

Chapter 1: Psychology: The Study of Mental Processes and Behavior

- Psychology- the scientific investigation of mental processes (thinking, remembering, feeling) and behavior
 - Involves understanding an individual's biology, psychological experience, and cultural context

The Boundaries and Borders of Psychology

- Biopsychology (behavioral neuroscience)- the field that examines the physical basis of psychological phenomena such as motivation, emotion, and stress
 - Study of electrical and chemical process in nervous system, rather than thoughts, feelings, and fears
- Localization of function- the extent to which parts of the brain control different aspects of functioning
- Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict – first theorists to address cultural differences and psychological differences
 - Individual psychology is shaped by cultural values, ideas, and ways of thinking
- Psychological anthropologists- study psychological phenomena in other cultures by observing the way natives behave in their lives
- Cross-cultural psychology- tries to distinguish universal processes from those that are specific to particular cultures
- Psychology born from philosophy
 - Philosophers tried to understand thought, feeling, and behavior through logic and arguments; in 19th century, people began to investigate it scientifically
- Introspection- method in which trained subjects verbally report everything that goes through their minds when presented with a stimulus or task; process of looking inward at one's own mental contents or process
- Experimentation not only route to psychological knowledge; also includes myths, religion, and language in cultures
- Structuralism- an early school of thought developed by Edward Titchener; attempted to use introspection as a method for uncovering the basic elements of consciousness and the way they combine with each other into ideas
- Functionalism- emphasized role (function) of psychological processes in helping individuals adapt to their environment

- 1st psychology textbook- William James; knowledge about psychology could come from many sources, including children, animals, and people whose minds did not function correctly
- Consciousness exists because it serves a function; the psychologist's job is to understand that function

Outstanding Women and Minorities in History

- Women acknowledged less frequently in psychology
 - Mary Whiton Calkins- became first woman president of American Psychological Association
 - Inez Prosser- first black woman to receive doctorate in psychology
 - Margaret Floy Washburn- first woman to receive doctorate in psychology; became president of American Psychological Association
 - Francis Cecil Sumner- first black male to earn PhD in psychology; "father of black psychology"

Perspectives in Psychology

- Paradigm- broad system of theoretical assumptions employed by a scientific community to make sense out of a domain of experience; includes shared models, metaphors, and methods
- Perspectives- broad ways of understanding psychological phenomena, including theoretical propositions, shared metaphors, and accepted methods of observation
- **The Psychodynamic Perspective:**
 - The perspective initiated by Sigmund Freud that focuses on the dynamic interplay of mental forces
 - Psychodynamics- a view, analogous to dynamics among physical forces, according to which psychological forces such as wishes, fears, and intentions have a direction and an intensity
 - 3 key premises:
 - People's actions are determined by the way thoughts, feelings, and wishes are connected in their minds
 - Many of these events occur outside of conscious awareness
 - These mental processes may conflict with one another, leading to compromises among competing motives
 - Theory originated in response to patients whose symptoms, although real, were not based on psychological malfunctioning

- Seeks to interpret meanings; to infer underlying wishes, fears, and patterns of thoughts from one's conscious thought and behavior
- Falsifiability criterion- the ability of a theory to be proven wrong as a means of advancing science
- **The Behaviorist Perspective**
 - Pioneered by John Watson and B. F. Skinner; focuses on the relation between observable behaviors and environmental events or stimuli
 - Focuses on relation between external or environmental events and observable physical behaviors
 - Mind is a blank slate; environment shapes people's minds
 - Scientist can observe behaviors, but not people's thoughts
 - Primary method is experimental; form hypothesis about the way environmental events will affect behavior, then create lab situation to test hypothesis
- **Cognitive Perspective**
 - A psychological perspective that focuses on the way people perceive, process, and retrieve information
 - Cognition- thought and memory
 - How memory works, how people solve problems and make decisions
 - Information processing- the transformation, storage, and retrieval of environmental inputs through thought and memory
 - Rationalist philosophers- emphasize the role of reason in creating knowledge
 - reasoning can arrive at knowledge independent of experience
 - network of brain cells are activated together; when a person is confronted with a stimulus that resembles something, the group of brain cells is activated and they recognize it
- **Evolutionary Perspective**
 - Built on Darwin's principle of natural selection, which argues that human behavioral proclivities must be understood in the context of their evolutionary and adaptive significance
 - Impulse to eat, caring for one's offspring, heterosexuality, etc. all have a biological basis
 - Nature-nurture controversy- question of the degree to which inborn biological processes or environmental events determine human behavior
 - Behavioral tendencies in humans evolved because they helped our ancestors survive
 - Natural selection- theory by Darwin that natural forces select traits in organisms that help them adapt to environment
 - Adaptive traits- help organisms adjust to environment
 - Ethology- the field that studies animal behavior from a biological and evolutionary perspective