

TABLE 1

PSYCHOLOGY'S CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

Perspective	Focus	Sample Questions
Neuroscience	How the body and brain enable emotions, memories, and sensory experiences	How are messages transmitted within the body? How is blood chemistry linked with moods and motives?
Evolutionary	How the natural selection of traits promoted the survival of genes	How does evolution influence behavior tendencies?
Behavior genetics	How much our genes and our environment influence our individual differences	To what extent are psychological traits such as intelligence, personality, sexual orientation, and vulnerability to depression attributable to our genes? To our environment?
Psychodynamic	How behavior springs from unconscious drives and conflicts	How can someone's personality traits and disorders be explained in terms of sexual and aggressive drives or as the disguised effects of unfulfilled wishes and childhood traumas?
Behavioral	How we learn observable responses	How do we learn to fear particular objects or situations? What is the most effective way to alter our behavior, say, to lose weight or stop smoking?
Cognitive	How we encode, process, store, and retrieve information	How do we use information in remembering? Reasoning? Solving problems?
Social-cultural	How behavior and thinking vary across situations and cultures	How are we humans alike as members of one human family? As products of different environmental contexts, how do we differ?

A Mnemonic: the 7 Approaches

- Each finger on your hand and the palm can represent a different perspective:



■ **The thumb = Psychodynamic**

- Stick out your thumb and make a gesture over your shoulder while turning your head in that direction. You are “looking back,” just as a psychodynamic psychologist does when they are focusing on the past and unconscious conflicts stemming from childhood.

■ **The index finger = Cognitive**

- Point to your head like you are thinking. The cognitive perspective looks at how we process, store, and interpret information.

■ **The middle finger = Behavioural**

- How do you know what it means to “flip someone off”? You learned it. This relates to the idea of rewards, punishments, and modeling. Flipping the bird is also an observable behaviour, and behaviourists focus on what can be seen and measured only.

■ **The ring finger = Humanistic**

- Try to lift your ring finger straight (without any other fingers going up also) – it can't be done! Now use your other fingers to push it up... much better. Humanists believe that we need others to help us “reach our fullest potential,” and Rogers' theory of unconditional positive regard does the trick.

■ **The pinky finger = Biological**

- Finish my sentence: “Pinky and the _____.” Behaviorists look at the tie between our behavior and our biology. But our knowledge base for this is still relatively small – like our pinky.

■ **The palm = Sociocultural**

- Make a “gathering” movement with both hands, bringing them to your chest. We are gathering all people together, all cultures. To understand others we must understand the culture they are from. Differences are good!

■ **The “evolved sixth finger” = Evolutionary**

- Hold up a finger from your other hand and pretend that you have 6 fingers instead of 5. Evolutionary psychologists focus on how traits/behaviors evolve over time (usually aided our ancestors' survival or increased their genetic line)

Applying the 7 Approaches to Real-Life Situations: Andrea Yates

- On June 20, 2001, after her husband had left for work, Andrea Yates, a Houston mother, drowned her five children in the family bathtub. She told police she drowned them from burning in hell. A jury rejected her insanity defense, and she was sentenced to serve life at a psychiatric prison. In a second trial (the first was appealed), the jury acquitted her, and she was sent to a hospital, not prison.

What do you believe to be the causes of Andrea Yates' murder of her children?



Biological

- Research indicates that brain chemistry plays a role in psychological disorder. Yates was diagnosed as suffering from postpartum depression with psychosis, and she had been taken off her antipsychotic medication about a month before the children's deaths. Andrea's husband, Russell, claimed he had been pleading with doctors to again prescribe Haldol, used in treating people who hear voices or have delusional thoughts.
- Mood disorders run in families and Andrea's was no exception. A sister and 2 brothers were also on antidepressants.

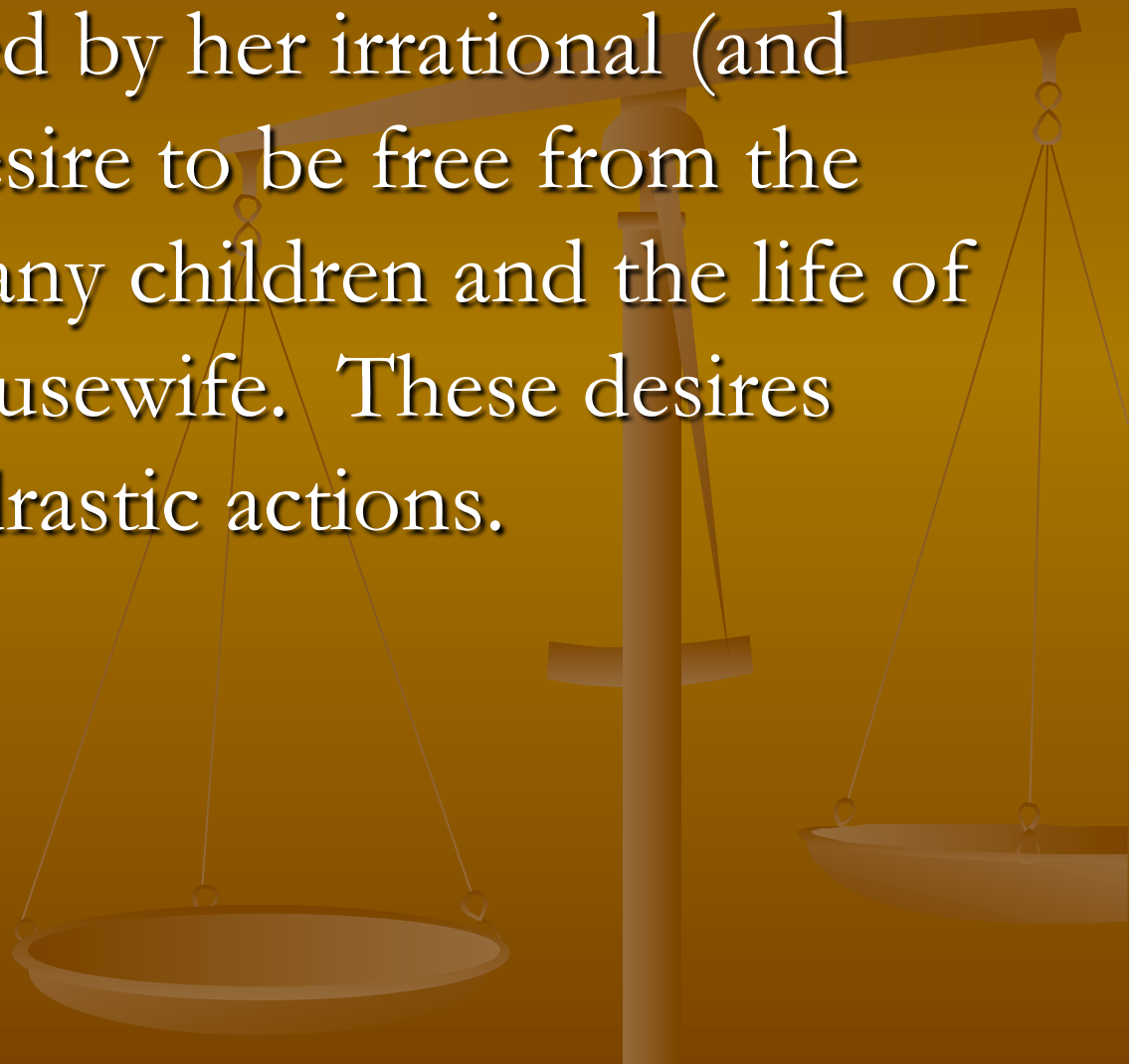
Cognitive



- Do we find the cause in her private mental functioning?
- Andrea experienced low self-esteem.
- At the time she killed her children, she believed she was possessed and that the sign of Satan (666) was marked on her scalp.
- She told the police that her children “weren’t developing correctly” and that drowning them was the only way to save them.

Psychodynamic

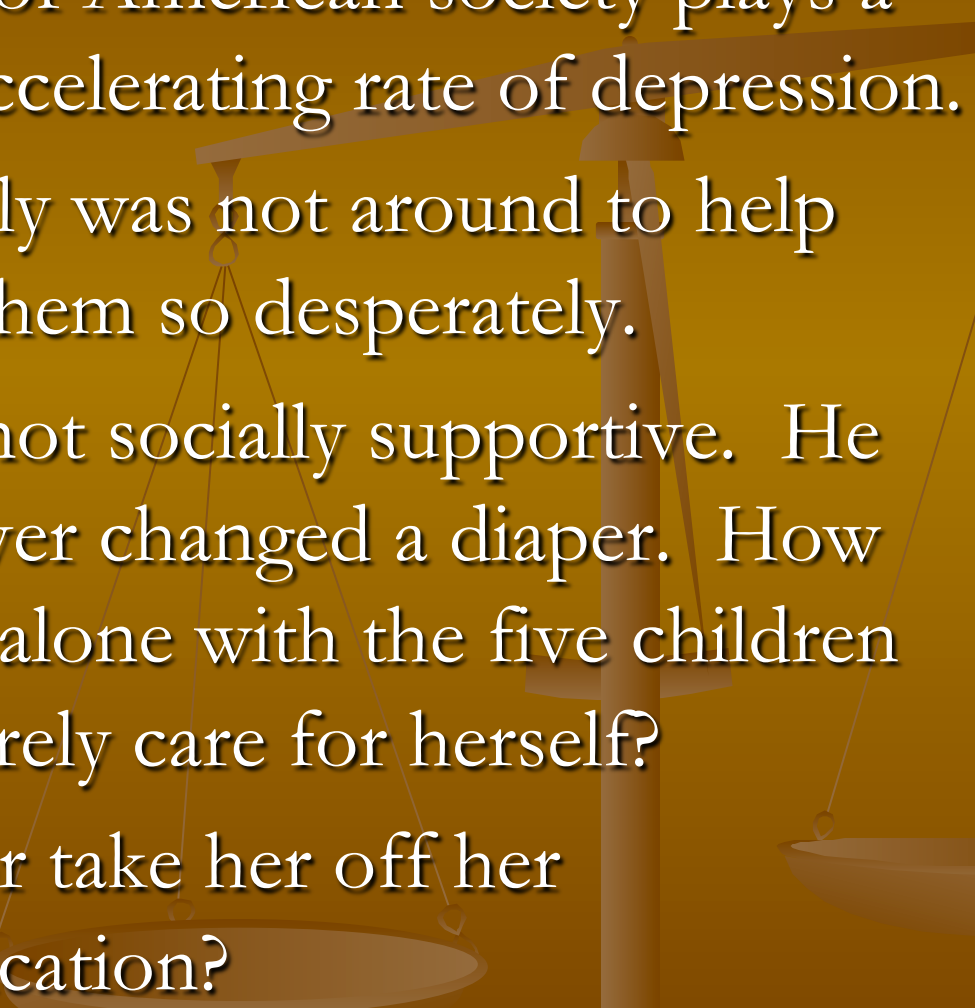
- Andrea was ruled by her irrational (and unconscious) desire to be free from the burden of so many children and the life of a submissive housewife. These desires resulted in her drastic actions.



Behavioral

- Doctors had strongly recommended no more children when they saw how seriously ill (mentally) Andrea was becoming with each child. Yet, her husband ignored their warnings and impregnated her a fifth time. Is it possible that Andrea saw her previously loving care only resulting in the punishment of more children and more responsibility, and therefore, she changed her actions towards the children to achieve a different result?

Sociocultural

- The individualism of American society plays a critical role in its accelerating rate of depression.
 - Her extended family was not around to help when she needed them so desperately.
 - Her husband was not socially supportive. He claimed he had never changed a diaper. How could he leave her alone with the five children when she could barely care for herself?
 - Why did her doctor take her off her antipsychotic medication?
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Illustrated Overview of Psych's History

1870

1880

2000 orly 1990s 75

Eric Kandel wins Nobel Prize
(in physiology & medicine)
for his research
biochemistry

2002

Daniel Kahneman wins
Nobel Prize (in economics)
for his research on
decision making.

for split

fallibi

launches the positive
psychology movement.

Nobel

in
l's
across

How Psychology
Developed

Psychology
Today

Seven Unifying
Themes

Personal
Application