

# What is psychology?

Science



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What is psychology? = it is the scientific study of the 'mental processes' and behavior  
What is the mind? = the mind is the means by which people perceive, think, and feel = mental processes. Behavior is simply what people do. Psychologists study the mind and behavior and anything that influences them, including childhood experiences, brain activity, genetics, friends and family, cultural norms, etc. Psy brings together many other disciplines eg. biology, philosophy, anthropology, computer science, art, and many other fields all with a goal of better understanding human behavior. Why study psychology? = First, because an understanding of psychology is essential to everyday functioning. We base all of our actions and decisions on an understanding of ourselves - we choose friends, roommates, spouses, majors, and careers based on our beliefs about our own talents, traits, and preferences. Why do you feel sad about some things while your friends don't and vice versa? = Second, we have a curiosity of others' behaviors, what makes other people behave the way they do? eg. what makes someone blow up the federal building in Oklahoma City?. Always be skeptical - Be a critical thinker - think about the story of Clever Hans. Look out for fallacies, untruths, etc. when you read or indeed whenever you encounter new information. Just because something is written in a book does not mean it's accurate - sometimes eg. b/c psych is a vital field - and changing faster than books can keep up Be on the look out for confirmation bias = tendency to seek info that supports our beliefs and ignoring anything that disconfirms  
Historical roots/schools of thought Well known pioneers In Germany, Wilhelm Wundt = world's first psychologist - establish the first institute for research in experimental psy- method for studying the mind was introspection = report contents of immediate states of consciousness - This psy is called  
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structuralism = reporting on mental experiences, i. e., the basic structures/elements of conscious experiences, including sensations, perceptions, memory, attention, learning, emotions, language. Example: Describe an apple. Problem: too subjective because too many variables come into play In America, William James, who grew bored by structuralism, thought that it was not the elements/components that were important but rather their functions -how do they work what functions do they perform in terms of helping adapt (or not) to our environment. This is called functionalism. Gestalt psy - the opposite of structuralism - interested in how we came up with ' perceptual whole'. This approach looks at how the mind organizes info into a coherent whole - our mind/perception attempts completion. " the whole is different from the sum of its parts" Around the same time in Vienna, there is Sigmund Freud -who thought that mental disorders stem from unconscious motivations mind and from early childhood experiences. His was a psychology of personality and of psych disorders. He thought behavior was as a result of unconscious desires and motives, and that blocked out emotions could be converted into physical symptoms. Psychoanalysis: uncover and release these emotions. John Watson - denounced any sort of introspection, or unconscious, thought they should not be part of psych at all. Only observable behavior was important, behaviorism. He thought all of our behavior was a product of learning, a consequence of past events/actions. Environment is a determinant of behavior. Moved psychologists to describing, explain, predict, control behavior Humanistic - unique subjective mental experience of the world emphasis the goodness of people studies self-awareness, love helping behavior, positive personality growth. Cognitive psych - how the mind

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organizes perceptions, processes info, interprets experience. Liken to how a computer works. Neuroscience - how does the brain communicate with itself and other body organs, has to do with looking at the elementary biochemical level of behavior. Evolutionary - present traits behaviors might be as a result of genetic info passed on through the years - warfare - homicide - could have been useful years ago. Cultural - influence of the culture or society we live in. What is culture? Individualism = philosophy of life, one's personal goals is more important than the goals of the group, desire to be free of other's influence. Collectivism = philosophy of life, needs of group over individual's needs, submit to influence of group. Scientific study Why are scientists not likely to say that something is a "proven fact?" All studies have flaws The scientific method - testing ideas against objective methods - empirical research = experience based = stating clearly what you are investigating and reporting exactly what you have found Goals of scientific psy: Describe (gather data) explain (theory + hypotheses) predict (empirical tests, statistics) control (application) select topic - review literature - why? develop a theory and then hypotheses theory: "an organized system of ideas seeks to explain why 2 or more events/factors/variables are related. It is a testable explanation for a set of facts or observations - not speculation or guess Hypothesis - if the theory is true, then what should I observe, find when I investigate - 'specific propositions or expectations about the nature of things derived from a theory' or a statement predicting the outcome of a scientific study, or describing the relationship among variables in a study. Get IRB approval. Consent from participant. Be ethical. how are you going to test your hypothesis - select a scientific method. Naturalistic observation, participant observation. Case study - observe an unusual phenomenon.

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Correlation study: how much two variables are related. Shows direction and strength. Can be positive, negative, or none. Think of examples.

Experimental – could show cause and effect. You manipulate one variable (independent variable) and examine another (dependent variable) holding others constant or controlling them. Sample, population. Random assignment. collecting and analyzing the data. Tests, surveys, questionnaires (self-reports or observer), objective data. Inferential statistics. Statistical significance – a mathematical result of computing the probability the findings (differences found) were as a result of chance. Clinical significance – the differences found may have an important or severe impact even if these differences are not mathematically significant.