Understanding Psychology within the Context of the Other Academic Disciplines

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Abstract

This paper is designed to assist undergraduate and graduate students as they study the field of psychology. As a course supplement, it intends to guide students in their learning throughout the semester and beyond the scope of the present semester in the form of lifelong learning. This learning tool will help students in organizing psychological terms, concepts, and ideas as well as connecting psychological constructs to existing schemas from previous academic courses. A contextual approach will be used that situates psychology historically and structurally within the academic traditions of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The field of psychology is understood by examining four current viewpoints (psychoanalytic, behavioristic, humanistic, and cognitive) that can be employed to critically compare and contrast theoretical perspectives. The information and ideas presented here will supplement a course textbook, classroom lectures and activities, outside readings, and other learning activities. The document is also designed for readers who need a quick overview, reference, or review of the field of psychology because they are new to the field, new to a particular course, or lacking a strong background in the field. This scholarly effort is dedicated to all of those who strive to develop a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of psychology in an effort to apply these ideas to practical situations in their professional careers and personal lives.

Key Terms: teaching psychology, learning psychology, organization of knowledge

Understanding Psychology within the Context of the Other Academic Disciplines

A traditional problem for college/university students is that they are expected to be more competent and flexible learners than many of their former high school peers. This implies that they can quickly absorb large amounts of complex information, transfer such knowledge appropriately, and understand such content at deeper levels of cognitive understanding. For example, students enrolled in their first undergraduate psychology course and those taking graduate psychology courses have offered the following legitimate concerns over the years:

1. They easily become overwhelmed by so many new terms and concepts.
2. They confuse terms and concepts due to cognitive overload and/or the different and specialized use of such terms and concepts as compared to usage in previous courses.
3. They fail to remember, organize, and connect what they have previously learned in a class or are currently learning in a course.
4. They lack an organized model of how the field of psychology could be understood.
5. They are missing an understanding of exactly how their current course instructor conceptualizes the field and that the conceptual vantage point of their current instructor could be radically different than teachers in previous courses.

It seems reasonable to assume that any learning tool that might help large numbers of students in even a few of the problem learning areas listed above could have a dramatic positive impact upon learning outcomes. The author of this paper has successfully employed just such a learning tool and offers this approach to an audience who obviously cares deeply about the teaching of psychology.

While historians have their dates and chemists have the Periodic Table of the Elements to organize knowledge and impart important ideas to students, what can psychologists offer students and fellow professionals to structure psychological knowledge? This paper offers a professional paper the author has written and shared with students for nearly three decades that assists students as they construct their own knowledge of psychology. Such a teaching/learning approach also assures students from the start of the course that they know how the instructor interprets the field of psychology.

The first order of business is to situate the field of psychology within the established academic traditions or domains of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. All college students have had educational experiences in these domains, but few students have paused to compare and contrast how the courses they have previously taken are similar or different related to method of evidence for seeking truth, how the nature of what is being studied drives the search for new knowledge, and what societal reward systems can do to advance particular disciplines. Since all students have completed some courses in these three traditions, they possess cognitive schemas that are well worth tapping into when studying psychology, or for that matter other disciplines.

Next, students are introduced to the course instructor's personal conceptualization of the field of psychology according to the psychoanalytic, behavioristic, humanistic, and cognitive perspectives in psychology. Students are succinctly shown how these four viewpoints have evolved in the history of the field and how different psychologists today might employ various theoretical viewpoints to explain, predict, and study human behavior. The course instructor helps students match up or classify theoretical ideas presented in the textbook during the semester with this model. For example, students are shown how the ideas of Freud and Erikson

best fit under the psychoanalytic view which emphasizes unconscious/conscious motivation; the dynamic personality model of the id, ego, and superego; and the important influences of early childhood upon later development and through the adult years.

Most students are deeply appreciative when a course instructor attempts to teach a discipline while at the same time teach the structure of the discipline as Jerome Bruner (1960) had suggested many decades ago. This approach is easily adaptable by those who teach in sub-specialties other than those of the author who primarily teaches educational psychology and developmental psychology courses.

As readers ponder the five (5) student concerns regarding learning cited earlier in this paper, they should note that these key learning elements involve human memory, but much more than what students generally think of in terms of remembering. The memory process is usually a necessary, but not sufficient condition, for the type of higher-level learning outlined here that implies understanding, application, and evaluation. Memory is a complex process that also involves forgetting, confusing, organizing, connecting, and retrieving relevant subject matter. Successful students are likely to already know this, but it is never too late to learn about the complexities of memory, how your personal memory system operates and is structured, and how it can be further improved. Students are urged to strive for the lofty goal of discovering the connections between “bits” of psychological knowledge and organizing such knowledge into coherent structures that will assist in later recall and result in deeper levels of understanding.

Psychology in the Larger Context

Imagine that it was possible to classify every college/university course into only one of the three following academic traditions: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Consider the knowledge distinctions involved with learning related to taking a course or

majoring in a discipline within these hallmarks. What does being a student of the humanities really mean? What does it mean to be a natural scientist or study the natural sciences? What does it mean to be a social scientist or study the social sciences? What similarities and distinctions exist between these three academic traditions?

One way to respond to these crucial questions would be to define what is meant by the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. Prior to this step, students should already have some basic ideas from an inclusion versus exclusion standpoint based upon their previous academic training. Table 1 below is an attempt to organize disciplines or fields of study (think perhaps of high school and college/university classes you have taken) according to this paradigm. You should already recognize the names of most of these disciplines, but some of them might be confusing or actually fit under more than one heading.

Table 1
Academic Disciplines and the Three Traditions

Humanities	**Social Sciences**	**Natural Sciences**
Art	Psychology	Biology
Music	Sociology	Chemistry
Philosophy	Political Science	Physics
Religion	(Politics)	Mathematics
Modern Languages	Economics	Geology
Ancient History	Geography	Computer Science
Literature	Modern History	Genetics
Speech	Cultural Anthropology	Astronomy
Journalism	Gerontology	Zoology
Theater/Drama		Botany

It can be logically assumed that the disciplines listed under each heading share several common characteristics and disciplines under the same heading share more in common with each

other than with disciplines listed under other headings. For example, biology and chemistry have more in common with each other than do biology and music. Psychology as a social science shares a great deal with the disciplines of sociology, politics (also known as political science), economics, cultural anthropology, modern history, etc. Another example might be seen by the fact that a social psychology course might be offered through a Department of Psychology and at other institutions the same course (at least according to title) might be offered by a Department of Sociology. Methodological approaches to studying phenomena and discovering knowledge are often easily shared across different disciplines under each heading. This frequently encourages interdisciplinary studies where social scientists from different disciplines might collaborate to conduct research. The collaborative nature of research can often be spotted by a careful reading of the biographical information included in the Author Notes or even the institutional affiliations of authors.

Some disciplines are intriguing because they have a foot in more than one academic tradition. A discipline like anthropology is often split between those who follow the more traditional social science orientations of cultural anthropology and anthropologists who employ a more laboratory (hard science) approach such as in physical anthropology. Historians are also deeply rooted in the humanities, if they are studying ancient cultures where the only remaining artifacts in the form of art, literature, and languages constitute the data being analyzed. Historians who study more modern events like the Cold War find that survey data in the form of public opinion polls during this historical time period may or may not support research hypotheses. The complexities of academic disciplines will not always allow for the rigid categorization into distinctive academic traditions, but more often than not, such categorization will lead you into the proper direction.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines social science as "the study of human society and social relationships." Many social scientists employ methods of studying variables and phenomena that are primarily quantitative or empirical (numerical) in nature such as birth order, age, or intelligence test score. Other more qualitative approaches are used when a variable seems to defy numerical measurement such as caring for others, emotional states, or parenting style. When studying such variables, social scientists adopt methodologies such as survey measures, interview formats, ethnographic field studies, case studies, biographies, and oral histories. Some social science researchers conduct experiments using both quantitative and qualitative measures in the same study, since the underlying nature of the variable drives the method used to measure a variable.

Each social science discipline to some degree strives to compete with other disciplines inside and outside the social sciences for the discovery of new knowledge, funding, and prestige. A larger proportion of the available financial resources at the university level normally is devoted to departments that can attract large numbers of high quality students, make scientific breakthroughs, hold government patents, etc. These are the famous "turf" battles on campus that can be seen by students in terms of the shrinking or expanding course offerings each semester and where specialized faculty might be available to some students and unavailable to others because they are working on research grants or traveling abroad.

Although each social science discipline shares a great deal with other social science disciplines, each has the potential to make unique contributions to the knowledge base in which we can better understand human behavior in various contextual circumstances and develop/refine useful techniques to study human behavior. Disciplines bring different fruits of knowledge to the table. Oftentimes, the focus upon a particular aspect of how human beings interact with the

environment demands a particular method of discovery. In addition to methodological specializations, each social science discipline possesses a distinctive historical tradition, unique theoretical perspectives, philosophical vantage points, and special interests.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines natural science as "the branch of knowledge that deals with the natural or physical world." A quick glance at the disciplines listed under the natural sciences suggests a degree of precision in measurement not normally found in the humanities or the social sciences. The scientific approach to discovery reigns supreme here and measurement is relatively more refined compared to the other two academic traditions. These disciplines are frequently called the "hard sciences." Objectivity is frequently valued over subjectivity, because to be subjective implies a source of bias.

The humanities have been thought of as the branch of knowledge that investigates particularly human constructs and human concerns other than those attributed to natural processes. An examination of the humanities points to the fields of study that explore unique qualities of the human being. These academic pursuits focus substantial exploration upon subjective human experience and celebrate ideas like creativity, individual uniqueness, and personal meaning. Arguments here are often not able to be settled based upon some sort of empirical data that proves, for example, that one religion is better than another. The argumentation shifts to questions like a particular religion is better for whom and for what overall purpose. These are quintessential human questions that continue to be posed and the fact that the answers have shifted over time might suggest that human thought is evolving (ascending or descending) depending upon your point of view. Note that forms of logical reasoning are at the heart of the humanities and the persuasiveness of the argument rests upon the form of reasoning and persuasive argumentation.

It is now again time to take a deep breath and realize that you have taken classes in these disciplines. When you tackle a new course, such as psychology, I encourage you to bring the knowledge that you already have accumulated regarding the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities to bear upon what you are learning in a psychology course. Such a learning strategy suggests that you know more than you think regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the scientific method of discovering knowledge.

You might also notice that some of your past and current coursework is missing from Table 1. For example, the areas of business, nursing, medicine, social work, education, and other professional training are not listed in Table 1. Some would argue that such coursework includes the interdisciplinary application of ideas from many disciplines listed in Table 1 and most professional knowledge lacks its own distinctive knowledge base. Others would debate this view and claim that professional knowledge is substantial, specialized, and separate from these disciplines. As you can see, the quest for ownership of knowledge and sometimes— even methodology is a highly politicized issue that often divides rather than unites scholars and academics. As a student, you need to be aware of such issues as you pursue your education. One of the hallmarks of a liberal arts institution is that students are firmly grounded in many disciplines (remember those general education graduation requirements here) in addition to professional preparation.

The Discipline of Psychology

The Greek roots tell us that psychology is the “study of” (ology) the soul (psyche) or mind. Unfortunately, this type of a definition does not address the fact that many different methods are used to study such phenomena and it also fails to inform us regarding exactly what

is to be studied—is it the mind; soul; spirit; or center of thought, emotion, and behavior? Obviously, this definition predates the evolving discipline of psychology as we know it today.

What follows is an attempt to briefly highlight the development of the field of psychology in just a few pages. Obviously, any attempt to do justice to this goal would entail volumes. The hope is that much of this content might be familiar to readers who have taken an introductory psychology class. Readers are directed to the book *A Brief History of Modern Psychology* (Benjamin, 2007) for a very readable and more expansive history of the field.

Most historians of psychology agree that the discipline grew out of philosophy (one of the humanities). For example, Evans (1999) stated that "in 1900, most psychology programs still were to be found in departments of philosophy" (p. 14). Keller (1937) suggested that Aristotle was the father of psychology; Descartes was the father of modern psychology; and Fechner was the father of quantitative (or experimental) psychology. The German influence of Gustave Fechner and Wilhelm Wunt, who were both trained as physicians, deserves recognition in the historical development of psychology. Wunt is credited with establishing the first psychological laboratory in the world at the University of Leipzig in Germany in 1879.

The field of psychology departed from the ranks of the humanities within the academic traditions of philosophy by adopting scientific methods. The scientific nature of psychology as the backbone of the field can be thought of in several different ways. Let's examine some of these ideas related to the scientific method.

- Application of a broad definition of the scientific method of discovery.
- Use of measurement techniques that promote as much objectivity and precision as possible. (Note: Quantitative measures are highly valued, but this does not rule out the proper use of survey measures, interviews, qualitative methods, ethnography, etc.).

- Generated hypotheses (educated guesses) based upon available theories, past research, and careful observation.
- Cautious use of representative sampling procedures in order to generalize the results and rule out alternative explanations of the findings such as individual idiosyncrasies.
- Control, selection, and manipulation of variables in order to discover if hypotheses are supported or not supported.
- Objectivity is employed whenever possible to guard against predetermined ideas, wishful thinking, and a selective interpretation of evidence.
- Public dissemination of the results of research investigations is accomplished through publications in professional journals/books, presentations at professional meetings, and inclusions in computerized databases.
- Replication of the results in future studies assures us that knowledge is valid and can be generalized or to what extent it can be generalized.

(Note: These ideas have been adapted from Biehler & Snowman, 1990)

Readers might be asking about now: "How is psychology defined?" A review of several published psychology textbooks offered the definitions below:

- "Psychological science is the study of mind, brain, and behavior." (Gazzaniga, Heatherton, & Halpern, 2010, p. 5)
- "…psychology is the science of behavior and mental processes." (Zimbardo, Johnson, & McCann, 2009, p. 4)
- "Psychology is the study of mental processes, behavior, and the relationship between them." (Sternberg, 2004, p. 2)

- "Psychology is defined today as the scientific study of mind (mental processes) and behavior" (Roediger, Capaldi, Paris, Polivy, & Herman, 1996, p. 3)
- "Psychology is the science of behavior and experience." (Laird & Thompson, 1992, p. 3)
- "Psychology is the science of behavior and mental processes." (Morris, 1990, p. 2)
- "Psychology is the scientific study of the behavior and mental processes of humans and other animals." (Crooks & Stein, 1988, p. 5)
- "Psychology is the study of the behavior of organisms." (Dworetzky, 1982, p. 4)

Although these introductory psychology textbook descriptions of the field of psychology do not represent a consensus regarding the definition of psychology, some patterns can be observed. Notice how the terms "science" and "behavior" emerge in nearly every definition. When the term "science" is not found in such definitions we find a broader term "study of" which should make us think that perhaps the very term "science" can be thought of in broad as well as narrow terms. The use of the terms "humans," "animals," and "organisms" reflect the decision to be specific or more general and therefore inclusive, since humans and animals are both living organisms. The influence of cognition (thinking) in the field can be seen with references to the mind and mental processes. It should be obvious that even though psychologists tend to differ somewhat in their precise definition of the field of psychology a student who adopts broad definitions of science, behavior, and organisms (human and animals) is not likely to be misled. Understanding that some psychologists are likely to define terms more narrowly than others is crucial to understanding the field.

Different Viewpoints within Psychology

Most believe that the history of psychology is best understood by movements known as structuralism, functionalism, behaviorism, Gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, existential

psychology, humanistic psychology and cognitive psychology. You might recall reading about some of these trends or schools of thought in the field in an introduction to psychology textbook. During the approximately 130 years since the first psychological laboratory was opened in Leipzig, Germany, the morphology of what has been called the study of psychology has radically changed based upon philosophical beliefs, methodologies refined for use, and what has been of interest to investigate. Unfortunately, some of these trends are more useful to historians of psychology than students who wish to quickly understand psychology today. Some of these movements have been incorporated into other trends and some have outlived their current day usefulness. For example, no psychologist today would claim to be a structuralist or a functionalist. A case could also be made for the inclusion of other currently popular specializations within the field such as biopsychology and social psychology.

The focus of this paper is to present students and other interested readers with a tool to better understand the current discipline of psychology. It is most important for students to grasp psychology as it relates to the courses that I regularly teach such as educational psychology, adolescent psychology, and child development. This is an obvious bias that I'm willing to be very up-front about while at the same time reminding readers that many people in the field might agree with my analysis of the field and other psychologists might vehemently disagree. Here lies an important maxim for students: It is crucial that you understand how the instructor of a psychology course conceptualizes the field in order to experience academic success in the class.

Psychology is both a discipline (field of academic study) and a professional enterprise where people apply psychology in therapeutic, educational, military, and other work settings. Psychologists often hold some theories and ideas in higher esteem than others, interpret the same research results in different ways, hold different philosophical beliefs regarding human nature,

and enjoy arguing for or against particular viewpoints in the field. In a nutshell, psychologists often see the world differently than other psychologists. If civility, communication, and reason can be maintained, such debates can lead to an advancement of the field.

Psychology is not the only profession that houses professionals who harbor differing opinions and fundamental beliefs. Examine the field of medicine. Doctors are likely to take very different approaches while dealing with an injury, disease, prevention, or a disorder based upon whether the doctor was trained as an M.D., D.O., or chiropractor. These medical approaches may sometimes agree and at other times disagree in their approach to health care in such terms as therapeutic techniques, dispensing of medication, and fundamental beliefs about human health. Psychologists are also trained according to different schools of thought and often value particular viewpoints over others in the field. The approach a psychologist takes to investigating, conceptualizing, analyzing, and modifying behavior is also likely to depend upon such training.

I wish to propose that most of the content we are covering in my classes can be reduced to four current-day models (viewpoints) in psychology. This is not meant to diminish the value or utility of viewing the field in a different manner, but remember that my main goal here is to help you organize the massive amount of information included in my courses. This paper will outline the psychoanalytic, behavioristic, humanistic, and cognitive views in psychology.

I am not alone in my conceptualization of the current field of psychology according to these four viewpoints. Nye (2000) described contemporary psychological thought according to four influential persons: Sigmund Freud (psychoanalytic view), B.F. Skinner (radical behaviorism), Carl R. Rogers (humanistic view), and Albert Ellis (cognitive view). This

reference book (now in its 6th edition) is a concise resource for learning both about the major ideas that have shaped psychology and the personal backgrounds of such individuals.

Hitt (1969) analyzed the basic arguments regarding the nature of human beings and wrote about two models of human behavior. The dual and distinctive nature of understanding behavior outlined in this paper pitted phenomenology (a field closely linked to humanistic psychology) against behaviorism. His analysis concluded that (1) acceptance of one model over the other would have profound implications for everyday life, personal behavior, and dealing with others; (2) each view has credibility; (3) each model could have practical implications for a particular problem being studied; and (4) scientists in each camp should listen to opposing viewpoints.

It deserves to be noted that Hitt wrote this when cognitive psychology was just beginning to re-emerge as a potent force with in the field. Many psychologists have used Ulrich Neisser's (1967) landmark book *Cognitive Psychology* where he re-organized the field by uniting a wide range of explorations in such topics as an important signpost for the return to power for cognitive psychology. The Freudian and Neo-Freudian perspectives as a separate model are also absent from Hitt's analysis of viewpoints of human behavior.

Ernest Hilgard (1977) identified three waves of influence as "forces" within the field of psychology that have had a major impact upon education and other fields as follows: First Force: Behaviorism, Second Force: Psychoanalysis, and Third Force: humanistic psychology. Although Hilgard addressed an education-oriented audience with such comments in this particular article, his influence on the entire field of psychology has been long felt. His popular textbook book *Introduction to Psychology* (1953) lived on as a viable teaching tool and influence in psychology courses for decades under additional co-authors (see Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1975). It is even available today in the form of the 14th edition as *Atkinson and*

Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology (Smith, Nolen-Hoeksema, Fredrickson, & Hilgard, 2003). This builds the case for Hilgard being a creditable spokesperson in the field of psychology.

Historically speaking these four viewpoints in psychology have reached high-water marks at different points in time. A chronological organization of the waves of influence can be thought of as follows: First Force (behaviorism), Second Force (psychoanalysis), Third Force (humanistic psychology), and Fourth Force (cognitive psychology). It should be noted that in both academic circles and professional practice all four views are discernable today.

The first task at hand is to highlight how these four viewpoints are distinctive. Table 2 below provides such an overview on several crucial philosophical points of great interest to those who study human behavior. Although this obviously oversimplifies these complex views, such a chart might help you more readily recognize some of these distinctive qualities.

Table 2
Aspects of Human Nature within Psychological Viewpoints

Psychological Viewpoint	**Primary Basis for Motivation**	**Good vs. Evil**	**Rational vs. Irrational**	**Free vs. Determined**
Psychoanalytic	Unconscious frequently rules the conscious (especially in survival modes)	Evil or dangerous (if person is threatened)	Most often irrational, but with rational potential	Mostly determined, but some free will is possible
Behavioristic	Extrinsic factors most important	Neutral (good or evil)	Either, depending upon learning and rewards/punishments	Determined by environment
Humanistic	Intrinsic factors can be more important than extrinsic factors	Basically good (unless threatened)	Rational, unless unhealthy	Free, but depends upon subjectivity and perception
Cognitive	Intrinsic and extrinsic factors are both important	Neutral (good or evil)	Highly dependent upon efficient rational thinking	Free, but depends upon perception

You might recall some of these beliefs from a previous course in psychology. Please feel free to ask questions related to these beliefs as we progress through that class at points that seem most relevant. If readers can keep these distinctions in mind, we are now prepared to launch into a more detailed description of each of the four viewpoints. Please recall that we are striving to accentuate differences rather than similarities between viewpoints here. The topic of similarities between viewpoints will be addressed later in the paper.

First Force: The Behavioristic Viewpoint

The behavioristic viewpoint relies upon the regimented devotion to a strict scientific (experimental) approach to studying behavior and focuses upon environmental (external) forces which influence behavior. The extreme adoption of such a view could conjure up views of people as robots controlled by their masters (programmers) who modify the environment in order to shape behavior in desired ways. On the other hand, it is difficult to suggest that each of us are not in powerful ways influenced by the physical setting, context of people (friends, family, and co-workers), and rewards/punishments that are offered to us. Although it is hard to dispel such environmental influences as inconsequential, it is relevant to ask exactly "who" controls the environment. In essence, this view provides a highly scientific technology for understanding and changing behavior without dealing with mental constructs or value issues regarding whether such modification of behavior is appropriate or moral.

Thoresen (1973) suggested that behaviorists could be characterized by:

- Reliance on objectivity and operational definitions.
- Focus on the "here and now" environment and its influence on the individual.
- Rejection of trait-state labels (e.g., introvert/extrovert)—a person can be best understood by what he/she does in particular situations.

- The use of the scientific method which stresses careful, systematic observation and control of behavior.

Behavioristic View

Prominent Theorists/Researchers:

John B. Watson, Edward Thorndike, Ivan Pavlov, and B.F. Skinner

Underlying Philosophy: Science (rigid application of the scientific method)

Key Words and Ideas: Stimulus and response (S—R), environment is most important, reductionistic thinking (searching for the smallest elements of behavior), behavior modification, shaping of behavior, operant conditioning, reward and punishment, extinction of behaviors, token economics, positive and negative reinforcement, classical conditioning, measureable characteristics, animals often used in research (but basic laws apply to humans as well), behavioral engineering, human beings are creatures of habit, unconditioned (unlearned) responses, conditioned (learned) responses, spontaneous recovery, Skinner box, objectivity is highly valued, mechanical mirror model, successive approximations, discrimination and generalization, extrinsic motivation, rigid adherence to the scientific method, contingencies, instrumental learning, recoding data, making graphs to chart behavior change, determining baselines, reliance upon statistical evidence, aversive therapy, observable characteristics more important than mental reports, observational learning, human beings are passive and molded by external stimuli, overt (outward/measureable) characteristics, Premack Principle, schedules of reinforcement, Law of Effect, A-B-C (Antecedents-Behavior-Consequences)

Second Force: The Psychoanalytic View

The psychoanalytic view, as originally formulated by Sigmund Freud, provided a dynamic view of human behavior that was powerfully influenced by constitutional (innate biological) factors such as sexual and aggressive drives, psychic conflict between the demands of these drives and social expectations, and unconscious versus conscious processes. Although psychoanalysts can agree or disagree and emphasize some facets over others, most accept these basic premises regarding human behavior. Freud can be credited with forcing everyone to consider where they stand on the influence of such factors as biological drives and the

unconscious. For example, Freud's notion of defense mechanisms continues to be a powerful reminder that observed behavior may not always be rooted in what it first seems.

Unfortunately, it is often difficult to empirically test hypotheses generated from psychoanalytic theories. Imagine that you wish to discover the "true" motivation for a particular action through an interview or survey question. This theoretical model forces us to consider the possibility that the respondent may not consciously be aware of such motivations and be unable to share this information. If the person **is** really aware of such "true" motivations, will he/she choose to share them with a researcher if divulging such information could be embarrassing? It deserves to be noted that even empirical support exists for the existence of some defense mechanisms (see Baumeister, Dale, & Sommer, 1998).

Many neo-Freudians (those who have adopted some and modified other of Freud's basic premises) have been called ego psychologists because they have chosen to emphasize the ego functions (logical and rational problem solving mechanisms of the personality) that mediate conflicts between the drives of the "id" and the societal constraints of the "superego." This view is not entirely pessimistic regarding the human potential for mental health, since even Freud held a somewhat limited hope that clients could make the unconscious become conscious and deal more logically and rationally with their "hidden" problems in life.

PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEW

Prominent theorists/Researchers: Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson

Underlying Philosophy: Hedonism (seeking pleasure and avoiding pain)

Key words and Ideas: id, ego, and superego elements of the human personality; ego-defense mechanisms; projection; regression; libido; ego ideal; reaction formation; displacement; sublimation; repression; suppression; passive aggressive behavior; Freud's 5 psychosexual stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital; fixation; unconscious/conscious motivation; preconscious state; adult behavior is largely dependent upon early childhood experiences; identification (unconscious modeling); psychoanalyst (therapist, usually an M.D. who employs

psychoanalytic techniques); catharsis; dreams and dream interpretation; hypnosis; manifest and latent dream content; symbolic meanings; Oedipus and Electra complexes; slips of the tongue; free association; phobias; subliminal techniques; transference; Erikson's 8 psychosocial stages (trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. identity confusion or diffusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, integrity vs. despair); foreclosure; moratorium; negative identity

Third Force: The Humanistic View:

The humanistic view in psychology tends to emphasize the processes and outcomes of mental health and healthy human relationships, which promote growth and development. Many of the people who are heavily invested in this view are clinicians (therapists, counselors, social workers, etc.). The view also promotes the exploration of the objective and subjective world while relying upon quantitative as well as qualitative measurement as tools to better understand the "whole" person. A hopeful posture regarding the possibility of human beings changing is inherent to the nature of working with clients in a clinical setting. Such people have also focused upon mental health (self-actualization) rather than only upon the mental illness model through creating an atmosphere where freedom with responsibility for actions and empathic understanding are at the core of behavioral change. An existential philosophical viewpoint is often adopted by proponents of this view.

Thoresen (1973) suggested that the goals of humanistic psychology include:

- Increasing the conscious range of a person's behavior—helping people identify what his/her behavior is and how it affects self and others.
- The need for the compassionate person who can relate and communicate effectively with others.
- Self-determination and responsibility—helping people accept responsibility for their own behavior.

- The need for educational experiences that engage the total person—the cognitive, social, spiritual, and emotional being.

As you might guess, many of those in the helping professions (teachers, nurses, counselors, therapists, etc.) have adopted ideas from this viewpoint in order to carry out their work. Characteristics such as empathy, congruence, and trust (unconditional positive regard) that make an excellent therapist have been applied to other helping professions. The topics of values clarification, promoting self-esteem, and moral development are of great interest to those who adopt this psychological viewpoint.

THE HUMANISTIC VIEW

Prominent Theorists/Researchers: Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May

Underlying Philosophy: Existentialism (ideas such as free will, responsibility, choices, being and becoming, personal meaning, human potential, significance of the individual)

Key words and Ideas: self-actualization; self-concept; 5 levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: physiological, safety and security, belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization; feelings and emotions; attitudes; values; individual personal growth; holistic or wholistic approach to studying human behavior; not likely to use animals in research; intrinsic motivation slightly emphasized over extrinsic motivation; the total person; facilitator of learning; empathic understanding; unconditional positive regard; self-directed rather than other–directed is the goal; encounter groups; individual human uniqueness is prized; sensitivity groups; philosophy of existentialism forms a foundation here; faith in human potential for change, improvement, and achievement; self-appraisal; self-disclosure; phenomenology; introspection; human experience is complex and multidimensional; active learning rather than passive learning is valued; Third Force psychology; subjectivity is valued; objectivity is also valued, but total objectivity is impossible to ever achieve; free will is tempered with individual responsibility for actions; Rogerian approaches: non-directive therapy, client-centered therapy, and person-centered therapy; focus upon the present (here-and-now) and future, rather than the past; Gestalt psychology (whole is more or greater than the sum of its parts); assertiveness is advocated in contrast to aggressiveness; focus upon being and becoming human; values clarification; study of human possibilities; focus upon the process without losing sight of the end-product focus; focus upon the unique individual; the source motivation and understanding lies within the individual

Fourth Force: The Cognitive View:

The cognitive viewpoint in psychology is a re-emergent view that has strong historical roots in other viewpoints. In some respects, this view has incorporated several key elements of the humanistic, behavioristic, and even the psychoanalytic viewpoints. Some examples include the focus upon intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, S—R (behavioristic) psychology morphs to become S—O—R (cognitive) psychology, and flexibility in research methodology as demonstrated by quantitative and qualitative research designs. One of the obvious strengths of the cognitive view point is that it has been successfully able to integrate important ideas from other views.

The advent and rapid growth of the computer as a developmental force in society has also contributed to this viewpoint that promotes the study of the mind, imagination, thinking (moral, critical, expert decision making, etc.), problem solving, memory, attention, perception, and language. Informal introspection, case studies, and other forms of qualitative research have been employed by proponents of this view to develop hypotheses that can eventually be confirmed and expanded by more objective methods. Advancements in measurement, technology, and brain research hold the keys to producing workable theories and interventions.

Students sometimes look forward to taking a course labeled “cognitive psychology.” This is certainly to be encouraged if the topics mentioned here are found to be appealing or useful. However, cognitive psychology is more than just a class; it is a powerful movement within the field of psychology. Cognitive science has had a major influence in recent years upon nearly every specialization or sub-field of psychology such as motivation, learning theory, therapy, human development, personality, social psychology, biopsychology, etc.

The cognitive view has emerged as the most prominent view in the field today and it is the current wave of popularity that many theorists and researchers are riding. Many departments

of psychology across the country pride themselves in having well-known researchers and theoreticians working on the cutting-edge of cognitive science. It would appear that many psychologists believe that the next major advancements to the field will come from this viewpoint.

While it is often very exciting and rewarding to be a proponent of the most popular viewpoint in psychology, a word of caution is in order. The wise cognitive psychologists today are well aware of how other viewpoints have helped to shape the current field of psychology and they should honor these origins. Students also need to be familiar with the inherent strengths and weaknesses of joining any psychological bandwagon.

THE COGNITIVE VIEW

Prominent Theorists and Researchers: J. P. Guilford, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner, Albert Bandura, Jerome Kagan, Albert Ellis, Robert Sternberg, Martin Seligman, Bernard Weiner, David Ausubel, Donald Meichenbaum, Mary Budd Rowe

Underlying Philosophy: Interactionism (the person mediates the environmental influence)

Key Words and Ideas: human intellectual events; conscious control of behavior; perception; thought processes; problem solving; decision making in particular contexts; language development (since we think in a particular language); information processing theory [sensory storage, short-term memory (STM), and long-term memory (LTM)]; 7±2; eidetic (photographic) memory; encoding; decoding; mnemonic devices; attention; interference theory; rote rehearsal (repetition); elaborative rehearsal (connecting unknown to known information); retrograde amnesia; semantic and episodic memory; chunking techniques; Guilford's Structure of the Intellect Model (contents, products, and operations); convergent and divergent thinking; Kohlberg's Moral Development(pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional); use of moral dilemmas; universal ethical principle stage; focus upon the rationale (reason) for a moral decision rather than only the actual behavior; Piaget's Cognitive Developmental Theory (sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage, and formal operational stage); schema or schemata; assimilation and accommodation; organization and adaptation; interactionism (human beings interact with the environment—both the person and the environment become important here); cognitive disequilibrium; Gardner's multiple intelligence theory (8 types); Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence; Ellis: Rationale-Emotive Therapy (RET) and Rational-Emotive-Behavior Therapy (REBT); constructivism; metacognition; metamemory; Seligman: learned helplessness and learned hopefulness; S—O—R (Stimulus—Organism—Response) theory; Weiner: attribution theory; Kagan: impulsivity and reflectivity;

Bloom: Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation); discovery learning, intuition; structure of knowledge; inductive and deductive reasoning; Ausubel: advance organizers; Bandura: self efficacy, modeling, social learning theory; teaching for transfer; heuristic devices; conceptual change; proactive rather than reactive; wait-time; cognitive behavior modification; Piaget's Two Stage Theory of Moral Development: 1. Moral realism (morality of constraint) and 2. Morality of Cooperation; self talk; task analysis

Use of the Four-Point of View Model

As a final note on how you might use this paper, think of using your accumulated knowledge in the field of psychology to broaden and deepen your knowledge base. Cognitive psychology would suggest that employing this knowledge base should help you learn new information when you connect what you are learning to what you have already learned. If you succeed here, you will be using cognitive psychology in order to learn cognitive psychology. What a fitting use of such knowledge! We have sound empirical evidence that this is exactly what successful students do in order to reach high levels of achievement.

Imagine that you have just been given an example of human behavior to analyze, understand, and make suggestions regarding how you might modify such behavior. What if you had four pair of lenses each ground and tinted somewhat differently in order to enhance particular aspects of what you are viewing? You could take each pair of lenses marked with a different point of view in psychology to examine the behavior. Just imagine how this would improve your understanding of human behavior.

The four pair of lenses would help you to see different characteristics of the behavior. If one pair of glasses failed to provide you with insights or answers to questions that you have generated regarding human behavior, you simply remove that pair and pick up another. If you can accomplish this intellectual challenge of seeing behavior through different lenses, you will be well on your way to employing an eclectic (multi-viewpoint) approach to understanding

human behavior. This will also maximize your chances of applying what you have learned about psychology.

The author of this paper conducts pedagogical research on his own teaching so that he as the course instructor, students, and other instructors might learn not only what works, but why something works as a teaching or learning tool. As an example of such research with the same Four-Point of View Model, readers are offered empirical evidence that the classroom use of this model as an instructional tool was statistically significantly correlated to overall class exam performance (see Herman, 2001).

Summary

You have a major challenge in studying the field of psychology. Sometimes psychologists use several different terms to describe basically the same process, principle, or event, so you will need to rapidly learn many new terms and distinguish them from other ideas. Try to learn the names of the originators of the major theories rather than just the ideas themselves. This should help you quickly find original source material because it offers more hooks on which to hang information in your mind. You should also strive to understand the philosophical foundations behind each theory. When learning about a new theory, try to think about the implications and interventions of each theory.

As you learn these new terms and ideas, try to relate them to what you already know and what you have experienced in life. It is always possible to over-analyze your own behavior and conclude that you and/or others are neurotic or in possession of some form of mental illness. Remember to leave the diagnosis to the professionally licensed therapists. The point here is that some self-exploration in a psychology is obviously very useful, normal, and motivational.

You will note that I have opted to encourage you to initially focus upon the distinctive nature of these four points of view in order to build a solid knowledge base in psychology. I have found that this is a good first step. Students sometimes find that after organizing their thinking about psychology as described in this paper, they also begin to see some similarities or interconnections between viewpoints. This should be your long-term goal, but don't rush into this phase too soon. A mastery of the basic distinctions should naturally lead you eventually to discover similarities as well. I offer you best wishes in your quest to master the field of psychology and hope that such an endeavor proves to be well worth the time and energy you choose to invest.

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Author Notes

In a very real sense, I have written this paper for two distinctive audiences: 1) my students and 2) other teachers/researchers/scholars who desire to improve the teaching of psychology. The reader will immediately notice that I have tried to write this paper in a tone that is directed to a student audience while maintaining the importance of grand ideas and factual details. This paper serves as an example of how academic scholars frequently write for various audiences for distinctive purposes. It is believed that every course instructor has the responsibility to inform students regarding how the academic content under consideration is structured, since this will improve teaching and learning. This paper is dedicated to all of those teachers of psychology and other disciplines who strive to improve learning outcomes.

The author also wishes to acknowledge a break with APA Style guidelines in placing the two tables into the text in this paper instead of placing such tables at the end of the paper. This diversion from standard practice was done in order to offer readers a format more conducive to learning and avoidance of frequently flipping to the end of the manuscript for the tables.