

I. The World of Psychology

Objectives

- Describe what psychology is, what psychologists do, and the main types of psychology
- Explain why the psychology of the past is important today, particularly the work of key pioneers
- Compare the seven different contemporary approaches to psychology

Vocabulary

behavior	functionalism	pragmatism	psychology
empirical	introspection	psychoanalysis	

Background

Why do people think and behave as they do? Answering innumerable, everyday questions about the mind and behavior is what psychologists attempt to do. What is *psychology*? Though research advances, cultural changes, and better scientific approaches have changed its definition, psychology means “the study of the mind and behavior.” Studying psychology will help students to discover more about their own identities, their thinking processes, and their actions.

Students learn that the role of psychologists today has evolved well beyond early pursuits of finding answers to fundamental questions about behavior. They find that there are five major areas of psychological work today: conducting research, promoting physical and mental health, helping people learn, working in communities, and improving work environments.

As they realize the pervasive role psychology has in the world, students learn about the two types of psychology—basic research and applied psychology—that work together to improve human lives. Students also find that psychological principles can help them in many specific ways to improve their social relationships, understand how others influence them, identify causes of stress, and realize that they have choices and can find help with their problems.

Students next review the issue of whether psychology is a science. Like other sciences using the “scientific method,” psychology today continues to be partially dependent on studies of the past. Many of today’s approaches were founded on the ideas of early psychologists. Students explore the ideas, approaches, and contributions of the four key figures—Wilhelm Wundt, William James, Sigmund Freud, and John B. Watson.

Students find ample material for discussion and debate as they learn about the seven modern approaches to psychology—neurobiological, behavioral, psychodynamic, cognitive, evolutionary, humanistic, and sociocultural. These varying approaches provide them with different ways of interpreting behavior.

As they consider the future of psychology and humanity’s quest to understand the mind and behavior, students will realize that psychology can provide them with tools to examine their lives and gain insights into their own personalities and into their culture.

Further Resources

Fancher, Raymond E. *Pioneers of Psychology*.

Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1991.

Hampden-Turner, Charles. *Maps of the Mind*. New York: Macmillan, 1982.

For Discussion

Review

1. What are the five major areas in which psychologists work?
2. What are the two main types of psychology, and how do they differ?
3. Who are the four key figures credited with first developing the field of psychology?
4. What are the seven major approaches to understanding the mind and behavior?

Critical Thinking

1. Of the five major functions of psychologists, which do you think is the most interesting? Why?
2. What specific contemporary problems or issues would you like to see psychologists address and improve? Why?
3. Why is it important to study the history of psychology?
4. Of the four key figures in psychology, whose work most interests you? Why?
5. Why do you think that it is so difficult to come up with one clear definition of the mind?

Activities

1. You're a Psychologist

Ask students to imagine themselves being able to work in any of the five major areas of psychology. Which area would they choose and why? To what specific research, cause, or problem would they like to dedicate themselves?

2. Psychology's Key Figures

Divide students into four teams, and have each group research and make a presentation on one of the four key figures in the history of psychology. They should talk about their figure's ideas, accomplishments, and contributions. At the end, groups can debate differences based on varying perspectives.

3. Internet: Psychology Sites

Direct interested students to research Web sites devoted to psychology. They should look for sites about psychological research as well as applied psychology. Have these students choose 5–7 of the best sites, print out key screens, and report on the sites to the class.

4. Special Sources: Psychology Professionals

Ask students to interview local psychology professionals, especially those who perform research or therapy. Students should learn about their specialties, past or present figures that most influence their work, and the kinds of approaches or techniques they use most.

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As you read Chapter I, write an answer to each question below.

1. What is the difference between psychology and behavior?

2. Using examples, describe the five major areas in which psychologists work.

3. Who are the four key figures in the history of psychology and what were their major contributions?

4. What are the focuses of the seven modern approaches to psychology?

5. What do modern psychologists determine to be the most accurate view or definition of the mind?

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Find the best answer for each item. Then circle that answer.

1. What is the definition of "psychology"?
 - a. the analysis of the effect of the body on the mind
 - b. the synthesis of the mind and the soul
 - c. the study of the mind and behavior
 - d. the marriage of research and media
2. What is introspection?
 - a. the measurement of external activity
 - b. looking inside oneself and describing what is happening
 - c. assessing behavior through observation
 - d. none of the above
3. What psychological approach focuses on how the mind functions rather than what it is?
 - a. functionalism
 - b. pragmatism
 - c. behaviorism
 - d. scientific method
4. What is the approach that is based on the assumption that if an idea works, it is valid?
 - a. behavioral
 - b. empirical
 - c. cognitive
 - d. pragmatism
5. What is the treatment for mental illness that emphasizes unconscious motives and conflicts?
 - a. psychodrama
 - b. psychoanalysis
 - c. physiology
 - d. paralysis

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Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. Every measurable internal and external activity a living thing does is called _____.
 - a. persuasion
 - b. ambivalence
 - c. behavior
 - d. growth
2. For psychologists to understand human behavior and help people, they must first _____.
 - a. address eating disorders
 - b. conduct research
 - c. form health care teams
 - d. design "user-friendly" products
3. _____ is NOT a basic function of research psychologists.
 - a. Conducting research
 - b. Studying the brain's influence on behavior
 - c. Making measurements to discover relationships
 - d. Creating better teaching materials
4. Research psychologists depend upon _____ to study behaviors.
 - a. the Internet
 - b. learning and motivation strategies
 - c. intuition
 - d. the scientific method
5. In cognitive psychology, applied psychologists _____.
 - a. design care for developmental disabilities
 - b. provide counseling for personal growth
 - c. improve teacher effectiveness
 - d. help guide advertising and media campaigns
6. Introspection theory was developed by _____.
 - a. Wilhelm Wundt
 - b. William James
 - c. Sigmund Freud
 - d. John B. Watson
7. Freud was committed to all of the following, EXCEPT _____.
 - a. how the unconscious affects personality development
 - b. how childhood experiences shape adult behavior
 - c. developing the technique of free association
 - d. observing behavior and focusing on how people learn
8. The term "collective unconscious" holds that _____.
 - a. aggressive impulses power the unconscious
 - b. inherited beliefs influence the unconscious
 - c. the unconscious has no effect on behavior
 - d. environmental adaptation shapes the unconscious
9. Client-centered therapy is a major part of the _____.
 - a. neurobiological approach
 - b. behavioral approach
 - c. humanistic approach
 - d. sociological approach
10. Studying how ethnic groups, religions, or homelessness influence behavior is a function of the _____.
 - a. evolutionary approach
 - b. psychodynamic approach
 - c. cognitive approach
 - d. sociological approach

Essay Question

Do you think psychology is a science? Why or why not?