Module 1: Overview of Psychology

PSY 201: The Psychology Major: Academic and Professional Issues
Module 1: Overview of Psychology & Critical Thinking in Psychology
Study Guide Notes

Reading:
Kuther: CH 1 and 2, McBurney: SEC 1-6
Psychology Majors Handbook
Psychology Fields Handout

Module 1 Study Guide Objectives:
Kuther Chapter 1:
You will learn:
- The definition of psychology and why it is a science.
- A brief history of psychology
  - Psychology has its roots in philosophy
  - Founded by Wilhelm Wundt in 1879
  - Differences between structuralism, Gestalt psychology, psychoanalytic psychology, functionalism, and behaviorism.
- Differences between different fields of psychology (clinical, counseling, developmental, educational, experimental, forensic, health, human factors, industrial-organizational, neuropsychology, psychometrics, social, and school psychology).
- Differences between psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and social workers
- What INFORMED CONSENT is and why it is important!

Kuther Chapter 2:
You will learn:
- Reasons why you should engage in self-writing.
- What the six Holland Personality Types are and which one(s) describe you (RIASEC).
- That Psychology majors tend to have Investigative or Social personality types.

Critical Thinking McBurney Sections 1 - 6:
You will learn:
- What critical thinking is and how psychologists are trained to be good critical thinkers.
- Why psychologists use so much jargon.
- What a theory is and why it is more valuable than facts.
- That a theory should NOT be accepted over another on the basis of personal, aesthetic, political, or religious biases/preferences.
- The goal of science is to solve puzzles, not wonder at mysteries.
Kuther Chapter 1: What is Psychology?

The Scope of Psychology

• What is psychology?
  — The scientific study of mind and behavior

• Psychologists hold a variety of occupations, for example...
  — Counselors
  — Professors
  — Researchers
  — Administrators

A Brief History of Psychology

• Roots in philosophy
  — Especially in the philosophical view of empiricism

• Birth of modern, scientific psychology credited to Wilhelm Wundt ("Father of psychology") in 1879
  — Wundt, and his student, Titchener, were key leaders of Structuralism
    • Sought to identify the basic building blocks, or structures, of the mind through experiments and introspection ("to look within")

• Gestalt Psychology:
  — Early Advocate: Max Wertheimer
  — Goal:
    • To describe organization of mental processes through observation of sensory/perceptual phenomenon
    • “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”
  — Method: observation of sensory/perceptual phenomenon

• Psychoanalysis / Psychodynamic Psychology:
  — Early Advocate: Sigmund Freud
  — Goals:
    • Suggested that both normal and abnormal behaviors are determined by unconscious forces
    • Explain personality and behavior
    • Develop techniques for treating mental illness
  — Methods: Study of individual cases

• Functionalism:
  — Early Advocate: William James
  — Goal: To study how the mind works in allowing an organism to adapt to the environment - examine the purposes of consciousness - what mind does and why
  — Methods: Naturalistic observations of animal and human behavior
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**Behaviorism:**
- **Early Advocates:** John B. Watson; B. F. Skinner
- **Goals:**
  - To study only *observable behavior* and explain behavior via learning principles,
  - Does NOT speculate about mental processes (thinking)
- **Methods:**
  - Observation of the relationship between environmental stimuli and behavioral responses

**Fields of Psychology:**

1. **Clinical Psychology**
   - Study and treat persons with emotional, behavioral, and psychological problems and disorders
     - **Clinical Researchers:**
       - Study how to best treat a particular diagnosis
     - **Practicing Clinicians:**
       - Assess and treat people who are experiencing psychological problems (e.g. crisis or grief) and disorders (e.g. schizophrenia)

2. **Counseling Psychology**
   - Similar to clinical but focus is on normative functioning rather than psychological disorders
     - **Counseling Researchers:**
       - How people deal with everyday life issues such as divorce, career changes, etc.
     - **Practicing Counselors:**
       - Help people adjust to life changes

3. **Developmental Psychology**
   - Study human development across the lifespan
     - **Developmental Researchers:**
       - Study the emotional, intellectual, and physical development of children, adolescents, and adults
     - **Practicing Developmental Psychologists:**
       - Consultants for parenting magazines, toy companies, and children’s programs
       - Assess development and provide and develop interventions to aid in development and education

4. **Educational Psychology**
   - Study the process of education and how people learn
     - Design and assess educational programs for effectiveness
     - Most work in academic setting and conduct research on learning (e.g. how people learn to read) and instruction (e.g. train teachers to deliver the best instructional methods)

5. **Experimental Psychology**
— Conduct research and teach a variety of topics on human cognition (e.g. learning, perception, motivation, memory, language, thinking, etc)
— Most teach and conduct research in an academic setting
— Others work as researchers for businesses and government

6. **Forensic Psychology**
— Study legal issues from a psychological perspective

   — **Forensic Psychology Researchers:**
     • Conduct research on issues such as reliability of eyewitness testimony

   — **Practicing Forensic Psychologists:**
     • Provide expert testimony in court cases
     • Assess defendants to determine competency
     • Select, train, and evaluate police officers

7. **Health Psychology**
— Study how psychological, biological, and social factors influence health and illness.
— Work in academic and applied settings
— Design, assess, and modify programs to promote health and wellness (e.g. smoking cessation, weight loss)

8. **Human Factors Psychology**
— Study how people interact with machines, environments, and products to increase safety, efficiency, and productivity

   • Examples:
     — Design computer monitors to prevent user fatigue
     — Design car dashboard to enhance access and safety
— Most work in industry and government

9. **Industrial-Organizational Psychology**
— Apply psychological principles to the workplace.

   — **IO Researcher:**
     • Study how to recruit, select, train, and evaluate employees.
     • Examples: What personality factors make a good employee? How to improve worker productivity?

   — **Practicing IO Psychologist:**
     • Recruit, select, train, and evaluate employees.
     • Develop programs to improve moral and increase productivity

10. **Neuropsychology**
— Examine the relationship between the brain and behavior (e.g. what part of the brain is responsible for motivation, language, and emotion?)
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— **Neuropsychological Researcher:**
  - Teaches and conducts research in academic settings
  - Example - how does the brain influence our emotions?

— **Practicing Neuropsychologist:**
  - Treat and assess persons with brain injuries

11. **Psychometrics and Quantitative Psychology**
   — Study and develop new methods for acquiring, analyzing, and applying information
   — Create, revise, or evaluate psychological, intelligence and aptitude tests
   — Work primarily in research and academic settings

12. **Social Psychology**
   — Study how people interact with each other and how they are influenced by the social environment
   — Mostly work in academic settings teaching and conducting research on personality theories, attitude formation, persuasion, conformity, attraction, prejudice, group dynamics, and aggression
   — Others work for corporations and advertising agencies conducting marketing research and studying how consumers view products

13. **School Psychology**
   — Apply psychological principles to the school environment
   — Work to foster the intellectual, emotional, educational, and social development of children

   — **School Psychological Researcher:**
     - Conduct research on how the classroom climate influences student learning or how to promote appropriate classroom behavior

   — **Practicing School Psychologist:**
     - Work in schools to assess and counsel students and develop behavioral interventions

**Differences among Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Social Workers, and Counselors:**

- **Psychologists:**
  - Mental health professionals with 5 - 7 years graduate school (beyond bachelor’s degree) having either a...

- **Doctor of philosophy degree (Ph.D.)**
  - Degree focus is on research and clinical experience
  - Graduate programs housed in university psychology department

- **Doctor of psychology (PsyD) degree**
  - Degree focus is on clinical experience and less on research
  - Graduate programs can be housed in (1) university psychology department, (2) university affiliated professional psychology school, or (3) within an independent professional psychology school.

  — In some states (LA and NM), they can prescribe medication
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- **Psychiatrists:**
  - Holds a doctor of medicine (MD) degree and tends to work with those who have serious mental disorders
  - Can prescribe medication

- **Social Worker:**
  - Mental health professional
  - Holds a Master of social work degree (MSW)
  - Help people solve personal and social problems

- **Counselor:**
  - Nearly all hold master degrees (2 years of course work, and 600 hours of supervised clinical experience)
  - May need licensure or certification to conduct therapy independently
  - Help clients take an active role in improving their lives

**Ethics in Psychology:**

- **When providing therapy:**
  - Must challenge clients to confront their issues without inducing self-harm to the clients
  - Establish professional boundaries

- **When conducting research:**
  - Benefits of research must outweigh the risks to participants
    - Must protect participants’ rights by seeking **Informed Consent** - participant’s informed, rational, and voluntary agreement to participate.
  - Must be mindful of the social and political implications of the work when it is reported and how it may be misinterpreted.

**Kuther Chapter 2: Choosing a Major:**

Is Psychology For You?

**Writing and Self-Awareness:**

- First step in choosing a major is to understand yourself

- WHY engage in self-reflective writing?
  - Self-exploration
  - Therapy
  - Get organized
  - Solve problems
  - Enhance communication
  - Unleash your creativity
  - Record your experiences
Starting a Journal:
• What should I write?
  — There are no rules - write about anything that comes to mind

• When should I write?
  — The more often you write - the more you will learn about yourself
  — Try writing at bedtime or right after you wake up.

Self-Assessment:
• Which of the following Holland Personality Types best describes you?
  — Realistic
    • Athletically or mechanically inclined
  — Investigative
    • Enjoys learning, observing, problem solving, and analyzing info
  — Artistic
    • Imaginative, creative, and innovative
  — Social
    • Enjoys helping and training others
  — Enterprising
    • Likes to work with people in persuasive, performance, or managerial situations to achieve organizational or economic goals
  — Conventional
    • Well-organized, has clerical or numerical ability, likes to work with data and carry out tasks in detail

Psychology college majors tend to have Investigative or Social personality types!!
Critical Thinking in Psychology:

McBurney Sections 1 – 6:
Psychology and Science

What is Critical Thinking?

• Psychologists are trained to be good critical thinkers...
  – To ask good questions
  – To gather useful information
  – To be aware of our own biases and those of others
  – To arrive at appropriate conclusions
  – To develop and ask further questions based on the info collected
  – By doing the above - we all become good consumers of research

• According to McBurney, Critical Thinking...
  – Is an attitude of asking “why?”
  – Is best learned in the context of a particular discipline
  – Skills learned in one discipline do not always transfer to another
  – Has principles but no specific rules

Section 1: Why is this course so hard? It is only Psychology!

• **Principle:** Science is a single enterprise united by a seamless web of facts, laws, and theories

Mistaken ideas about Psychology:

  – Not technical, just common sense!
  – Psychology isn’t a science!
  – Majority of psychologists are clinicians doing therapy!

• Truth about Psychology:
  – Psychology is a science just like biology, chemistry, etc.
    • Science is a way of knowing based on empirical methods (experience)

Section 2: Why do Psychologists use so much Jargon?

• **Principle:** Terms are used in science in a technical sense that is often very different from the everyday sense of those terms

Why can’t we just say Punishment instead of Negative Reinforcement?

  – Jargon improves communication between knowledgeable people

  – Dictionary or layperson definitions of terms often do NOT deal with the distinctions that scientists need to make

  – Example: Negative reinforcement is NOT punishment!
    • Negative reinforcement = removal of something unpleasant in order to increase behavior (e.g. removing “time-out” to increase apologetic behavior)
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- **Punishment** = administration of something unpleasant in order to decrease behavior (e.g. spanking to decrease stealing)

Section 3: Why don’t you skip the THEORIES and give us more FACTS?

- **Principle**: Main goal of science is theories, not facts

- Because some theories in Psy contradict one another, students mistakenly believe that nothing in Psy is known for sure and that is why the focus is on theories

- HOWEVER, goal of science is to understand/explain why things happen (“why” knowledge), not just predict/control (“how to” knowledge)

- Theory...
  - Set of interrelated concepts that explain a large # of facts
  - “Why knowledge” that is more valuable than facts, because theories (1) explain facts, (2) suggests further research that results in new facts, and (3) suggests new ways of dealing with problems

Section 4: But that’s just your Theory!

- **Principle**: Scientists as a rule believe the theory that best explains the facts, not just the one that they like the best.

- Some students accept a theory because it appeals to them more than another theory

- However, although NO theory is 100% perfect, a theory should NOT be accepted over another on the basis of personal, aesthetic, political, or religious biases/preferences.

Section 5: You’re so Logical!

- **Principle**: It is pretty hard to be correct when your logic is wrong

- Sometimes students mistrust science because of its imperfections and instead rely on “feelings”

- But we must be aware of using feelings and the logical errors that we make
  - **Logical Fallacies** = arguments that tend to be persuasive even though they are faulty (they “feel” correct, but are not)

Section 6: But you have taken all the Mystery out of it!

- **Principle**: The goal of science is to solve puzzles, not wonder at mysteries

- Some students really like things that can’t be explained (i.e. a mystery)

- If you really like to learn the explanation for things, then psychology might be for you!