

The Zeitgeist (or spirit of the times) in American psychology in the first two decades of the 20th century was characterized by a growing interest in scientific methods and a shift away from introspection and mental processes as a way to understand human behavior. This shift paved the way for the rise of behaviorism, which emphasized the study of observable behavior and rejected the study of mental processes.

There were several factors that promoted and supported the rise of behaviorism during this time:

1. Influence of Darwin's Theory of Evolution: Darwin's theory of evolution emphasized the importance of the environment in shaping behavior, and behaviorists applied this principle to their study of animal and human behavior.
2. Rise of experimental psychology: The early 20th century saw the rise of experimental psychology, which emphasized the use of controlled experiments to study behavior. Behaviorism's focus on observable behavior was in line with this new emphasis on experimental methods.
3. Success of animal research: Animal research, particularly the work of Edward Thorndike with his puzzle boxes and Ivan Pavlov with his classical conditioning experiments, provided strong evidence for the principles of behaviorism.
4. Pragmatism: Pragmatism was a philosophical movement that emphasized the practical consequences of ideas and actions. Behaviorism's emphasis on observable behavior and its practical applications, such as in education and therapy, fit well with this pragmatic approach.

Overall, the Zeitgeist in American psychology in the early 20th century created a favorable climate for the rise of behaviorism, and behaviorism in turn contributed to the growth and development of psychology as a scientific discipline.