CHAPTER OUTLINE

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WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY?

THE MYSTERY THAT IS YOU

Do you have a hero? When you think about someone you truly admire, does a high-achieving celebrity or sports figure come to mind? If so, you are in good company, because individuals such as Tiger Woods, Oprah Winfrey, and Mother Teresa show up on many lists of most admired people. In a December 2006 Gallup poll, the most admired man was George W. Bush, followed by Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, Colin Powell, and the Reverend Billy Graham (Jones, 2006). The most admired women were Hillary Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Condoleezza Rice, Laura Bush, former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, and Angelina Jolie. These are individuals who have made significant contributions in public life, many of them throughout long careers.

But at the right moment, an ordinary individual can become a hero. Jabbar Gibson was a teenager when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, leaving him among the masses of people ravaged and stranded by the storm (“Editorial,” 2005). After 2 days of wading alone in the filthy flood waters, he made a drastic move to save himself. He broke into a school, took the keys to a yellow school bus parked outside, and set off for Houston. Once on the way, Gibson’s desperate act of self-preservation turned into something quite different: heroism. As he drove along Highway 10 (he never had driven a bus before), Gibson started picking up people stranded by the road. Soon his bus carried dozens of frightened but thankful individuals from all walks of life, including new babies with their mothers, as well as elderly people, all relying on young Gibson to get them to safety. The harrowing 8-hour, 300-mile journey included a stop for gas, paid for with spare change the passengers collected. When Gibson and his weary riders arrived in Houston, it occurred to him that he might be in trouble for taking the bus.

But true to the spirit of the hero he had become, Gibson concluded, “I don’t care if I get blamed for it so long as I saved my people” (“Editorial,” 2005). In the
aftermath of Katrina, Gibson was hardly the only hero to emerge; many doctors, nurses, and other citizens rode out the tempest and stayed to help others. Every catastrophe has its heroes.

Does it take a disaster to be a hero? The answer is no, because even in more ordinary daily circumstances, people make choices that might reasonably be called heroic. People are kind to individuals in need when they could be thoughtless or cruel. They are generous when they might be selfish. They work hard when they could slack off. When we think about the admirable people we encounter every day, we can see how ordinary human behavior can be extraordinary if viewed in the right light.

Similarly, many other aspects of human life take on extraordinary dimensions when looked at with a close lens. Scientists bring such powerful observations to their efforts. Consider astronomers, who wonder at the stars, and zoologists, who marvel at the varied creatures that populate the earth. As scientists, psychologists too are passionate about what they study, and what they study is you. Right now, as you are reading this book, thousands of dedicated scientists are studying things about you that you might have never considered, such as how your brain responds to a picture flashed on a screen or how your eyes adjust to a sunny day. It is hard to imagine a single thing about you that is not fascinating to some psychologist somewhere. As a human being you have been endowed with remarkable gifts—from the capacities to see, hear, smell, think, reason, and remember to the abilities to fall in love, strive for goals, and become someone’s hero. As you interact with the world every day, you manifest these gifts in a variety of ways that psychologists find fascinating to study.

So, although psychology shares many similarities with other sciences, especially in how it studies the world, it is different from other sciences because of what it studies: the many facets of you. As you learn more about psychology, you will also be learning about more aspects of yourself than you ever imagined existed. Throughout this book and your introductory psychology class, you will join in the passionate scientific inquiry that seeks to unravel the mystery that is you.

**PREVIEW**

This chapter begins by defining psychology more formally, and then gives context to that definition by reviewing the history and the intellectual underpinnings of the field. We next examine a number of contemporary approaches to the subject, as well as areas of specialization and potential careers. Our introduction to this dynamic, practical field closes by looking into how psychology can play a key role in human health and wellness.

### 1 Defining Psychology

*Explain what psychology is and describe the positive psychology movement.*

What is psychology? When asked this question, if you are like most people, you think of therapy. You probably imagine a situation where a clinical psychologist, be it Sigmund Freud or Dr. Phil, sees clients and tries to help them deal with a variety of mental problems. Yet formally defined, psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. There are three key terms in this definition: *science, behavior, and mental processes.*
As a science, psychology uses the systematic methods of science to observe human behavior and draw conclusions. The goals of psychological science are to describe, predict, and explain behavior. Researchers might be interested in knowing whether individuals will help a stranger who has fallen down. The researchers could devise a study in which they observe people walking past a person who needs help. Through many observations, the researchers could come to describe helping behavior by counting how many times it occurs in particular circumstances. The researchers may also try to predict who will help, and when, by examining characteristics of the individuals studied. Are happy people more likely to help? Are women or men more likely to help? What circumstances promote helping? After psychologists have analyzed their data, they also will want to explain why helping behavior occurred when it did.

Behavior is everything we do that can be directly observed—two people kissing, a baby crying, a college student riding a motorcycle. Mental processes are the thoughts, feelings, and motives that each of us experiences privately but that cannot be observed directly. Although we cannot directly see thoughts and feelings, they are nonetheless real. They include thinking about kissing someone, a baby’s feelings when its mother leaves the room, and a college student’s memory of a motorcycle ride.

Psychology Versus Common Sense: What Don’t You Already Know About Psychology?

One of the challenges facing teachers and practitioners of the science of psychology is overcoming the sense that everybody “knows” everything there is to know about psychology because we are all people. Of course, we all have brains—but we do not necessarily know how they work! So, it is worthwhile to ask the question, How is psychology different from our common knowledge about ourselves and one another?

You may think that psychology is the same as simple common sense about people. But, in fact, researchers often turn up the unexpected in human behavior. For example, it may seem obvious that couples who live together (cohabit) before marriage have a better chance of making the marriage last. After all, practice makes perfect, doesn’t it? However, researchers have found a higher rate of success for couples who marry before living together (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Popeno & Whitehead, 2005; Seltzer, 2004). It also might seem obvious that we would experience more stress and be less happy if we had to function in many different roles than if we functioned in only one role. Yet women who engage in multiple, such as wife, mother, and
career woman—report more satisfaction with their lives than women who perform a single role or fewer roles, such as wife or wife and mother (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Bennett & McDaniel, 2006).

As you read this book, you will encounter some findings that fit well with what you already know about people, but other conclusions will seem counterintuitive. Keep in mind that “what everybody knows” is a category that is influenced by historical and cultural context. Although it is shocking and incredible from our present-day perspective, there was a time when “everybody knew” that African Americans were innately intellectually inferior to Whites and that women were morally inferior to men. As you will see, psychology does not accept assumptions at face value. Psychology is a rigorous discipline that tests assumptions, bringing scientific data to bear on the questions of central interest to human beings (McBurney & White, 2007; Stanovich, 2007).

**Thinking Like a Psychologist Means Thinking Like a Scientist**

Psychologists approach human behavior as scientists. As scientific thinkers, they examine the available evidence about some aspect of mind and behavior, evaluate how strongly the data (information) support their hunches, analyze disconfirming evidence, and carefully consider whether they have explored all of the possible factors and explanations (Sternberg, Roediger, & Halpern, 2007). It is important to underscore how critical it is that psychologists look for biases in the way people think and behave. Consider, for example, a person who expresses wild enthusiasm about the remarkable effects of exercise on health when responding to survey questions about health awareness. It would be crucial for a researcher to uncover the fact that this particular individual sells exercise videos on the side and thus perhaps is communicating a biased perspective.

Psychologists, like other scientists, rely on critical thinking. **Critical thinking** is the process of thinking reflectively and productively and evaluating the evidence. Thinking critically means asking ourselves how we know something. Too often we have a tendency to recite, define, describe, state, and list rather than to analyze, infer, connect, synthesize, criticize, create, evaluate, think, and rethink (Brooks & Brooks, 2001). Thinking critically is an important aspect of psychology, as it is in all disciplines (Sternberg, 2007; Sternberg, Roediger, & Halpern, 2007). The ability to evaluate information critically is also essential to all areas of daily life (Halpern, 2003, 2007). For example, if you are planning to buy a car, you might want to collect information about different makes and models and evaluate their features and costs before deciding which one(s) to test drive. This is an exercise in critical thinking.

Critical thinking is not a spectator sport. It means actively engaging with ideas and not settling for easy answers. Critical thinking means being open-minded, curious, and careful.

As you will see throughout this book, psychologists do not agree on everything. Instead, psychology, like any science, is filled with debate and controversy. How might psychology benefit from these controversies? Psychology has advanced as a field because it does not accept simple explanations and because psychologists do not always concur with one another about why mind and behavior work the way they do. Psychologists have reached a more accurate understanding of mind and behavior because psychology fosters controversies and because psychologists think deeply and reflectively and examine the evidence on all sides.

What are some of psychology’s controversies? Here is a brief sample:

- Are memories of sexual abuse real or imagined?
- Can personality change?
- Is self-esteem always a good thing?
- Should the psychological disorders of children be treated with drugs?

Because it is important for you to think critically about controversies, each chapter of this book has a Critical Controversy feature that presents an issue of disagreement or
debate in contemporary psychology. Psychology is a science that is alive and constantly changing. Reviewing these controversies gives you a chance to see how scientists grapple with the ever-changing questions presented by their continuously emerging knowledge about human behavior.

One controversy in psychology centers on the growing popularity of a new approach to the field. That new perspective is called positive psychology.

**Positive Psychology**

So, psychology is the science of human behavior. As you consider this general definition of psychology, you might be thinking, Okay, where’s the couch? Where’s the mental illness? The science of psychology certainly includes the study of therapy and psychological disorders, but by definition psychology is a much more general science (Ash & Sturm, 2007). This discrepancy between popular beliefs and the reality of psychology was one motivating factor behind the debate in the discipline that began at the beginning of the twenty-first century. A number of scholars noted that psychology had become far too negative, focusing on what can go wrong in people’s lives rather than on what they can do competently and what can go right (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Too often, they said, psychology has characterized people as passive and victimized. The desire to study the full range of human experience motivated the *positive psychology movement*: the push for a stronger emphasis on research involving the experiences that people value (such as hope, optimism, and happiness), the traits associated with optimal capacities for love and work, and positive group and civic values (such as responsibility, civility, and tolerance) (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; Diener, 2000; Emmons, 2007; Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2006; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; Snyder & Lopez, 2006).

To get a sense of why positive psychology is a valuable perspective, imagine that you have been asked to create a science of “watchology.” You have two watches that have both had the unfortunate trauma of being left in the pocket of a pair of jeans as they churned and tumbled through the washer and dryer. One watch has suffered the worst possible fate—it no longer tells time. The other has emerged from the traumatic event still ticking. Which watch will you want to use in developing your theory of watchology? You quite reasonably conclude that the working watch will help you understand watches better than the broken one.

What does watchology have to do with psychology? When they think of psychology, many people think of Sigmund Freud. Certainly, Freud has had a lasting impact on the field and on the larger society. (As recently as March 2006, on the occasion of his 150th birthday, Freud was featured on the cover of *Newsweek.* But it is important to keep in mind that Freud based his ideas about human nature on the patients that he saw in his clinical practice—individuals who were struggling with psychological problems. His experiences with these individuals colored his outlook on all of humanity. Freud (1918/1996) once wrote, “I have found little that is ‘good’ about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash.”

This negative view of human nature has crept into general perceptions of what psychology is all about. Imagine, for example, that you are seated on a plane, having a pleasant conversation with the stranger sitting next to you. At some point you ask your seatmate what she does for a living, and she informs you she is a psychologist. You might think to yourself, “Uh-oh. What have I already told this person? What secrets does she know about me that I don’t know about myself? Has she been analyzing me this whole time?” Would you be surprised to discover that this psychologist studies happiness? Or intelligence? Or the processes related to the experience of vision? The study of abnormal problems is a very important aspect of psychology, but to equate the science of psychology entirely with the study of abnormal problems is like equating biology with the field of medicine or a cellular biologist with a medical doctor (which, as any pre-med major will assure you, is a mistake). As you read further, you will discover that psychology is a diverse field and that psychologists have wide-ranging interests. Psychologists have made extraordinary advances in understanding psychological...
disorders and treatment, and these topics are essential to an understanding of the science of psychology. At the same time, the field of psychology is broader than these topics.

In this book, we consider the full range of human behavior, including strengths and capacities as well as disorders and dysfunction. Psychology is interested in understanding the rich truths of human life in all its dimensions, including people’s best and worst experiences. Psychologists acknowledge that, as in the heroism of Jabbar Gibson, sometimes individuals’ best moments emerge amid the most difficult circumstances.

Research on the human capacity for forgiveness demonstrates this point (Cohen & others, 2006; Legaree, Turner, & Loliss, 2007; McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2007; Ross, Hertenstein, & Wrobel, 2007). Forgiveness is the act of letting go of our anger and resentment toward someone who has done something harmful to us. With forgiveness we cease seeking revenge or avoiding the person who did us harm, and we might even wish that person well. Most world religions place value on the sometimes challenging act of forgiveness. In October 2006, after Charles Carl Roberts IV took 10 young Amish girls hostage in a one-room schoolhouse in Pennsylvania, eventually killing 5 of them and wounding 5 others before killing himself, the grief-stricken Amish community focused not on hatred and revenge but on forgiveness. As funds were being set up for the victims’ families, the Amish insisted that one be established for the murderer’s family. As they prepared simple funerals for the dead girls, the community invited the wife of the killer to attend.

The willingness of the Amish people to forgive this horrible crime is both remarkable and puzzling. Can we scientifically understand the human ability to forgive even what might seem to be unforgivable? A number of psychologists have taken up the topic of forgiveness in research and clinical practice (Bono & McCullough, 2006; Cohen & others, 2006). Michael McCullough and his colleagues (2007) have shown that the capacity to forgive is an unfolding process that often takes time. Furthermore, sometimes forgiveness is a dynamic process—we might forgive someone for an offense immediately but then later return to thoughts of revenge or punishment. For the Amish, their deep religious faith led them to embrace forgiveness, where many people might have been motivated to seek revenge and retribution. Researchers also have explored the relation between religious commitment and forgiveness (Cohen & others, 2006; McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2007; Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, 2005).

The positive psychology movement is certainly not without controversy and critics (Lazarus, 2003). As already noted, however, controversy is a part of any science. Healthy debate characterizes the field of psychology, and a new psychological perspective has sometimes arisen when one scientist questions the views of another. Such ongoing debate and controversy are signs of a vigorous, vital discipline. Indeed, the very birth of the field was itself marked with controversy and debate. As we will see, great minds do not always think alike, especially when they are thinking about psychology.

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**REVIEW, ASSESS, AND SHARPEN YOUR THINKING**

**Review**

1. Explain what psychology is and describe the positive psychology movement.
   - Define psychology and discuss how psychology differs from our common knowledge about ourselves and others.
   - Discuss the role of critical thinking in scientific thought.
   - Outline the objectives of positive psychology and discuss why they are important.

**Assess**

1. How are psychology and common sense different in the study of people?
   - A. They are not different. Psychology is the study of what we know about ourselves and others.
   - B. Psychology uses the scientific method to answer questions about human behavior while common sense implies that everything is known, as through intuition.
   - C. Psychology focuses on behavior, while common sense focuses on thoughts.
   - D. Psychological findings are counterintuitive.
2. Which of the following statements is correct?
   A. Positive psychology focuses on human strengths and signs of resilience that often emerge out of a negative life experience, but does not examine negative aspects of life.
   B. Positive psychology has a long tradition in the field of psychology, dating back over 100 years.
   C. Positive psychology focuses only on persons in therapy.
   D. Positive psychology is based on Freud’s ideas about human nature.

3. On which of the following topics would a positive psychologist likely focus?
   A. the relationship between combat and post-traumatic stress disorder
   B. the relationship between well-being and income
   C. the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy with persons with bipolar disorder
   D. the rates of neuronal death in brain injured individuals

4. Which of the following is not a mental process?
   A. Thoughts
   B. Behaviors
   C. Emotions
   D. Motives

5. The goals of psychology include:
   A. The study of human behavior
   B. The description, prediction, and explanation of behavior
   C. The confirmation of intuition
   D. The study of thinking

Sharpen Your Thinking
The human capacity for forgiveness is a topic that interests psychologists. What is an important strength of your own that you think should be included in psychology’s research agenda? Why?

2 The Roots and Early Scientific Approaches of Psychology

Discuss the roots and early scientific foundations of psychology.

Psychology seeks to answer questions that people have been asking for thousands of years. For example:

- How do our senses perceive the world?
- How do we learn?
- What is memory?
- Why does one person grow and flourish, whereas another person struggles in life?
- Do dreams matter?
- Can people learn to be happier and more optimistic?

The notion that these questions might be answered by scientific inquiry is a relatively new idea. From the time human language included the word why and became rich enough to let people talk about the past, we have been creating myths to explain why things are the way they are. Ancient myths attributed most important events to the pleasure or displeasure of the gods: When a volcano erupted, the gods were angry; if two people fell in love, they had been struck by Cupid’s arrows. Gradually, myths gave way to philosophy—the rational investigation of the underlying principles of being and knowledge. People attempted to explain events in terms of natural rather than supernatural causes (Viney & King, 2003).

Western philosophy came of age in ancient Greece in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others debated the nature of thought and behavior, including the possible link between the mind and the body. Later philosophers, especially René Descartes, argued that the mind and body were completely separate and focused their attention on the mind. Psychology grew out of this tradition of thinking about the mind and body. The influence of philosophy on contemporary psychology persists today.
as researchers who study emotion still talk about Descartes, and scientists who study happiness refer back to Aristotle.

Philosophy was not the only discipline from which psychology emerged. Psychology also has roots in the natural sciences of biology and physiology (Johnson, 2008; Kalat, 2007). Indeed, it was Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), a German philosopher-physician, who put the pieces of the philosophy–natural science puzzle together to create the academic discipline of psychology.

Some historians like to say that modern psychology was born in December 1879 at the University of Leipzig, when Wundt and two young students performed an experiment to measure the time lag between the instant at which a person heard a sound and the instant at which that person actually pressed a telegraph key to signal that he had heard. The experiment was one of many attempts to measure human behavior through physiological measurement.

What was so special about this experiment? Wundt’s experiment was about the workings of the brain: He was trying to measure the time it took the human brain and nervous system to translate information into action. At the heart of this experiment was the idea that mental processes could be studied quantitatively—that is, that they could be measured. This focus ushered in the new science of psychology.

**Structuralism**

The main research conducted by Wundt and his collaborators focused on trying to discover basic elements, or “structures,” of mental processes. For example, they described three different dimensions of feeling: pleasure/displeasure, tension/relaxation, and excitement/depression. A student of Wundt’s, E. B. Titchener (1867–1927), gave Wundt’s approach the label of *structuralism* because of its focus on identifying the structures of the human mind.

The method used in the study of mental structures was *introspection* (literally, “looking inside”). For this type of experiment, a person was placed in a laboratory setting and was asked to think (introspect) about what was going on mentally as various events took place. For example, the individual might be subjected to a sharp, repetitive clicking sound and asked to report whatever conscious feelings the clicking produced. What made this method scientific was the systematic, detailed self-reports required of the person in the controlled laboratory setting.

These studies focused mainly on sensation and perception because they were the easiest processes to break down into component parts. For example, Titchener used the introspective method to study taste. He trained participants to identify and record their taste sensations. The outcome was the identification of four components of taste: bitter, sweet, salty, and sour. In the long run, though, conscious introspection was not a very productive method of exploring the basic elements of human behavior. You might be able to describe to someone how you solved a math problem using introspection, but could you explain the process by which you remember, say, your own phone number? It seems to pop into consciousness without your awareness of the operations that must be involved. Where did it come from? Where was it stored? How did you find it?

**Functionalism**

Although Wundt is most often regarded as the founding father of modern psychology, it was William James (1842–1910), perhaps more than any other person, who gave the field an American stamp. James’s approach to psychology developed out of his interest in the school of philosophy called *pragmatism*, which essentially holds that to find out the meaning of an idea, you must determine its consequences. So, an idea is evaluated based on how useful it is. From a pragmatic perspective, then, the question is not so much what the mind is (that is, its structures) as what it is for (its purpose or functions). This interest in the outcome of mental processes led James to emphasize cause and effect, prediction and control, and the important interaction of the environment and behavior. James’s view was eventually named *functionalism*.

In contrast to structuralism, which emphasized the components of the mind, *functionalism* was concerned with the functions and purposes of the mind and behavior.
in individuals’ adaptation to the environment. Structuralists were not interested in an individual’s interaction with the environment, but this activity was a major functionalist theme. Whereas the structuralists were looking inside the mind, searching for its structures, the functionalists were focusing more on what was going on in human interactions with the outside world. If structuralism is about the “what” of the mind, functionalism is about the “why.”

Central to functionalism is the question of why it is adaptive that people think the way they do. James and other functionalists did not believe in the existence of elementary, rigid structures of the mind. Instead, James saw the mind as flexible and fluid, characterized by constant change and adaptation in response to a continuous flow of information. James objected to the tendency of structuralists to break mental processes down into minute, separate components. Not surprisingly then, he called the natural flow of thought a stream of consciousness.

Functionalism meshed well with another important intellectual development of the time, the work of British naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–1882). In 1859, Darwin published his ideas in *On the Origin of Species*. He proposed the principle of natural selection, an evolutionary process that favors organisms’ traits or characteristics that are best adapted to reproduce and survive. He believed that organisms reproduce at rates that would cause enormous increases in the population of most species, yet noted that populations remain nearly constant. Darwin reasoned that an intense, constant struggle for food, water, and resources must occur among the young born in each generation, because many of the young do not survive. Those that do survive to adulthood pass their genes on to the next generation. Darwin concluded that organisms with biological features that led to more successful reproduction were better represented in subsequent generations. Over many generations, organisms with these characteristics would constitute a larger percentage of the population. Eventually this process could modify a whole population. If environmental conditions changed, however, other characteristics might become favored by natural selection, moving the process in a different direction.

If you are unfamiliar with Darwin’s theory of evolution, it might be useful to review these ideas through a simple example. Consider the question, Why do giraffes have long necks? An early explanation of this characteristic might be that giraffes live in places where the trees are very high, and so the giraffes must stretch their necks to get to their favorite food—leaves. Lots of stretching might lead to giraffes with longer necks. The problem with this explanation is that it does not tell us why giraffes are born with long necks. A characteristic cannot be passed from one generation to the next unless it is recorded in the genes. According to evolutionary theory, species change through random genetic mutation, so that presumably long, long ago, some giraffes were genetically predisposed to have longer necks, and some giraffes were genetically predisposed to have shorter necks. Only those with the long necks survived to reproduce, giving us the giraffes we see today. The survival of the giraffes with long necks is a product of natural selection. Natural selection favors organisms’ traits or characteristics that are best adapted to survive in a particular environment. Evolutionary theory fits well with the functionalist perspective since it emphasizes the survival function of characteristics. Evolutionary theory implies that the way we are, at least partially, is the way that is best suited to surviving in our environment (Kardong, 2008). James was certainly influenced by Darwin’s work (Myers, 1986). The influence of functionalism on psychology is apparent today in the application of the psychology to areas such as business and education (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007; Santrock, 2008).

Wundt and James were each generally unimpressed with the other’s perspective. Wundt famously compared James’s masterwork *The Principles of Psychology* to literature: “It is beautiful but it is not psychology” (Fancher, 1996, p. 266). In turn, James wrote that Wundt’s structuralist school of thought had “plenty of school, but no thought” (James, 1904, p. 1). Nonetheless, although these two great minds did not agree, each had a profound influence on the science of psychology. Indeed, if you trace the intellectual history of any living psychologist, the academic family tree will end with one of these notable figures.
2. Discuss the roots and early scientific foundations of psychology.
   - Summarize the roots of psychology and the view of psychology called structuralism.
   - Define functionalism and explain the differing emphases of structuralists and functionalists.

Assess

1. Who is considered the founder of functionalism?
   A. Wilhelm Wundt  
   B. Sigmund Freud  
   C. William James  
   D. Socrates

2. Which of the following statements is correct?
   A. Structuralism focuses on the purpose of the mind.
   B. Functionalism focuses on the structures of the brain.
   C. Functionalism led to the identification of the components of taste.
   D. Structuralism employs the method of introspection.

3. Who wrote The Principles of Psychology?
   A. William James  
   B. Charles Darwin  
   C. Wilhelm Wundt  
   D. Rene Descartes

4. Wundt is considered the founder of modern psychology because he
   A. used animal research to understand the human mind.
   B. studied mental processes using quantitative experiments.
   C. used more philosophy than biology to understand the mind.
   D. tried to prove that the mind and body are completely separate.

5. Why is Charles Darwin’s work relevant to psychology?
   A. Darwin’s research demonstrated that there are few differences between humans and animals.
   B. Darwin’s principle of natural selection suggests that human behavior is partially a result of efforts to survive.
   C. Darwin stated that humans descended from apes, which allows psychology to use animal research to understand human behavior.
   D. Darwin disproved functionalism.

Sharpen Your Thinking

List some questions about your mind and behavior that a deeper understanding of psychology might help you to answer.

3. Contemporary Approaches to Psychology

Summarize the main themes of seven approaches to psychology.

If structuralism won the battle to be the birthplace of psychology, it is safe to say that functionalism won the war. Today most psychologists talk about the adaptiveness of behavior and mental processes and rely on methods beyond introspection to understand the complex processes of the human mind (Strack & Schwarz, 2007). In the century since Wundt and James debated the best way to think about psychology, a number of broad approaches have emerged. In this section we briefly survey seven different approaches that represent the intellectual backdrop of psychological science: biological, behavioral, psychodynamic, humanistic, cognitive, evolutionary, and sociocultural.

The Biological Approach

Some psychologists examine behavior and mental processes through the biological approach, which is a focus on the body, especially the brain and nervous system. For example, researchers might investigate the way your heart races when you are afraid or how your hands sweat when you tell a lie. Although a number of physiological systems may be involved in thoughts and feelings, perhaps the largest contribution to physiological psychology has come through the emergence of neuroscience (Bosel, 2007; Hagner, 2007).

Neuroscience is the scientific study of the structure, function, development, genetics, and biochemistry of the nervous system. Neuroscience emphasizes that the brain and nervous
system are central to understanding behavior, thought, and emotion. Neuroscientists believe that thoughts and emotions have a physical basis in the brain. Electrical impulses zoom throughout the brain's cells, releasing chemical substances that enable us to think, feel, and behave. Our remarkable human capabilities would not be possible without the brain and nervous system, which constitute the most complex, intricate, and elegant system imaginable. Although biological approaches might sometimes seem to reduce complex human experience into simple physical structures, developments in neuroscience have allowed psychologists to understand the brain as an amazingly complex organ, perhaps just as complex as the psychological processes linked to its functioning.

The Behavioral Approach

The behavioral approach emphasizes the scientific study of observable behavioral responses and their environmental determinants. In other words, the behavioral approach focuses on interactions with the environment that can be seen and measured. The principles of the behavioral approach also have been widely applied to help people change their behavior for the better (Martin & Pear, 2007; Watson & Tharp, 2007). The psychologists who adopt this approach are called behaviorists. Under the intellectual leadership of John B. Watson (1878–1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904–1990), behaviorism dominated psychological research during the first half of the twentieth century.

Many studies with a behavioral approach take place in experimental laboratories under carefully controlled conditions. When behaviorism was in its infancy, virtually all behavioral studies were conducted in the laboratory, although today many take place outside the laboratory in natural settings such as schools and homes.

Skinner emphasized that what we do is the ultimate test of who we are. He believed that rewards and punishments determine our behavior. For example, a child might behave in a well-mannered fashion because her parents have rewarded this behavior. An adult might work hard at a job because of the money he gets for his effort. We do these things, say behaviorists, not because of an inborn motivation to be competent people but rather because of the environmental conditions we have experienced and continue to experience (Skinner, 1938).

Contemporary behaviorists still emphasize the importance of observing behavior to understand an individual, and they continue to use the rigorous sorts of experimental methods advocated by Watson and Skinner (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). They also continue to stress the importance of environmental determinants of behavior (DeSantis-Moniaci & Altshuler, 2007). However, not every behaviorist today accepts the earlier behaviorists' rejection of thought processes (often called cognition) (Kushner, 2007).

The Psychodynamic Approach

The psychodynamic approach emphasizes unconscious thought, the conflict between biological instincts and society's demands, and early family experiences. This approach argues that unlearned biological instincts, especially sexual and aggressive impulses, influence the way people think, feel, and behave. These instincts, buried deep within the unconscious mind, are often at odds with society's demands. Although Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the founding father of the psychodynamic approach, saw much of psychological development as instinctual, he theorized that early relationships with parents are the chief forces that shape an
individual's personality. Freud's (1917) theory was the basis for the therapeutic technique that he called psychoanalysis. His approach was controversial when he introduced it in Vienna at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, his ideas flourished, and many clinicians still find value in his insights into human behavior.

Unlike the behavioral approach, the psychodynamic approach focuses almost exclusively on clinical applications rather than on experimental research. For this reason, psychodynamic theories always have been controversial and difficult to validate. Nonetheless, they are an important part of psychology. Today's psychodynamic theories tend to place less emphasis on sexual instincts and more on cultural experiences as determinants of behavior.

The Humanistic Approach

The humanistic approach emphasizes a person's positive qualities, the capacity for positive growth, and the freedom to choose any destiny. Humanistic psychologists stress that people have the ability to control their lives and avoid being manipulated by the environment (Maslow, 1971; Rogers, 1961). They theorize that, rather than being driven by unconscious impulses (as the psychodynamic approach dictates) or by external rewards (as the behavioral approach emphasizes), people can choose to live by higher human values, such as altruism—unselfish concern for other people's well-being—and free will. Humanistic psychologists also think that people have a tremendous potential for self-understanding and that the way to help others achieve self-understanding is by being warm and supportive. Many aspects of this optimistic approach appear in research on motivation, emotion, and personality, and in many ways the humanistic perspective provides a foundation for positive psychology (Diaz-Laplante, 2007; Patterson & Joseph, 2007).

The Cognitive Approach

According to cognitive psychologists, your brain hosts or embodies a "mind" whose mental processes allow you to remember, make decisions, plan, set goals, and be creative (Gluck & others, 2007; Sternberg, 2008). The cognitive approach, then, emphasizes the mental processes involved in knowing: how we direct our attention, perceive, remember, think, and solve problems. For example, cognitive psychologists want to know how we solve algebraic equations, why we remember some things for only a short time but remember others for a lifetime, and how we can use imagery to plan for the future.

Cognitive psychologists view the mind as an active and aware problem-solving system (Plessner, Beisch, & Betseh, 2007). This positive view contrasts with the behavioral view, which portrays behavior as controlled by external environmental forces. The cognitive view also contrasts with pessimistic views (such as those of Freud) that see human behavior as being controlled by instincts or other unconscious forces. In the cognitive view, an individual's mental processes are in control of behavior through memories, perceptions, images, and thinking.

The Evolutionary Approach

Although arguably all of psychology emerges out of evolutionary theory, some psychologists emphasize an evolutionary approach that uses evolutionary ideas such as adaptation, reproduction, and "survival of the fittest" as the basis for explaining specific human behaviors. David Buss (1995, 2008) argues that just as evolution shapes our physical features, such as body shape, it also influences our decision making, level of aggressiveness, fears, and mating patterns. Thus, evolutionary
psychologists argue, the way we adapt can be traced to problems animals and early humans faced in adapting to their environments (Dunbar & Barrett, 2007).

Evolutionary psychologists believe that their approach provides an umbrella that unifies the diverse fields of psychology (Bjorklund, 2007; Geary, 2006). Not all psychologists agree with this conclusion. For example, some critics stress that the evolutionary approach provides an inaccurate account of why men and women have different social roles and does not adequately account for cultural diversity and experiences (Wood & Eagly, 2007). But the evolutionary approach is young, and its future may be fruitful.

The Sociocultural Approach

The sociocultural approach examines the ways in which the social and cultural environments influence behavior. Socioculturalists argue that a full understanding of a person's behavior requires knowing about the cultural context in which the behavior occurs (Kagitcibioglu, 2007; Shiraev & Levy, 2007). For example, in some cultures, including the United States, it may be entirely acceptable for a woman to be assertive, but in other cultures, such as in Iran, the same behavior may be considered inappropriate.

We find an example of the sociocultural approach in recent research examining motivation in Western versus Eastern cultures. Imagine that you are in a psychological study in which you are asked to solve a number of puzzles. Some of the puzzles are quite easy, and you complete them with no problem. The other puzzles are more difficult; try as you might, you cannot figure them out. After the study you are left alone with the puzzles, and the researcher informs you that if you like, you can keep playing with the puzzles while she prepares the rest of the study materials. Which puzzles would you be likely to work on?

If you are like most U.S. college students, you will gravitate toward the easy puzzles, choosing to work on what you know you are already good at. However, if you are like most Asian students, you will pick up the difficult puzzles and keep working on those that you have not yet solved (Heine, 2005; Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). These cultural differences are thought to emerge out of differing views of the self, goals, and learning. It has been suggested that Asian students show a particularly adaptive response to task difficulty and failure and that U.S. students might benefit from looking at failure as an opportunity to learn rather than as something to avoid.

The sociocultural approach focuses not only on comparisons of behavior across countries but also on the behavior of individuals from different ethnic and cultural groups within a country (Berry, 2007). Thus there is increasing interest in the behavior of African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, especially in terms of the factors that have restricted or enhanced their ability to adapt and cope with living in a predominantly White society (Banks, 2008; Bennett, 2007).

These seven approaches to understanding psychology provide different and often complementary views of the same behavior. Think about a simple event you might experience—say, seeing a cute puppy. Seeing that puppy involves physical processes in the eyes, nervous system, and brain. But the moment you spot that puppy, you might smile without thinking. You might feel the cuteness of the puppy give your heart a little squeeze. Such an emotional reaction might be a response to your past learning experiences with animals, or to your unconscious memories of a childhood dog, or even to evolutionary processes that promoted cuteness as a way for helpless offspring to survive. You might find yourself tempted to pick up and cuddle the little guy. Sociocultural factors might play a role in your decision about whether to ask the owner if holding the puppy would be okay, whether to share those warm feelings about the puppy with others, and even whether (as in some cultures) to view that puppy as food.

The sociocultural approach especially contrasts with the evolutionary approach. To read about how these two approaches view altruism, see the Critical Controversy.

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evolutionary approach A psychological perspective that uses evolutionary ideas such as adaptation, reproduction, and “survival of the fittest” as the basis for explaining specific human behaviors.

sociocultural approach A psychological perspective that examines the ways in which the social and cultural environments influence behavior.
Critical Controversy

Can Humans Really Be Altruistic?

If there was a silver lining in the dark cloud of September 11, 2001, it was that firefighters, police officers, emergency medical personnel, and many ordinary individuals altruistically risked their own lives to help people caught in the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Other heroes of 9/11 included the passengers aboard United Flight 93 who selflessly forced the plane to crash in a field instead of allowing it to hit the intended target.

Altruistic behavior is often defined as voluntary behavior that is intended to benefit others and is not motivated by any expectation of personal gain. The most extreme form of altruism is giving one’s life to save someone else, as did many responding to the attacks of September 11.

Altruism poses an important problem for the evolutionary approach to psychology (Van Lange & others, 2007). According to Darwin’s theory of evolution, behaviors that favor an organism’s reproductive success are likely to be passed on to future generations. In fact, altruistic behavior reduces a person’s chances of reproductive success, to the extent that it means providing one’s resources to another with no apparent gain. Therefore, altruists should be at a clear evolutionary disadvantage compared to those who act more selfishly and thereby ensure the propagation of their own genes. Over many generations, selfish behavior should be favored and altruistic behavior should die out, according to the evolutionary view.

Seen in this way through the Darwinian lens of the survival of the fittest, human altruism is hard to understand. The concept of kin selection, however, provides one way to reconcile altruism with evolutionary theory. According to this concept, our genes survive not just when we reproduce but also when our relatives reproduce. Kin selection includes the idea of inclusive fitness, which means that a gene may be considered successfully adaptive if it benefits not only the individual who possesses it but also anyone who is genetically related to that person (Caporael, 2007). Indeed, from an evolutionary perspective, the individuals who carry our genes—our children—have a special place in the domain of altruism. Natural selection favors parents who care for their children and improve their probability of surviving. Human parents who feed their young are performing a biologically altruistic act because feeding increases their offsprings’ chances of survival. So is a mother bird that altruistically tries to drive predators away from the fledglings in her nest. She is willing to sacrifice herself so that three or four of her young offspring will have the chance to survive, thus preserving her genes.

The theory of kin selection can explain why some people forgo having their own children and choose instead to care for relatives and relatives’ children. What this theory cannot explain is altruism directed toward people outside the family—and especially toward strangers. However, evolutionary psychologists believe that tremendous benefits can come to individuals who form cooperative, reciprocal relationships (Bernhard, Fischbacher, & Fehr, 2006; Wenseleers & Ratnieks, 2006). By being good to someone now, individuals increase the likelihood that they will receive a benefit from the other person in the future. Through this reciprocal process, both gain something beyond what they could have gained by acting alone.

In contrast to the evolutionary interpretation, the sociocultural approach attempts to explain altruistic behavior as being the result of social and cultural experiences. According to the sociocultural approach, each of us is a product of many culturally and socially derived relationships, which continually unfold over time (Newson, Richerson, & Boyd, 2007; Shiraev & Levy, 2007). Because our relationships within our culture are open-ended and adaptable rather than rigidly determined by our genes, genuine acts of altruism...
are possible. Simply put, if our culture teaches us to be kind without regard for our own gain, then we can become true altruists.

By providing a theory that emphasizes the importance of adaptation and natural selection in explaining all behavior, the evolutionary approach has much to recommend it (Fletcher & Zwick, 2006; Freeman & Herron, 2007). It forces us to look at our capacity for selfishness and to refine our notions of kindness and altruism. Yet the sociocultural approach also is attractive, because it stresses that people can be genuinely altruistic (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). This possibility is what comes to mind when we think about the firefighters, police officers, and passengers who sacrificed their lives on September 11, 2001. In the end, this contrast in views may well sharpen our understanding of what it is to be fully human.

What Do You Think?
- Are people ever truly altruistic? Or are they operating according to selfish motives?
- Have you ever acted in a genuinely altruistic fashion? If so, when and how? Could your behavior be explained instead by theories of kin selection?
- What kind of research might settle the question of whether humans are capable of genuine altruism?

REVIEW, ASSESS, AND SHARPEN YOUR THINKING

Review

3 Summarize the main themes of seven approaches to psychology.
- Describe the biological approach.
- Discuss the behavioral approach.
- Summarize the psychodynamic approach.
- Explain the humanistic approach.
- Provide an overview of the cognitive approach.
- Review the evolutionary approach.
- Recap the sociocultural approach.

Assess

1. Which of the following areas of psychology is most interested in the impact of early family experiences?
   A. positive psychology
   B. cognitive psychology
   C. psychodynamic psychology
   D. behavioral psychology

2. Which of the following approaches would view learning as a combination of perceptual and memory processes?
   A. the positive psychology approach
   B. the behavioral approach
   C. the sociocultural approach
   D. the cognitive approach

3. A psychologist who examines the role of political messages in the well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people would be most closely associated with which of the following approaches?
   A. the cognitive approach
   B. the evolutionary approach
   C. the sociocultural approach
   D. the psychodynamic approach

4. Which of the following approaches would focus on self-fulfillment, altruism, and personal growth?
   A. the cognitive approach
   B. the behavioral approach
   C. the psychodynamic approach
   D. the humanistic approach

5. A psychologist who conducts studies of identical twins to determine if having a twin with a psychological disorder increases the risk of the other twin developing the same disorder would be most closely associated with
   A. the evolutionary approach.
   B. the psychodynamic approach.
   C. the behavioral approach.
   D. the biological approach.

Sharpen Your Thinking

Suppose you could talk with a psychologist specializing in each of the seven approaches. Think about the members of your family and other people you know. Write down at least one question you might want to ask about the thoughts and behaviors of these people.
4 Areas of Specialization and Careers in Psychology

Evaluate areas of specialization and careers in psychology.

If you were to go to graduate school to earn an advanced degree in psychology, you would be required to specialize in a particular area. Here we review the major areas of psychology that are the focus of this book. It is important to keep in mind that these specializations are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the boundaries that separate these areas are quite fuzzy, and psychologists in one field may collaborate with researchers in another. Throughout this book, in a feature called Intersection (see page 21 of this chapter for the first example), we highlight areas where different fields of psychology come together to address important and often intriguing research questions.

Areas of Specialization

Psychology has many areas of specialization. In 2007, there were 56 divisions in the American Psychological Association, each focusing on a specific area of psychology. The most recent division to be added was trauma psychology. Here we describe some of the main specializations in the field of psychology.

Physiological Psychology and Behavioral Neuroscience Researchers who study physiological psychology are interested in the physical processes that underlie mental processes such as vision and memory. Physiological psychologists may use animal models (that is, they may use animals, such as rats, to study processes that are difficult or impossible to study in the same way in humans) to examine such topics as the development of the nervous system. The field of behavioral neuroscience also focuses on biological processes, especially the brain’s role in behavior (Kolb & Whishaw, 2007). In Chapter 3 we examine the many ways that physiological processes relate to psychological experience.

Developmental Psychology Developmental psychology is concerned with how people become who they are, from conception to death. In particular, developmental psychologists concentrate on the biological and environmental factors that contribute to human development. For many years the major emphasis of developmentalists was child development. However, an increasing number of today’s developmental psychologists show a strong interest in adult development and aging (Birren & Schaele, 2007; Schaele, 2007). Their inquiries range across the biological, cognitive, and social domains of life. Chapter 4 reviews the key findings in this fascinating area.

Sensation and Perception Researchers who study sensation and perception focus on the physical systems and psychological processes that allow us to experience the world—to smell the Thanksgiving turkey in the oven and to see the beauty of a sunset. These complex processes are the subject of Chapter 5.

Cognitive Psychology Cognitive psychology (addressed in Chapters 8 and 9) is the broad name given to the field of psychology that examines attention, consciousness, information processing, and memory. Cognitive psychologists are also interested in cognitive skills and abilities such as problem solving, decision making, expertise, and intelligence, topics covered in Chapter 9 (Gluck & others, 2007; Sternberg, 2006). Researchers in cognitive psychology and sensation perception are sometimes called experimental psychologists.

Learning Learning is the complex process by which behavior changes to adapt to changing circumstances. Learning has been addressed from the behavioral and cognitive perspectives, and this topic is covered in Chapter 7 (Bandura, 2007a, 2007b).
Motivation and Emotion  Researchers from a variety of specializations are interested in these two important aspects of experience. Research questions addressed by scientists who study motivation include how individuals persist to attain a difficult goal and how rewards affect the experience of motivation (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Emotion researchers delve into such topics as the physiological and brain processes that underlie emotional experience, the role of emotional expression in health, and the possibility that emotions are universal (Barrett & others, 2007; Frijda, 2007). These fascinating questions are examined in Chapter 10.

Personality Psychology  Personality psychology focuses on the relatively enduring characteristics of individuals. Personality psychologists study such topics as traits, goals, motives, genetics, personality development, and well-being (Cloninger, 2008). Researchers in personality psychology are interested in those aspects of your psychological makeup that make you uniquely you. The field of personality is explored fully in Chapter 11.

Social Psychology  Social psychology deals with people’s social interactions, relationships, social perceptions, social cognition, and attitudes. Social psychologists are interested in the influence of groups on individuals’ thinking and behavior and in the ways that the groups to which we belong influence our attitudes (Brewer, 2007). Some of the research questions that concern social psychologists include understanding and working to reduce racial prejudice, determining whether two heads really are better than one, and exploring how the presence of others influences performance (Mays, Cochran, & Burnes, 2007). Social psychologists believe that we can better understand mind and behavior if we know how people function in groups. Chapter 12 reviews the major research findings of social psychology.

Clinical and Counseling Psychology  Clinical and counseling psychology is the most widely practiced specialization in psychology. Clinical and counseling psychologists diagnose and treat people with psychological problems (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2007; Prochaska & Norcross, 2007). Counseling psychologists sometimes deal with people who have less serious problems (Santee, 2007). For example, counseling psychologists may work with students, advising them about personal problems and career planning.

A clinical psychologist typically has a doctoral degree in psychology, which requires 3 to 4 years of graduate work and 1 year of internship in a mental health facility. Clinical psychologists are different from psychiatrists, who study psychiatry, which is a branch of medicine. Psychiatrists are physicians with a doctor of medicine (MD) degree who subsequently specialize in abnormal behavior and psychotherapy. Despite their different training, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists are alike in sharing a common interest in improving the lives of people with mental health problems. One important distinction is that psychiatrists can prescribe drugs, whereas clinical psychologists generally cannot. Chapters 14 and 15 address the intriguing world of psychological disorders and treatment.

Health Psychology  Health psychology is a multidimensional approach to health that emphasizes psychological factors, lifestyle, and the nature of the healthcare delivery system (Taylor, 2007). Many health psychologists study the roles of stress and coping in people’s lives (Stanton, Revenson, & Tennen, 2007). Health psychologists may work in physical or mental health areas. Some are members of multidisciplinary teams that conduct research or provide clinical services. Health psychology is examined in Chapter 16.

James W. Pennebaker of the University of Texas, Austin, is a distinguished social psychologist. His research probes the connections among traumatic life experience, expressive writing, physical and mental health, and work performance.
Social psychologists explore the powerful influence of groups (such as, clockwise, Chinese Americans, members of motorcycle clubs, gay dads, military families, and inner-city youths) on individuals' attitudes, thinking, and behavior.

The psychology specialties that we have discussed so far are the main areas of psychology that we cover in this book. However, they do not represent an exhaustive list of the interests of the field. Other specializations in psychology include the following.

**Industrial and Organizational Psychology**  Industrial and organizational psychology (I/O psychology) centers on the workplace—both on the workers and on the organizations that employ them. I/O psychology is often divided into industrial psychology and organizational psychology. Among the main concerns of industrial psychology are personnel matters and human resource management (Fouad, 2007). Thus, industrial psychology is increasingly referred to as personnel psychology. Organizational psychology examines the social and group influences of the organization (McShane & von Glinow, 2007). I/O psychology is the focus of the online chapter.

**Community Psychology**  Community psychology is concerned with providing accessible care for people with psychological problems. Community-based mental health centers are one means of delivering services such as outreach programs to people in need, especially those who traditionally have been underserved by mental health professionals (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2007). Community psychologists view human behavior in terms of adaptation to resources and the specific situation. They work to create communities that are more supportive of residents by pinpointing needs, providing needed services, and teaching people how to gain access to resources that are already available (Beeson & others, 2006). Community psychologists are also concerned with prevention. That is, they try to prevent mental health problems by identifying high-risk groups and then intervening with appropriate services and by stimulating new opportunities in the community.
School and Educational Psychology  School and educational psychology centrally concerns children’s learning and adjustment in school. School psychologists in elementary and secondary school systems test children, make recommendations about educational placement, and work on educational planning teams. Educational psychologists work at colleges and universities, teach classes, and do research on teaching and learning (Alexander & Winne, 2006).

Environmental Psychology  Environmental psychology is the study of the interactions between people and the physical environment. Environmental psychologists explore the effects of physical settings in most major areas of psychology, including perception, cognition, learning, development, abnormal behavior, and social relations (Israel & others, 2006; Sallis & Glanz, 2006). Topics that an environmental psychologist might study range from how different building and room arrangements influence behavior to what strategies might be used to reduce human behavior that harms the environment.

Psychology of Women  The psychology of women studies psychological, social, and cultural influences on women’s development and behavior. This field stresses the importance of integrating information about women with current psychological knowledge and beliefs and applying the information to society and its institutions (Hyde, 2007; Smith, 2007).

Forensic Psychology  Forensic psychology is the field of psychology that applies psychological concepts to the legal system (Fradella, 2006). Social and cognitive psychologists increasingly conduct research on topics related to psychology and law. Forensic psychologists are hired by legal teams to provide input about many aspects of a trial, such as jury selection. Forensic psychologists with clinical training may also provide expert testimony in trials, particularly to add their expertise to the question of whether a criminal is likely to be a danger to society.

Sport Psychology  Sport psychology applies psychology’s principles to improving sport performance and enjoying sport participation (Cox, 2007; Williams, 2006). Sport psychology is a relatively new field, but it is rapidly gaining acceptance. It is now common to hear about elite athletes working with a sport psychologist to improve their games.

Cross-Cultural Psychology   Cross-cultural psychology is the study of culture’s role in understanding behavior, thought, and emotion (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007). Cross-cultural psychologists compare the nature of psychological processes in different cultures with a special interest in whether psychological phenomena are universal or culture-specific. The International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology promotes research on cross-cultural comparisons and awareness of culture’s role in psychology. To read about some cross-cultural research on a topic of interest to almost everyone, see the intersection on how culture influences happiness.

Careers

Psychologists do not pass all of their time in a laboratory, white-smocked with clipboard in hand, observing rats and crunching numbers. Some psychologists spend their days seeing individuals with problems; others teach at universities and conduct research. Still others work in business and industry, designing more efficient criteria for hiring. In short, psychology is a field with many areas of specialization.

Could you get passionate about psychology? Have you ever thought about majoring in psychology? Students who major in psychology often find the subject matter highly interesting (Kuther & Morgan, 2007; Landrum & Davis, 2007). In the remaining chapters of this book, you will encounter hundreds of truly fascinating inquiries in psychology.
Cross-Cultural Psychology and Emotion: Are Some Cultures Happier Than Others?

When you think of all the things that might make a life good, you would probably include happiness. When asked to make three wishes for anything at all, many people wish for happiness (King & Broyles, 1997). And worldwide, people value being happy (Inglehart, 1990).

How do psychologists study happiness? Using the 1–7 scale, read the 5 statements below and indicate your agreement with each item.

7 Strongly Agree
6 Agree
5 Slightly Agree
4 Neither Agree Nor Disagree
3 Slightly Disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly Disagree

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

You have just completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener & others, 1985), a commonly used questionnaire that measures how generally happy people are with their lives. To find out how happy you perceive yourself to be, add up your ratings and divide by 5. This average rating could be considered your level of general happiness. This scale and others like it have been used to measure happiness levels in a broad range of studies in many different countries.

Based on such research, Ed and Carol Diener (1996) have declared that “most people are pretty happy,” scoring above the midpoint on the scale you just completed. These researchers concluded that being generally happy might be a characteristic of most people and that evolution may have endowed us with a propensity to be moderately happy most of the time. Still, research on happiness in various cultures has generally centered on relatively industrialized countries. What about truly nonindustrialized cultures?

When asked to make three wishes for anything at all, many people wish for happiness.

In a recent study, levels of happiness were examined in groups of people who have not generally been included in psychological studies (Biswas-Diener, Vitterso, & Diener, 2005). The research included three groups: the Inuits of Greenland, the Masai of southern Kenya, and American Old Order Amish. All three groups completed measures essentially the same as the ones you just did. The Inuit tribe studied (the Inughuit) live at 79 degrees latitude (very far north!), in the harshest climate inhabited by a traditional human society. The landscape consists of rocks, glaciers, and the sea. Farming is impossible. The Inughuits do have some modern conveniences, such as electricity and running water, but they generally adhere to a traditional hunting culture. It is not uncommon to find an Inughuit hunter carving a seal or caribou on the kitchen floor while children in the next room watch TV. Most of us might feel a little blue in the winter months when gloomy weather seems to stretch on, day after day.

For the Inughuits, however, the sun never rises at all throughout the winter months, and in the summer, it never sets. How happy could an individual be in such a difficult setting? Pretty happy, it turns out, as the Inughuits averaged a 5.0 on the Satisfaction with Life Scale.

The Masai are an indigenous African nomadic group who live in villages of about 20 people, with little exposure to the West. The Masai are known to be fierce warriors, and their culture has many traditional ceremonies built around a boy’s passage from childhood to manhood. Boys are circumcised between the ages of 15 and 22, and they are forbidden from moving or making a sound during the procedure. Girls also experience circumcision as they enter puberty, a controversial rite that involves the removal of the clitoris and that makes childbirth extremely difficult. The Masai practice child marriage and polygamy, and each tribe has a “medicine man.” Women in Masai culture have very little power and are generally expected to do most of the work. How happy could an individual be in this context? Masai men and women who completed the measure orally in their native tongue, Maa, averaged a 5.4 on the life satisfaction scale (Biswas-Diener, Vitterso, & Diener, 2005).

Finally, the Old Order Amish belong to a strict religious sect that explicitly rejects modern aspects of life. The Amish separate themselves from mainstream society and can be seen on horse and buggy in various areas of the midwestern and northeastern United States. The women wear bonnets, and the men sport beards, dark clothes, and old-fashioned brimmed hats. Children are schooled only to the 8th grade. The people farm without modern machinery and dedicate their lives to simplicity—without radios, TVs, CDs, DVDs, iPods, cell phones, washing machines, and cars. But the Amish are still relatively happy, averaging 4.4 on the 7-point happiness scale (Biswas-Diener, Vitterso, & Diener, 2005).

These results converge with the findings of a host of other studies on happiness indicating that most individuals are indeed happy. But there is evidence for national differences in happiness. In one study, levels of happiness were examined in over 100,000 people from 55 nations (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). The happiest countries were Iceland, Sweden, Australia,
Denmark, Canada, Switzerland, and the United States. The least happy nations were the Dominican Republic, Cameroon, China, Russia, and South Korea. What might account for national differences in general happiness? Among the factors that were found to relate to increased national well-being were income, civil rights, and social equality (including the number of girls enrolled in secondary school).

Research on cultural factors in well-being suggests that even if most people are indeed reasonably happy, the factors that affect happiness may be culture-specific (Tov & Diener, 2007). Researchers have distinguished individualistic cultures from collectivistic cultures (Triandis, 2007). Individualistic cultures (such as the United States and western European nations) emphasize the uniqueness of each individual and his or her thoughts, feelings, and choices. Individualistic cultures view the person as having an independent sense of self, separate from his or her social group. In contrast, collectivistic cultures (such as those in East Asia) emphasize the social group and the roles the individual plays in that larger group. Collectivistic cultures view the person as embedded in the social network or having an interdependent sense of self. Researchers have found that the individualism is associated with higher levels of personal happiness (Diener, 2000; Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995).

This difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures is all the more interesting when we consider that although individualistic cultures report higher levels of personal happiness, they also have higher suicide rates. Similarly, individualistic cultures are characterized by higher levels of marital satisfaction but also higher divorce rates (Diener, 2000).

It may be that individuals in collectivistic cultures are more likely to sacrifice personal happiness for the sake of duty—for instance, staying in an unsatisfying marriage. Indeed, personal happiness is higher for individuals in collectivistic cultures when their personal goals and values fit societal dictates (Lu, 2006).

One factor that differs across cultures in relation to happiness is the individual's level of consistency across various situations. Are you essentially the same person at work, at school, and in your interactions with friends, family members, and romantic partners? In the West, being consistent across different situations is often considered an aspect of psychological health and of living in a way that is "true to yourself." In addition, in the West, when individuals perceive themselves to be consistent across different situations, they report higher levels of happiness. However, in other cultures, among them Korea (a collectivistic culture), consistency is unrelated to well-being (Suh, 2002). In more collectivistic cultures, tailoring one's behavior to social situations and roles is not experienced as being fake but rather as pursuing the goal of harmony with others.

This research shows how putting the central questions of psychology in a cross-cultural context can illuminate not only general human characteristics (such as happiness) but also differences in the culture-bound processes that lead to these characteristics (such as individualism versus collectivism). Further, cross-cultural research can help us to identify important characteristics within members of the same culture that influence the process by which individuals define and lead happy lives (Cross, Gore, & Morris, 2003; Kagitzbasi, 2007; Shiraev & Levy, 2007; Tov & Diener, 2007).

Not only do you gain considerable knowledge and understanding of the mind and behavior, but majoring in psychology equips you with a rich and diverse portfolio of skills that serve you well in many different types of work, both practical and professional (Morgan & Korschgen, 2006). A psychology major helps you improve your skills in research, measurement and computing, problem solving, critical thinking, and writing. Integrating these skills, which span the arts and sciences, provides you with unique qualifications. And even if you are not a psychology major and do not plan to major in psychology, this course and others in psychology can give you a richer, deeper understanding of many areas of life.

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FIGURE 1.1
Some Job Possibilities for Students with an Undergraduate Degree in Psychology

A psychology degree opens the door to many possible careers in the realms of business, social and human services, and research.
Is Psychology in Your Future?

Instructions
Students who are successful as psychology majors have a profile that is related to the questions below. Answer true or false to each item.

1. I often think about what makes people do what they do. __________
2. I like reading about new findings that scientists have discovered doing behavioral research. __________
3. I am often skeptical when someone tries to persuade me about behavioral claims unless there is evidence to back up the claim. __________
4. I like the prospect of measuring behavior and doing statistics to determine meaningful differences. __________
5. I can usually come up with multiple explanations to account for behavior. __________
6. I think I could come up with ideas to research to help explain behaviors I am curious about. __________
7. I am often approached by others who want me to listen to their problems and share my ideas about what to do. __________
8. I don’t get especially frustrated if I can’t get answers to my questions. __________
9. I am usually careful with details. __________
10. I enjoy writing and speaking about things I am learning. __________
11. I like to solve puzzles. __________
12. I feel comfortable that psychology can provide me with an education that will lead to a good job. __________

Scoring and Interpretation
If you answered true to a majority of the items, psychology is a major that likely matches up well with your interests. Although the items are not a perfect predictor of whether you will enjoy majoring in and pursuing a career in psychology, they can give you an indication of whether you might benefit from finding out more about what psychologists do and what is involved in becoming a psychologist. Your psychology professor or a career counselor at your college likely can inform you about the best way to pursue a career in psychology.

Psychology also pays reasonably well. Psychologists earn well above the median salary in the United States. It is unlikely that you would live in a palatial mansion because you majored in psychology, but it is also unlikely that you would go broke. A psychology major enables you to improve people’s lives, to understand yourself and others, possibly to advance the state of knowledge in the field, and to have an enjoyable time while you are doing these things.

An undergraduate degree in psychology can give you access to a variety of jobs. For a list of some of the job possibilities in business, social and human services, and research that are open to students with such a degree, see Figure 1.1. If you choose a career in psychology, you can greatly expand your opportunities (and your income) by getting a graduate degree, either a master’s or a doctorate.

Where do psychologists work? Slightly more than one-third are teachers, researchers, or counselors at colleges or universities. Most other psychologists work in clinical and private practice settings (Figure 1.2). To reflect on whether a career in psychology might be in your future, see the Psychology and Life box.
Review

4. Evaluate areas of specialization and careers in psychology.
   - Name and describe the various areas of specialization in psychology.
   - Discuss career opportunities that are available to individuals who have an undergraduate degree in psychology.

Assess

1. Of the two types of psychologists listed in each option below, which would be most likely to spend the majority of their time doing research?
   A. social psychologists and personality psychologists
   B. counseling psychologists and clinical psychologists
   C. counseling psychologists and cognitive psychologists
   D. clinical psychologists and school psychologists

2. A researcher interested in the way in which our eyes are able to detect changes in the shape of an object would likely be associated with which of the following areas of specialization?
   A. motivation and learning
   B. developmental psychology
   C. industrial and organizational psychology
   D. sensation and perception

3. A psychologist who examines the role stress plays in triggering behaviors that are related to HIV transmission is most closely associated with which of the following specializations?
   A. health psychology
   B. social psychology
   C. community psychology
   D. physiological psychology

Sharpen Your Thinking

Think of a career other than psychology that you might enter. In what ways might studying psychology be useful in that career?

5. Psychology and Health and Wellness

Describe the connections between the mind and the body.

One problem with the common tendency to equate the science of psychology with clinical psychology or with psychopathology—the study of mental illness—is that such a perspective limits the relevance of psychology to people with problems. This narrow way of viewing the field ignores the important question, What does psychology have to do with me and those around me? One of positive psychology’s goals is to enhance general awareness of the role of psychological research in providing an understanding of “normal” people and their everyday lives. In this book, we seek to answer the question, What does psychology have to say about me? by tying research in psychology to your health and wellness. How better to show that psychology matters than to demonstrate how it matters to your ability to function as a healthy person every day?

psychopathology The study of mental illness.
How the Mind Impacts the Body

When you think of psychology, you might think first about the mind and its complex mental processes such as love, gratitude, hate, and anger. But psychology has come to recognize more and more that the mind we are studying is intricately connected to the body. As you will see when we examine neuroscience as an approach to psychology in Chapter 3, observations of the brain at work reveal that when mental processes change, so do physical processes (Hagner, 2007).

Health psychologists talk about “health behavior” as a subset of behaviors that are relevant to physical health. These behaviors might include eating well, exercising, not smoking, performing testicular and breast self-exams, brushing your teeth, and getting enough sleep. But think about your body for a moment. Are there really ever times when your behavior is not relevant to your body (and therefore your health)? Is there ever a time when you are doing anything—thinking, feeling, walking, running, singing—when your physical body is not present? As long as your body is there, with your heart, lungs, blood, and brain activated, your health is implicated. Everything we do, see, think, and feel is potentially important to our health and well-being.

It might be helpful to think about the ways the mind and body can relate to each other, even as they are united in the physical reality of a person. Let’s say you experience a mental “event” such as seeing a “Buns of Steel” infomercial on TV. You decide to embark on a quest for these legendary buns of steel. Mental commitment, goal setting, and self-discipline will be the kinds of mental processes necessary to transform your body. The mind can work on the body, changing its shape and size.

How the Body Impacts the Mind

Similarly, the body can influence the mind in dramatic ways. Consider how fuzzy your thinking is after you stay out too late, and how much easier it is to solve life’s problems when you have had a good night’s sleep. Also consider your outlook on the first day of true recovery from a nagging cold: Everything just seems better. Your mood and your work improve. Clearly, physical states such as illness and health influence the way we think. So do physical conditions such as being hot or uncomfortable. Research has shown, for instance, that when people experience extreme heat, they can start to feel hostile and even act more aggressively than usual. A study by Doug Kenrick and Steve MacFarlane (1986) showed that during very hot weather, people without air conditioning in their cars were much more likely to honk their horns during a traffic jam.

The link between the mind and the body has fascinated philosophers for centuries. Psychology occupies the very spot where the mind and body meet. Throughout this book, we point out the ways that all of the various approaches to psychology matter to your well-being. Psychology is not only about you—it is crucially about you, essential to your understanding of your life, your goals, and the ways that you can use the insights of these thousands of scientists to make your life healthier and happier.
Review

5. Describe the connections between the mind and the body.
   • Summarize the ways that the mind can influence the body.
   • Summarize the ways that the body can influence the mind.

Assess

1. Psychopathology is
   A. another word for schizophrenia.
   B. the study of healthy individuals.
   C. the illness that affects all criminals.
   D. a term that describes the study of mental illness.

2. Which of the following statements is most correct?
   A. The mind has an impact on the body.
   B. The body has an impact on the mind.
   C. The link between the mind and body has not been established.
   D. The mind and body impact each other.

3. Which of the following are health behaviors?
   A. Smoking
   B. Smiling
   C. Eating
   D. All of the above

4. Which of the following is an example of the mind impacting the body?
   A. Exercise leading to elevated mood
   B. Using alcohol to cope with a break-up
   C. Setting a goal to run a marathon and starting training
   D. Being in a hot room and feeling irritable

Sharpen Your Thinking

Consider your activities last night. What was your body doing, and what was your mind doing? Think of the various ways that these two aspects of yourself affected each other in one evening.

1 DEFINING PSYCHOLOGY

Explain what psychology is and describe the positive psychology movement.

Psychology Versus Common Sense: What Don’t You Already Know About Psychology?
Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. Science uses systematic methods to observe, describe, predict, and explain. Behavior includes everything organisms do that can be observed. Mental processes are thoughts, feelings, and motives. The science of psychology is different from common sense. Often, commonsense notions have been proven to be erroneous by sound scientific research.

Thinking Like a Psychologist Means

Thinking Like a Scientist
Critical thinking involves thinking reflectively and productively and evaluating the evidence. It is important to maintain a healthy skepticism about anything that appears to be magical and wondrous. Psychology is full of controversies, and it is essential to think critically about these controversies. Most controversies are not completely resolved on one side or the other.

Positive Psychology
The positive psychology movement is a recent development, and the approach is not without controversy. Its proponents argue that psychology has been too negative and needs to focus more on the positive aspects of people, such as their optimism, creativity, and civic values. Positive psychology draws attention to what works, as a basis for understanding what does not work.

2 THE ROOTS AND EARLY SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES OF PSYCHOLOGY

Discuss the roots and early scientific foundations of psychology.

Structuralism
Structuralism emphasized the study of the conscious mind and its structures. Wilhelm Wundt founded the first laboratory in psychology in 1879, dedicated to searching for the mind’s elemental structures, and E. B. Titchener named the approach “structuralism.”

Functionalism
Functionalism focused on the functions of the mind in adapting to the environment. William James was the leading functionalist theorist. The functionalist emphasis on the adaptive character of the mind fit well with the emerging understanding of Darwin’s theory of evolution.