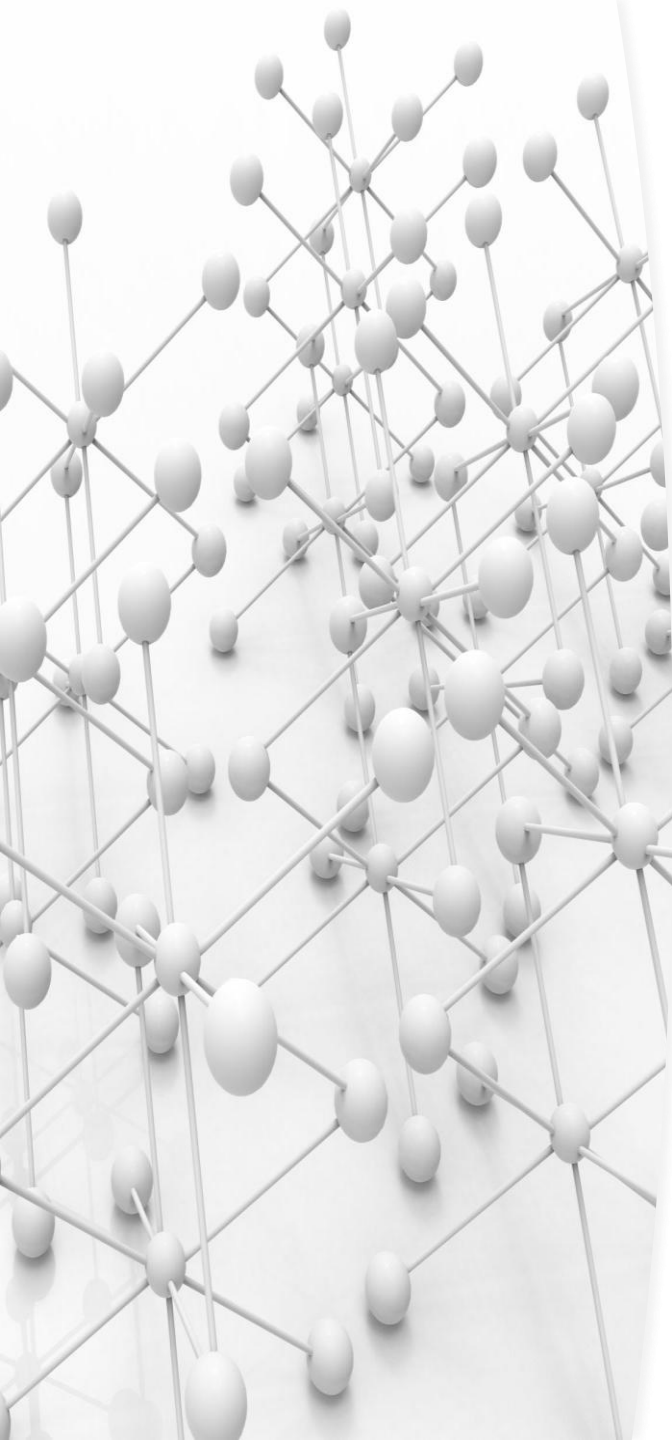


Figure 1.2 The relationship between Psychology and other scientific disciplines



Contemporary Challenges

Interdisciplinary Nature:

- Increased collaboration with other disciplines.
- Integrating diverse perspectives poses conceptual challenges
- But also enriches field by fostering holistic understanding of human behaviour.

Cultural Considerations:

- Issues of cultural bias, diversity, and universality of psychological principles are essential considerations in modern research and practice.

Applications of Psychology



Clinical and Counselling Psychology: Diagnosing and treating those with mental health concerns and providing therapy to individuals and groups.



Educational Psychology: Studying how people learn and developing methods to enhance educational experiences.



Industrial-Organizational Psychology: Applying psychological principles to the workplace to improve productivity, morale, and employee well-being.



Health Psychology: Investigating psychological factors influencing health and illness.



Sports Psychology: Enhancing athletic performance and addressing psychological aspects of sports and exercise.



Forensic Psychology: Applying knowledge and expertise to various legal contexts, working with both the criminal and civil justice systems.

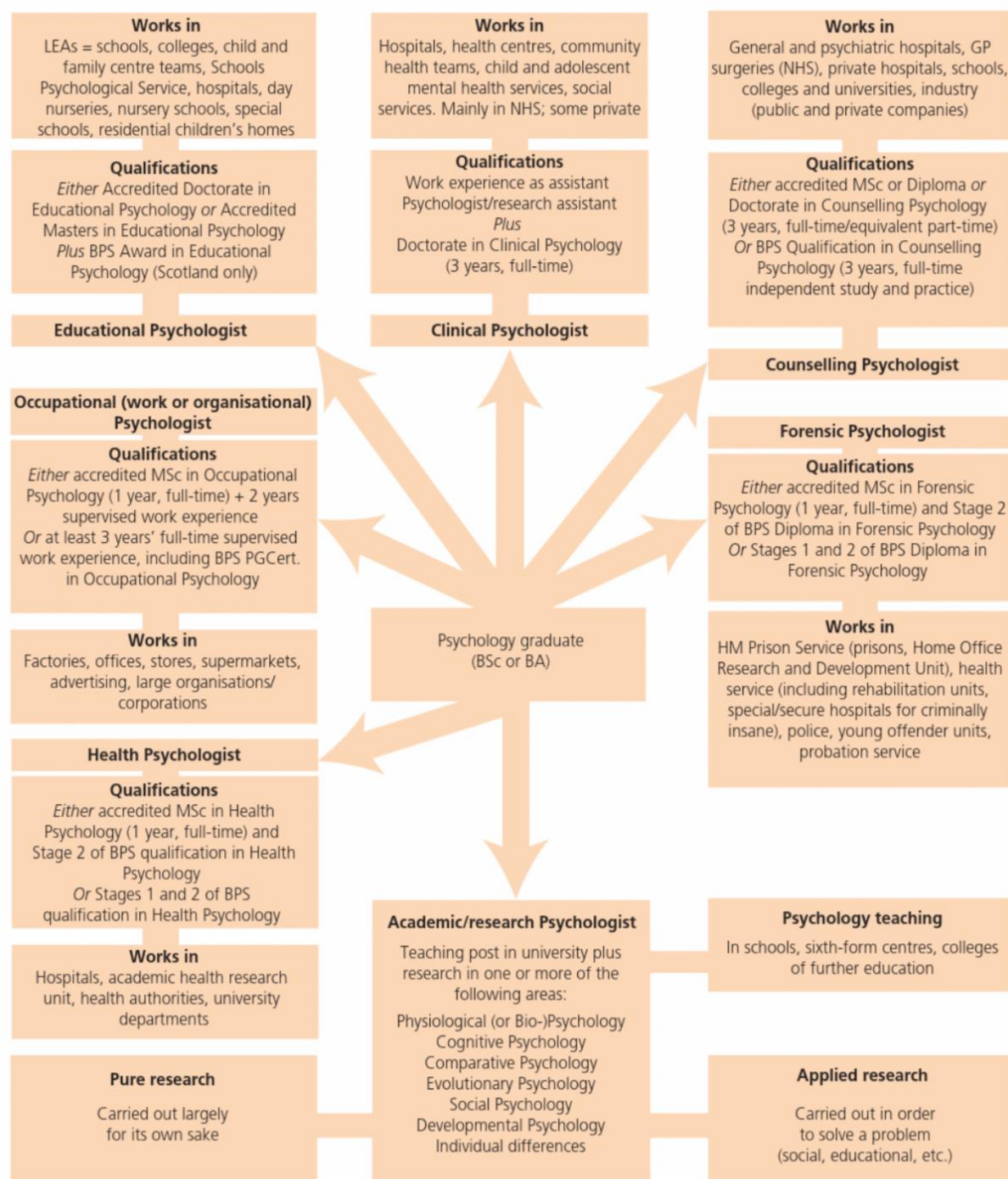
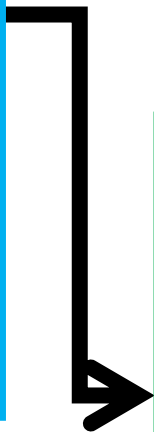


Figure 1.4 Some of the main areas of academic and applied Psychology open to Psychology graduates

Psychology Career Interactive Group Task

In your groups, pick a Psychology Career from the following options:

- **Clinical**
- **Counselling**
- **Forensic**
- **Health**
- **Educational**
- **Sport**



For the chosen career discover the following:

- What does this psychologist do?
- Who do they work with?
- Why might that role be interesting?

Chartership in Psychology



The
British
Psychological
Society

- Professionals who have achieved chartered status through recognised professional body in psychology.
- In UK, title **Chartered Psychologist** is granted by the British Psychological Society (BPS).
- Attainment indicates they have met key educational and professional criteria, demonstrating high level of competence and ethical practice in their field.



BPS accredit Psychology courses to ensure standards of quality and graduates are well-prepared for further training or employment in psychology-related fields.

Core areas covered in BPS-accredited courses include:

- **Biological Psychology**
- **Cognitive Psychology**
- **Developmental Psychology**
- **Social Psychology**
- **Individual Differences**
- **Research Methods and Statistics**
- **Conceptual and Historical Issues in Psychology**



Theoretical Approaches in Psychology

- The field of Psychology encompasses range of theoretical approaches
- Seek to understand and explain human behaviour, cognition (thought), and emotion
- Often serve as lens to analyse and interpret data



Theoretical Approaches in Psychology



Psychologists make different assumptions about what aspects of a person should be the focus of study.



This helps determine an underlying model/image of what people are like.



This determines a view of psychological functioning, nature of development, methods of study, major cause(s) of disorders, and methods/goals of treatment.



A theoretical approach is a perspective that is not as clearly outlined as a theory, instead....



Theoretical Approaches in Psychology

"Provides a general orientation to a view of humankind. We see people as operating according to these basic principles and therefore see explanations of human behaviour as needing to be set within these limits and with these principles understood."
(Coolican et al., 1996)

Theoretical Approaches in Psychology

Many major approaches include two or more distinguishable theories.

Basic principles and assumptions are shared within an approach to give them distinct identity.

Overview of major theoretical approaches in Psychology

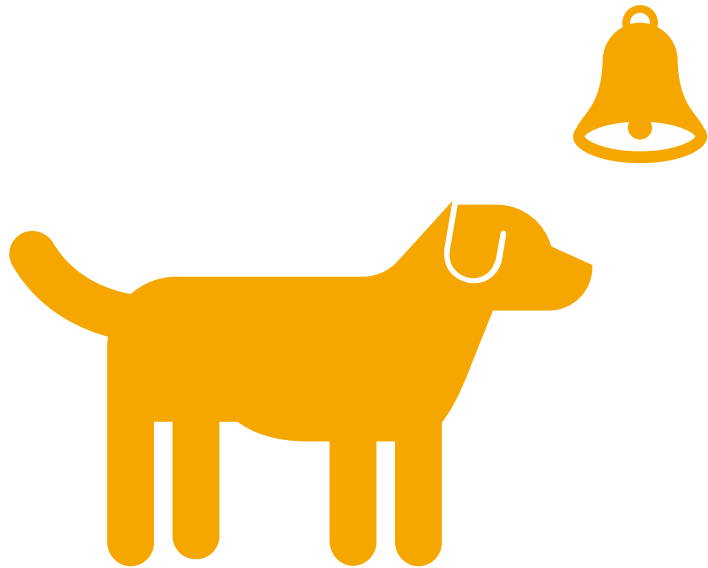
- 1. Biopsychological**
- 2. Behaviourist**
- 3. Psychodynamic**
- 4. Humanistic**
- 5. Cognitive**
- 6. Social-Constructionist**
- 7. Evolutionary**





Biopsychological:

- **Focus:**
 - Examines biological basis of behaviour and mental processes.
- **Key Concepts:**
 - Genetics, neuroscience, hormones, and impact of brain on behaviour.



Behaviourist:

- **Focus:**
 - Emphasises observable behaviour and environmental factors that influence it.
- **Key Concepts:**
 - Conditioning (classical and operant), reinforcement, punishment, and stimuli-response associations.



Psychodynamic:

- **Focus:**

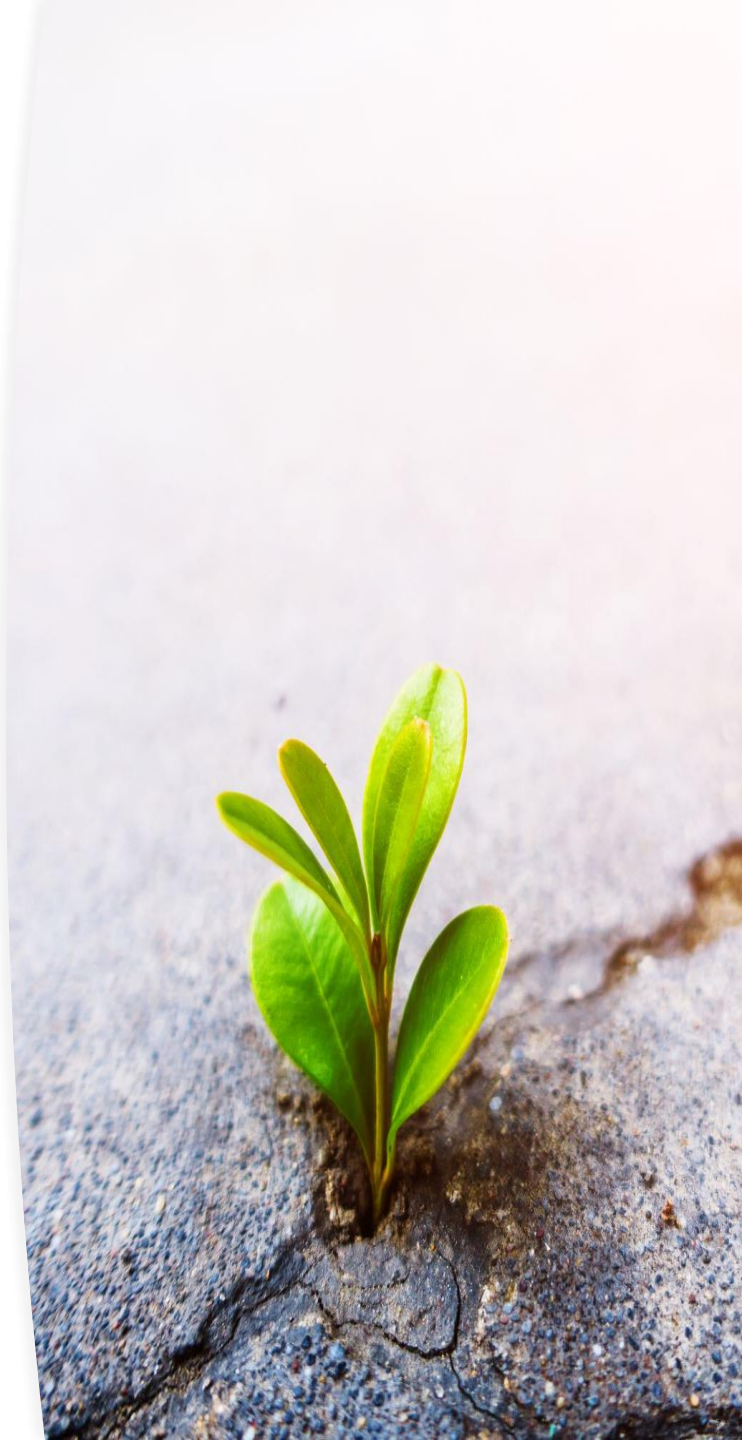
- Developed by Freud: explores unconscious processes and unresolved conflicts as determinants of behaviour.

- **Key Concepts:**

- Role of unconscious mind, psychosexual development, and the importance of early childhood experiences.

Humanistic:

- **Focus:**
 - Stresses importance of personal growth, self-actualisation, and pursuit of one's potential.
- **Key Concepts:**
 - Self-concept, self-esteem, and idea that individuals strive for personal fulfillment.





Cognitive:

- **Focus:**

- Investigates mental processes, (attention, perception, memory, problem-solving, decision-making).

- **Key Concepts:**

- Information processing, cognitive schemas, and role of mental structures in shaping behaviour.

Social Constructionist:

- **Focus:**
 - Examines how cultural and social factors influence behaviour and mental processes.
- **Key Concepts:**
 - Cultural norms, societal expectations, group dynamics, and impact of social institutions.



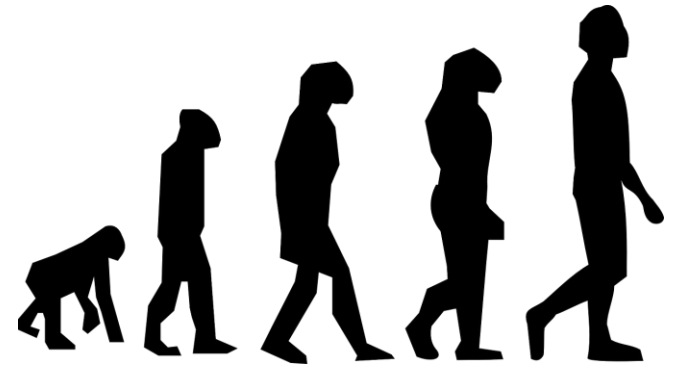
Evolutionary:

- **Focus:**

- Investigates how natural selection and evolutionary processes have shaped human behaviour and cognition.

- **Key Concepts:**

- Adaptive behaviours, reproductive success, and role of evolutionary history in psychological traits.



Guess the Approach - Interactive Group Activity

- **Scenario:**
 - A student develops a fear of presentations after a bad experience.
- In your groups decide how each of the following approaches would explain this:
 - Behaviourist
 - Cognitive
 - Psychodynamic
 - Biopsychological

Summary of major themes



As a Science, Psychology is **empirical** - Examines direct observation over intuition to attain knowledge



Despite studying **objective** behaviour, psychology recognises personal experience is **subjective**



Behaviour is determined by multiple causal factors

Biological (nature), environment and past experience (nurture), psychological factors (cognition & motivation)



Behaviour adapts to environmental demand and capacities evolve (adaptation and survival)



Behaviour and cognitive processes are affected by social and cultural environments