

MODULE TWO – WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY

- psychology is the scientific investigation of mental processes and behaviour
 - to do this we need to consider a person's biology, psychological experiences and cultural / historical context
 - aims: describe, explain, predict, control

Positive Psychology

- positive psychology is interested in well-being, and the conditions under which human beings are able to thrive and flourish

Biopsychology

- biopsychology (behavioural neuroscience) – seeks to understand the mind through understanding the biological activity of the brain
- localisation of function – is the notion that discrete brain regions play a significant role in discrete aspects of mental functioning
 - broca's area = understand speech, can't produce speech
 - wernicke's area = can't understand speech, can produce speech

Cultural Influences and Psychology

- culture – refers to the influence of membership in a larger group such as a tribe
- *Psychological Anthropologists* study psychological phenomenon in other cultures through naturalistic observation
- *cross-cultural psychologists* investigate psychological hypotheses in other cultures

History of Psychology

- philosophy + physiology = psychology

Philosophical Issues of Psychology

- free will versus determinism
- nature (biology) versus nurture (environment)
- rationalism versus empiricism
- reason versus emotion
- continuity versus discontinuity with other animals
- individualism versus relationality
- conscious versus unconscious
- mental versus physical (mind/body)

Psychology's Early History

- Wilhelm Wundt (1832 - 1920)
 - established the first research lab in 1879
 - first psychology journal
 - primary focus on consciousness (the mind and mental processes)

- G. Stanley Hall (1846 - 1924)
 - America's first research lab (1883)
 - America's first psychology journal
- APA Edward Titchener – proponent of structuralism
 - used introspection to understand the structure of consciousness
- William James – proponent of functionalism
 - functionalism argued that consciousness is functional and serves a purpose

Structuralism vs Functionalism

- structuralism – analyse consciousness into basic elements and investigate the relationship between these elements
- functionalism – investigate the functions/purposes of consciousness,
 - applied to the 'real world' – behaviourism and applied psychology
 - led to the investigation of mental testing, developmental patterns and sex differences

Perspectives in Psychology

- a paradigm is a broad system of theoretical assumptions employed by a scientific community, psychology lacks a unified paradigm but has a number of schools of thought or "isms"

Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939) and the Unconscious Mind

- psychoanalytic theory
- the unconscious
 - thoughts, memories and desires that greatly influence behaviour without consciousness awareness – "Freudian slip" / dreams

The Psychodynamic Perspective

- conscious and unconscious forces interact to control our thoughts and behaviours
 - thoughts, feelings and wishes
 - mental processes can be in conflict
- seeks to understand the meanings of the mental life of a client through speech and dream analysis – data is collected through case studies
- metaphor for psychodynamic view – awareness is like an iceberg

Behaviourism: Redefining Psychology

- John B Watson (1878 - 1958)
- the study of observable behaviour
- nature v nurture – the importance of environmental factors
- Ian Pavlov contributed greatly to the field of behaviourism

- stimulus response relationships: pavlov's dog and little albert
- B F Skinner (1904 - 1990)
 - 1950s – height of influence
 - environment factors determine behaviour – responses that lead to positive outcomes are repeated and responses that lead to negative outcomes not
 - free will is an illusion
- metaphor for the behaviourist view – humans and other animals are mechanistic; we show responses that can be elicited (or made more likely) by external stimuli
- seeks to understand the relations between stimuli and behaviour through the experimental method
- data is quantitative empirical data that can be analysed statistically and replicated

Humanist Perspective

- humanistic perspective is *person-centred*
- opposition to psychoanalytic theory and behaviourism
- gained influence in the 1950s
- optimistic view of human nature: unique quality of humans and potential for growth
 - Abraham Maslow (1908 - 1970)
 - Carl Rogers (1902 - 1987)
- the humanistic perspective focuses on the uniqueness of the individual and that people are motivated to reach their full potential (self-actualisation)
- metaphor for the humanistic perspective – people are innately good and will strive to realise goals and ambitions

Cognitive Perspective

- focuses on how people process, store and retrieve information
- metaphor for cognitive perspective – the mind is like a computer
- uses experimental methods to infer mental processes at work

Evolutionary Psychology

- natural selection occurs for behavioural, as well as physical, characteristics too
- metaphor for evolutionary – we are all runners in a race, competing for resources
- Buss, Daly & Wilson, Cosmides & Tooby – 80s and 90s:
 - studied natural selection of mating preferences, jealousy, aggression, sexual behaviour, language, decision making, personality and development
 - thought provoking perspective gaining in influence, but not without criticism
- gather information through deductive methods with more recent use of experimentation – often start with a known behaviour in a species and attempt to explain it on the basis of evolutionary principles

Overall Psychological Perspectives

- psychodynamic – focus on unconscious processes, conflict and early experiences
- behavioural – focus on learning (behaviour modified by consequences)
- humanistic – focus on the unique individual and motivation to achieve goals
- cognitive – focus on thoughts and memories
- evolutionary – focus on why we feel, think or behave

Sub Disciplines Within Psychology

- biopsychology
- developmental
- social
- clinical
- cognitive
- personality
- organisational
- educational
- health
- counselling
- sport
- forensic
- positive
- conservation