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Module 1.3: Contemporary Psychology

Contemporary psychology is a diverse field that is influenced by all of the historical perspectives described in the preceding section. Reflective of the discipline's diversity is the diversity seen within the **American Psychological Association (APA)**. The APA is a professional organization representing psychologists in the United States. The APA is the largest organization of psychologists in the world, and its mission is to advance and disseminate psychological knowledge for the betterment of people.

There are 56 divisions within the APA, representing a wide variety of specialties that range from Societies for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality to Exercise and Sport Psychology to Behavioral Neuroscience and Comparative Psychology. Reflecting the diversity of the field of psychology itself, members, affiliate members, and associate members span the spectrum from students to doctoral-level psychologists, and come from a variety of places including educational settings, criminal justice, hospitals, the armed forces, and industry (American Psychological Association, 2014).

The Association for Psychological Science (APS) was founded in 1988 and seeks to advance the scientific orientation of psychology. Its founding resulted from disagreements between members of the scientific and clinical branches of psychology within the APA. The APS publishes five research journals and engages in education and advocacy with funding agencies. A significant proportion of its members are international, although the majority is located in the United States.

Other organizations provide networking and collaboration opportunities for professionals of several ethnic or racial groups working in psychology, such as the National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA), the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA), the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi), and the Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP). Most of these groups are also dedicated to studying psychological and social issues within their specific communities.
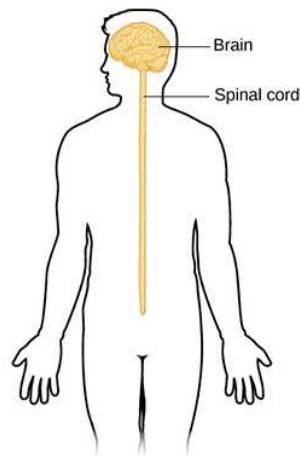
Use the slideshow below to read an overview of each of the major subdivisions within psychology today in the order in which they are introduced throughout the remainder of this course. This is not meant to be an exhaustive listing, but it will provide insight into the major areas of research and practice of modern-day psychologists. Click the arrows to move from one subdivision to the next.

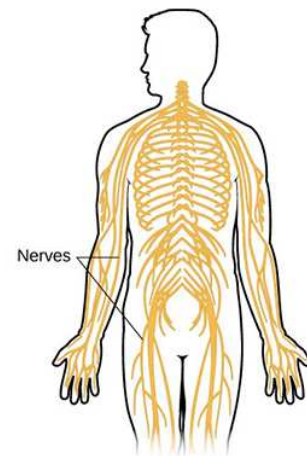[Access a printable copy of this slideshow](#) 📄

Biopsychology

Biopsychology explores how our biology influences our behavior and typically focuses on the immediate causes of behavior based in the physiology of a human or other animal. Many biological psychologists want to understand how the structure and function of the nervous system is related to behavior. They often combine the research strategies of both psychologists and physiologists. The research interests of biological psychologists span a number of domains, including sensory and motor systems, sleep, drug use and abuse, reproductive behavior, neurodevelopment, and plasticity of the nervous system, among other topics. Researchers outside of the field of psychology, such as biologists and chemists, are often involved in this research; this interdisciplinary approach is often referred to as neuroscience, of which biological psychology is a component.

Central Nervous System

Brain

Spinal cord

Peripheral Nervous System

Nerves

Check Your Knowledge

Select the following link to open an interactive activity to test your knowledge about some of the major psychological perspectives. This will be useful in studying for your exam at the end of Lesson 3.

[←Module 1.2](#) [Module 1.4→](#)

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