

Week 9 Essay History of Psychology Tessa Pearce

The first two decades of the 20th century were marked by significant developments in the field of psychology in the United States, including the rise of behaviorism as a dominant school of thought. The zeitgeist or spirit of the times during this period emphasized a scientific approach to psychology, which was heavily influenced by the prevailing ideas of positivism and determinism.

One of the key factors that promoted and supported behaviorism during this time was the growing belief among psychologists that psychology needed to be more rigorous and scientific in its methods. This led to a focus on observable behaviors as the basis for understanding human psychology, rather than introspection or speculation about mental processes.

Another important factor was the influence of behaviorist pioneers such as John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner, who developed theories and methods that were widely embraced by the psychological community. Watson, in particular, argued that psychology should focus solely on observable behaviors and that mental processes were irrelevant to understanding human behavior. This idea resonated with many psychologists of the time who were seeking a more objective and scientific approach to psychology.

Additionally, Behaviorism was seen as a way to address the practical concerns of society at the time, such as improving education, workplace productivity, and social behavior. The emphasis on observable behaviors and the use of experimental methods made behaviorism appealing to educators, employers, and policymakers who were looking for practical solutions to these issues. Overall, the zeitgeist in American psychology during the first two decades of the 20th century supported and promoted behaviorism by emphasizing a scientific approach to psychology, the influence of behaviorist pioneers, and the practical applications of behaviorist theories and methods.