Psychology

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What is Psychology?

Psychology is an academic and applied discipline that involves the scientific study of mental functions and behaviors. Psychology has the immediate goal of understanding individuals and groups by both establishing general principles and researching specific cases, and by many accounts it ultimately aims to benefit society. In this field, a professional practitioner or researcher is called a psychologist and can be classified as a social, behavioral, or cognitive scientist. Psychologists attempt to understand the role of mental functions in individual and social behavior, while also exploring the physiological and neurobiological processes that underlie certain cognitive functions and behaviors. Psychologists explore concepts such as perception, cognition, attention, emotion, phenomenology, motivation, brain functioning, personality, behavior, and interpersonal relationships. Psychologists of diverse orientations also consider the unconscious mind. Psychologists employ empirical methods to infer causal and correlational relationships between psychosocial variables. In addition, or in opposition, to employing empirical and deductive methods, some—especially clinical and counseling psychologists—at times rely upon symbolic interpretation and other inductive techniques. Psychology has been described as a "hub science", with psychological findings linking to research and perspectives from the social sciences, natural sciences, medicine, and the humanities, such as philosophy.

History

The word psychology literally means, "study of the soul". The Latin word psychologia was first used by the Croatian humanist and Latinist Marko Marulić in his book, Psichologia de ratione animae humanae in the late 15th century or early 16th century. The earliest known reference to the word psychology in English was by Steven Blankkaart in 1694 in The Physical Dictionary which refers to "Anatomy, which treats of the Body, and Psychology, which treats of the Soul."
Psychology has many subfields. The ones listed are the ones I am most interested in.

- Cognitive
- Developmental
- Personality
- Social

Cognitive

Cognitive psychology studies cognition, the mental processes underlying mental activity. Perception, attention, reasoning, thinking, problem solving, memory, learning, language, and emotion are areas of research. Classical cognitive psychology is associated with a school of thought known as cognitivism, whose adherents argue for an information processing model of mental function, informed by functionalism and experimental psychology.

Developmental

Mainly focusing on the development of the human mind through the life span, developmental psychology seeks to understand how people come to perceive, understand, and act within the world and how these processes change as they age. This may focus on cognitive, affective, moral, social, or neural development. Researchers who study children use a number of unique research methods to make observations in natural settings or to engage them in experimental tasks. Such tasks often resemble specially designed games and activities that are both enjoyable for the child and scientifically useful, and researchers have even devised clever methods to study the mental processes of infants. In addition to studying children, developmental psychologists also study aging and processes throughout the life span, especially at other times of rapid change (such as adolescence and old age). Developmental psychologists draw on the full range of psychological theories to inform their research.

Personality

Personality psychology is concerned with enduring patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion—commonly referred to as personality—in individuals. Theories of personality vary across different psychological schools and orientations. They carry different assumptions about such issues as the role of the unconscious and the importance of childhood experience. According to Freud, personality is based on the dynamic interactions of the id, ego, and super-ego. Trait theorists, in contrast, attempt to analyze personality in terms of a discrete number of key traits by the statistical method of factor analysis. The number of proposed traits has varied widely. An early model, proposed by Hans Eysenck, suggested that there are three traits which comprise human personality: extraversion–introversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Raymond Cattell proposed a theory of 16 personality factors. Dimensional models of personality are receiving increasing support, and some version of dimensional assessment will be included in the forthcoming DSM-V.

Social

Social psychology is the study of how humans think about each other and how they relate to each other. Social psychologists study such topics as the influence of others on an individual's behavior (e.g. conformity, persuasion), and the formation of beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes about other people. Social cognition fuses elements of social and cognitive psychology in order to understand how people process, remember, or distort social information. The study of group dynamics reveals information about the nature and potential optimization of leadership, communication, and other phenomena that emerge at least at the microsocial level. In recent years, many social psychologists have become increasingly interested in implicit measures, mediational models, and the
interaction of both person and social variables in accounting for behavior. The study of human society is therefore a potentially valuable source of information about the causes of psychiatric disorder. Some of the sociological concepts applied to psychiatric disorders are the social role, sick role, social class, life event, culture, migration, social, and total institution.

(Wikipedia)

Bibliography
