

Psychology Notes

Open Learning Initiative | 5/13/2026 – Ongoing

Module 2

Psychology is the study of the human mind and behavior, coming from the Greek words 'Psyche' and 'Logia'.

Psychology was made from philosophy with two well know philosophers Plato and Aristotle focusing on topics like mind vs body and nature vs nurture.

4 main questions till remain in psychology:

1. Nature vs Nurture
2. Mind vs Body
3. Automatic vs Controlled Processing
4. Differences vs Similarities

Later on in science history Rene Descartes asking upon the mind vs body and John Locke with empiricism (people being blank slates. Although scientist in their own rights these are philosophical questions and topics.

The change from philosophy to science was with the first lab created by Wilhelm Wundt, in Leipzig Germany, 1879.

The first American lab however was created by William James at Harvard University 1875, technically the first class rather than lab.

Two subjects of old psychology are no longer taught / not relevant:

- Structuralism – The use of introspection to categorize and break down sensations to the basic elements
- functionalism – The purpose of a particular human behavior

Psychology topics that are still taught however are:

- psycho-dynamic – The unconscious influences on thought and behavior
- Behaviorism – Observable behavior and objectivity
- Cognitive development – How people process information
- Humanistic – The development of a healthy effectively functioning person

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The lab in Germany mostly focused on structuralism, in which they would create a periodic table called “Elements of Sensation”, they believed you can map out every sensation and categorize it.

The sensation of stimulus is not the same as the perception of a stimulus.

They mostly focused on unconscious processing

Harvard’s lab focused mostly on functionalism, where ones thinking is only relevant to ones behavior, very influenced by Charles Darwin theory of evolution.

Functionalism focused on how the mind and behavior adapt.

Functionalism became evolutionary psychology.

Sigmund Freud probably the most famous in psychology as a whole is the creator of psychoanalysis and his work involved people’s mental issues focusing on their childhood experiences, that many experiences which were bad are repressed but still affect people negatively.

important to note a lot of his theories and others similar were not correct.

John B. Watson, was the first behaviorist and the creator of the little Albert experiment which was you can condition someone to fear something with “bad” stimulus, essentially classical conditioning. Proving you can find an object that’s non-threatening, threatening if given a reason too.

The most famous behaviorist is Burrhus Fredrick Skinner also known as B. F. Skinner. For popularizing psychology to a larger audience. – more later

Hermann Ebbinghaus and Fredrick Bartlett, researched how memory worked in the turn of the 20th century, finding behavior is much more complex.

Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, worked heavily with children. Jean finding the 4 major developmental stages for development and ego centrism, where children think you can see and interpret the same exact same things they can. While Lev developed scaffolding, this is when a teacher figure gives information or helps understand topic that a child would not normally learn on their own.

Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers are credited with creating the humanistic branch, asking what makes a person “good”? Abraham creating the hierarchy of needs, where people strive for self-actualization after meeting the other needs. While Carl created client-centered therapy, where you view the person you work with as an equal instead of a patient. (insane empathy moment)

There is no one way to study the mind.(duh but..) Depending on the branch of psychology depends on the approach you may want to take or will take:

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Behavioral Neuroscience – Genetics and the links among the brain, mind, and behavior.

Biological - Relationships between bodily systems and chemicals regarding how they influence behavior and thought.

Cognitive - Thinking, decision making, problem solving, memory, language, and information processing

Social – Concepts of self and social interaction and how they differ across cultures and shape behavior

Developmental – How and why people change or remain the same over time, from conception to death.

Clinical – Diagnosis and treatment of mental, emotion, and behavior disorders and promotion of psychological health.

Individual – Uniqueness and differences of people and the consistencies in behavior across time and situations

Industrial – How human behavior and psychology affect work and how they are affected by work.

Module 3 – Methods

Psychology is based in empirical study, using observational data and true evidence.

Basic Research – Research that answers fundamental questions about behavior

Applied Research – Research that investigates issues that have implications for everyday life and provides solutions to everyday problems

Both supply each other

“A theory is an integrated set of principles that explains and predicts many, but not all, observed relationships within a given domain of inquiry.”

Good Theories fit 4 Criteria

1. General – Summarizes the different outcomes
2. Parsimonious – Provides the simplest account of the outcomes
3. Expendable – Provides ideas for future research
4. Falsifiable – Variables of interest can be measured and shown incorrect with research

When a better theory is found it will replace the old one and so the cycle repeats

If a questions wants to be studied it must be stated as a research hypothesis – A precise statement of the presumed relationship among specific parts of a theory. (Must be specific and falsifiable)

A statement which can be expanded on and be proven true or false.

A variable is “a factor in a scientific experiment that may be subject to change

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Theories are general, hypothesis are specific.

There are 5 steps in conducting a scientific study:

1. Formulate a research question
2. Conduct an empirical study
3. Analyze the data
4. Draw conclusions
5. Write research article

* Always check if the question has been asked / solved before *

There are a shit ton of psychological rules you have to follow, you must ALWAYS debrief in an ethical experiment especially if deception was used to achieve the study.

IMPORTANT

I have too too many notes on unimportant shit so from now on I will only take notes on things of interest

Create intro to psych personal by end of year