Psych 1 Chapter 1 Overview

After studying this chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1) Why is psychology a science, and how can it be distinguished from pseudoscience and folk wisdom?

2) What are the eight critical thinking guidelines that help in understanding psychological issues?

3) What are the basic principles of structuralism?

4) What are the basic principles of functionalism?

5) What are the basic principles of psychoanalysis?

6) How does the biological perspective explain thoughts, feelings, and behavior?

7) How does the learning perspective approach explain understanding behavior?

8) What does the cognitive perspective in psychology emphasize?

9) What does the sociocultural perspective in psychology focus on?

10) How does the psychodynamic perspective explain thoughts and behavior?

11) What role did humanism and feminism play in shaping the development of modern psychology?

12) What are the main differences between basic and applied psychology?

13) How do psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, and psychiatrists differ from one another in their training, background, and approach to treatment?
Chapter Outline

I. PSYCHOLOGY, PSEUDOSCIENCE, AND POPULAR OPINION
   A. Psychology, pseudoscience, and popular opinion
      1. Psychology is based on rigorous research
      2. Its claims are testable
      3. Popular opinion is sometimes wrong

II. THINKING CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY IN PSYCHOLOGY
   A. Critical thinking is the ability and willingness to assess claims and make judgments on the basis of well-supported research
   B. Eight guidelines for critical thinking
      1. Ask questions; be willing to wonder
      2. Define your terms
         a. A hypothesis is a statement that tries to describe or explain a given behavior
         b. Operational definitions specify how the phenomena are to be measured
      3. Examine the evidence
      4. Analyze assumptions and biases: falsifiability is a good practice!
      5. Avoid emotional reasoning
      6. Don’t oversimplify
      7. Consider other interpretations
      8. Tolerate uncertainty

III. PSYCHOLOGY’S PAST: FROM THE ARMCHAIR TO THE LABORATORY
   A. All psychologists want to describe, predict, understand, and modify behavior
   B. Early psychologists
      1. Primarily used anecdotes or descriptions of individual cases as evidence, instead of empirical evidence
      2. Phrenology
         a. Early 1800s and Joseph Gall
         b. Discredited theory that different brain areas account for character and personality traits, and can be “read” from bumps on the skull
   C. The birth of modern psychology
      1. Germany and Wilhelm Wundt
         a. Considered the “father of psychology”
         b. Established first experimental psychology lab in 1879
         c. Trained introspection—technique by which participants were trained to describe their sensations, mental images, and emotions
   D. Three early psychologies
1. Structuralism
   a. Titchener (student of Wundt) popularized Wundt’s ideas in the United States
   b. Introspection was method of choice to determine what happens
2. Functionalism
   a. William James interested in how and why behavior occurs; causes and consequences of behavior
   b. Influenced by Darwin and asked how certain attributes enhance survival and adapt to the environment
   c. Used a variety of methods and studied a broader range of subjects
3. Psychoanalysis
   a. Sigmund Freud
   b. Believed that patients’ symptoms had mental, not bodily, causes
   c. Unconscious part of mind has strong influence on behavior

IV. PSYCHOLOGY’S PRESENT: BEHAVIOR, BODY, MIND, AND CULTURE
A. The major psychological perspectives
   1. The biological perspective
      a. Examines how bodily events affect behavior, feelings, and thoughts
      b. Related to evolutionary psychology, which examines how evolutionary past may explain some present behaviors and psychological traits
   2. The learning perspective
      a. Behaviorism
         i. Examines how the environment and experience affect a person’s actions
         ii. Does not use the mind to explain behavior: they study only what they can observe and measure directly
      b. Social-cognitive learning theories
         i. Combines behaviorism with research on mental processes like thoughts, values, expectations, and intentions
         ii. Expands behaviorism beyond the study of behavior to include learning by observation, insight, imitation
   3. The cognitive perspective
      a. Emphasizes mental processes in perception, memory, language, problem solving, and other areas of behavior
      b. One of the strongest forces in psychology today
   4. The sociocultural perspective
      a. Emphasizes social and cultural influences on behavior
b. Social psychologists focus on social rules and roles, and on the influence of groups, friends, lovers, and others
c. Cultural psychologists examine how cultural rules and values affect people’s development, behavior, and feelings
5. The psychodynamic perspective
a. Deals with unconscious dynamics within the individual, such as inner forces, conflicts, or instinctual energy
b. Based on Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis, but other theories also exist
c. Focuses on unconscious origins of self-defeating behavior
d. Language, methods, standards of evidence differ from other approaches
B. Two influential movements in psychology
1. Humanistic psychology
a. Rejects psychoanalytic perspective as too pessimistic and behaviorism as too mechanistic
b. Rejects determinism by the unconscious (psychoanalysis) or by the environment (behaviorism); believes in free will
c. Goal of humanism is to help people express themselves and reach their full potential
d. Positive psychology—modern humanism
2. Feminist psychology
a. Identifies biases in research and psychotherapy
b. Feminist psychologists may identify with any of the major perspectives
c. Analyzes gender identity, roles, relations, and behavior of the sexes
d. Motivates the study of new topics such as motherhood, menstruation, and menopause
e. Reminds us that research and psychotherapy are social processes, affected by all the attitudes and values that people bring to any endeavor
V. WHAT PSYCHOLOGISTS DO
A. Psychological research
1. Basic researchers seek knowledge for its own sake
2. Applied researchers focus on the practical uses of their findings
B. Psychological practice
1. Practitioners work to understand and improve physical and mental health
2. They work in hospitals, schools, and counseling centers
3. Types of practitioners
a. Counseling psychologists help people deal with problems of everyday life
   b. School psychologists work to enhance students’ performance
   c. Clinical psychologists diagnose, treat, and study mental and emotional problems
   4. Differences between therapists
   a. The term “psychotherapist” is unregulated; anyone can claim to be one
   b. A psychoanalyst is a person who practices psychoanalysis. This requires an advanced degree and specialized training
   c. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor with training in psychiatry; psychiatrists often focus on biological causes and treat them with medication
   d. Social workers and counselors usually have a Master's degree in social work or psychology

C. Psychology in the community—psychologists contribute to the welfare of their communities by helping out within their areas of expertise

Taking Psychology with You: What Psychology Can Do for You—and What It Can’t

A. What psychology can do for you
   1. Make you a more informed person
   2. Satisfy your curiosity about human nature
   3. Help you increase control over your life
   4. Help you on the job
   5. Give you insights into political and social issues
   6. Help you become a more critical thinker

B. What psychology can’t do for you
   1. Tell you the meaning of life
   2. Relieve you of responsibility for your actions
   3. Provide simple answers to complex questions