Approaches to Psychology

“Psychology, I like.” – Yoda
Ch. 1 – The Field of Psychology

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cV0e3q-ufo

Psychology joke.
I. The Different Approaches

- The problems you wish to investigate are tied to a number of theoretical approaches to psychology

- There are six basic approaches to the study of psychology (some psychologists also include a seventh approach)
A. Seven Approaches

1. Evolutionary
2. Biological
3. Behavioral
4. Cognitive
5. Humanistic
6. Psychodynamic
7. Sociocultural
B. Overview of Each Approach

1. **Biological**: Focuses primarily on the activities of the nervous system, the brain, hormones, and genetics.

2. **Psychodynamic**: Emphasizes internal, unconscious conflicts; the focus is on sexual and aggressive instincts that collide with cultural norms.
3. **Behavioral:** Examines the learning process, focusing in particular on the influence of rewards and punishments.

4. **Evolutionary:** Investigates how primal survival instincts can influence behavior.
5. **Cognitive**: Focuses on the mechanisms through which people receive, store, and process information

6. **Humanistic**: Emphasizes an individual’s potential for growth and the role of perception in guiding mental processes and behavior

7. **Sociocultural**: Explores how behavior is shaped by history, society, and culture
The Evolutionary Approach

- Functionalism
- Why we do what we do
- The influence of Charles Darwin
Natural Selection

An evolutionary process in which individuals of a species that are best adapted to their environments are the ones most likely to survive; they then pass on these traits to their offspring.
William James’s Adaptation of Darwin’s Principles

“The most adaptive behaviors in an individual are the ones that grow stronger and become habitual.”
Key Points in the Evolutionary Approach

- The adaptive value of behavior
- The biological mechanisms that make it possible
- The environmental conditions that either encourage or discourage behavior
The Adaptive Value

Evolutionary psychology examines behaviors in terms of their adaptive value for a species over the course of many generations.
An Example from the Evolutionary Perspective

- Male vs. Female: differences in visual-spatial ability
- Hunting vs. gathering
Other Examples

- Fear of snakes and spiders
- Greater sexual jealousy in males
- Preference for foods rich in fats and sugars
- Women’s greater emphasis on a potential mate’s economic resources
Other Evolutionary Notions

- Mating preferences, jealousy, aggression, sexual behavior, language, decision making, personality, and development
- Critics
The Biological Approach

- Behavior and mental processes are largely shaped by biological processes.
- It is not identified with any single contributor.
The Biological Focus

- The brain and central nervous system
- Sensation and perception
- Autonomic nervous system
- Endocrine system
- Heredity and genetics
Biological Focus (cont.)

- The physiological basis of how we learn and remember
- The sleep-wake cycle
- Motivation and emotion
- Understanding the physical bases of mental illnesses such as depression and schizophrenia
Major Contributors
Howard Gardner

- Studied brain damage and neurological disorders
- Created the theory of multiple intelligences
- The different types of intelligence
Hans Eysenck

- Importance of genetics
- Intelligence is inherited
- Personality has a biological component
- Hierarchy of personality traits
Roger Sperry

- Split-brain surgery
- Techniques for measuring the different functions of the hemispheres of the brain
- Application: epilepsy
William James

- Humans are motivated by a variety of biological instincts
- Instincts are inherited tendencies
- The father of American psychology
Elizabeth Loftus

- Study of memory
- Eyewitness testimony
- Myth or repressed memories?
- Lost in a mall
The Psychodynamic Approach
The Psychodynamic/Psychoanalytic Approach

- Examines unconscious motives influenced by experiences in early childhood and how these motives govern personality and mental disorders
- Free association and psychoanalysis
Sigmund Freud

- The “Father of psychoanalysis”
- The second mind, unconscious
- Repression, free association, dream analysis
- Theory of personality
Approaches to Psychology

Carl Jung

- Analytical psychology
- Personal and collective unconscious
- Archetypes
Erik Erikson

- A neo-Freudian
- A strong need for social approval
- Psychosocial development and crises
The Humanistic Approach
The “Third Force” in Psychology

- Rejected the views of both behaviorism and psychoanalytic thought
- Free will and conscious choice
The Humanists Revolt

- Humanists felt that both behaviorist and psychoanalytic perspectives were dehumanizing.
- Humanists believed that behaviorism and psychoanalysis ignored personal growth.
- An optimistic view of human potential.
More Differences

- Choices are not dictated by instincts, the biological process, or rewards and punishments
- The world is a friendly, happy, secure place
In the 1940s, humanism began to receive attention because of Rogers. Human behavior is governed by each individual’s sense of self. The drive for personal growth.
Application of the Humanistic Approach

- Greatest contribution comes in the area of therapy
- Client-centered therapy
Abraham Maslow

- Hierarchy of needs, theory of motivation
- Becoming fully self-actualized
- Emphasis on uniqueness
- **Activity**
Criticisms of the Humanistic Approach

- Not all people have the same needs or meet them in a hierarchical fashion
- The humanistic approach is vague and unscientific
The Cognitive Approach
The Cognitive Perspective

- Studies people’s mental processes in an effort to understand how humans gain knowledge about the world around them.
- Cognito = Latin for “knowledge”
- How we learn, form concepts, solve problems, make decisions, use language.
What Is Cognition?

- An “unobservable” mental process
- The study of consciousness, physiological determinants of behavior
- 1950s-1960s: new understanding of children’s cognitive development
Advocates of the Cognitive Approach

- The manipulation of mental images can influence how people behave.
- The focus is not on “overt” behavior.
- The cognitive method can be studied objectively and scientifically.
Wilhelm Wundt

- He used “introspection” as a research technique
- He set up the first psychology laboratory
- Voluntarism
Jean Piaget

- Child psychologist
- Educational reforms
- Children are not “blank slates”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensori-motor (birth – 2 yrs.)</td>
<td>Differentiates self from objects; recognizes self as agent of action; object permanence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-operational (2yrs. -7 yrs.)</td>
<td>Learns Language, uses words to represent objects; egocentric thinking; classifies objects by single characteristic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete operational (7yrs. – 11 yrs.)</td>
<td>Starts thinking logically; conservation of numbers, mass, and weight; classifies objects by several features; <a href="https://www.amazon.com/Smart-Shel-Silverstein/dp/0688074112">Smart by Shel Silverstein</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal operational (11 yrs. &amp; up)</td>
<td>Think logically &amp; abstract thinking; concerned about hypothetical thinking and future</td>
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Lawrence Kohlberg

- How children develop a sense of right and wrong
- He borrowed from Piaget
- Moral questions
International drug lords have kidnapped the President of the United States. In return for releasing him unharmed, they have one demand:

1. Pass a law that legalizes cocaine and heroin

If this does not happen within 5 days, the President will be tortured slowly and then killed. (Assume that the President can not be rescued)

What are the issues at hand? Pros? Cons? What do you do?
Stanley Schachter

“Misery loves company”

Anxiety and companionship
Approaches to Psychology

The Behavioral Approach
What Is Behaviorism?

- Focuses on observable behavior and the role of learning in behavior
- Behaviorism continues to influence modern psychology
- The role of reward and punishment in learning
Applications of Behaviorism

- Aggression
- Drug abuse
- Self-confidence issues
- Overeating
- Criminality
Ivan Pavlov

- Nobel Prize winner
- Psychic reflexes
- Classical conditioning
B.F. Skinner

- A strict behaviorist
- Operant conditioning: rewards and punishments
The Sociocultural Approach
Why Has Psychology’s Focus Been So Narrow?

- Cross-cultural research is costly, difficult, and time consuming
- Psychology has traditionally focused on the individual, not the group
- Cultural comparisons may foster stereotypes
Sociocultural Issues

- Ethnicity
- Gender issues
- Lifestyles
- Income
- The influence of culture on behavior and the mental process
Stanley Milgram

Classical experiment on obedience to authority
Solomon Asch

1950 conformity study showed that people tend to conform to other people’s ideas of truth even when they disagree with those ideas.