

Concepts in Psychology

APA Style

The American Psychological Association (APA) compiles its Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). This is the authoritative manual instructing all psychology students and professionals in how to write papers and articles, how to use citations and references in their work that properly give credit to their sources so they avoid plagiarism, and how to prepare tables and charts summarizing research findings. All psychology students and professionals should own a copy of this, and need to make the basics of APA Style second nature in how they write. The APA has a great online tutorial for new users of APA Style.

Applied Behavior Analysis

Abbreviated as “ABA,” the field of behavior analysis grew out of the scientific study of principles of learning and behavior. It has two main branches: experimental and applied behavior analysis. The experimental analysis of behavior is the basic science of this field and has over many decades accumulated a substantial and well-respected body of research literature. This literature provides the scientific foundation for applied behavior analysis, which is both an applied science that develops methods of changing behavior and a profession that provides services to meet diverse behavioral needs. Briefly, professionals in applied behavior analysis engage in the specific and comprehensive use of principles of learning, including operant and respondent conditioning, in order to address behavioral needs of widely varying individuals in diverse settings. Examples of these applications include: building the skills and achievements of children in school settings; enhancing the development, abilities, and choices of children and adults with different kinds of disabilities; and augmenting the performance and satisfaction of employees in organizations and businesses. Applied behavior analysis is a well-developed discipline among the helping professions, with a mature body of scientific knowledge, established standards for evidence-based practice, distinct methods of service, recognized experience and educational requirements for practice, and identified sources of requisite education in universities.

Reference

Behavior Analyst Certification Board. (n.d.). *About the BACB*. <https://www.bacb.com/about/>

Behavior

According to the APA, behaviors are the actions by which an organism adjusts to its environment. The psychological perspective of behavior is primarily concerned with observable behavior that can be objectively recorded and with the relationships of observable behavior to environmental stimuli.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Behavior. In APA Dictionary of Psychology. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/behavior>

Biopsychology

Psychology majors explore cells that make up the nervous system, as well as learning to identify the structure and functions of nerve cells. Neural communication occurs within and between neurons. You will learn to recognize major neurotransmitters and their impacts, as well as to identify major functions of brain regions.

Reference

OpenStax. (2020). *Psychology 2e*. <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>

Cognition

Processes of knowing, including attending, remembering, using language, decision making, and reasoning; also the content of the processes, such as concepts and memories.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Cognition. In APA Dictionary of Psychology. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/cognition>

Emotion

As we move through our daily lives, we experience a range of emotions. An emotion is a subjective state of being that we often describe as our feelings. The words emotion and mood are sometimes used interchangeably, but psychologists use these words to refer to two different things. Typically, the word emotion indicates a subjective, affective state that is relatively intense and that occurs in response to something we experience. Emotions are often thought to be consciously experienced and intentional. Mood, on the other hand, refers to a sustained, less intense, affective state that does not occur in response to something we experience. Mood states may not be consciously recognized and do not carry the intentionality that is linked to emotion.

Reference

OpenStax. (2020). *Psychology 2e*. <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>

Forensic Psychology

Forensic psychology is the application of the science and profession of psychology to questions and issues relating to law and the legal system. The word “forensic” comes from the Latin word *forensis*, meaning “of the forum,” where the law courts of ancient Rome were held. Today forensic refers to the application of scientific principles and practices to the adversary process where especially knowledgeable scientists play a role.

Reference

American Board of Forensic Psychology. (n.d.). *About Forensic Psychology*. <https://abfp.com/about/>

Gender and Sexuality

The investigation of gender, sex and sexuality is part of the study of psychology.

An individual's biological sex (i.e., male or female) is determined by their chromosomes and physiology. Biological sex does not always match with their gender. The terms "sex" and "gender" are not the same thing. "Sex" refers to physical or physiological differences between male, female, and intersex bodies. These can be primary sex characteristics (i.e., reproductive organs and structures) or secondary sex characteristics (e.g., breasts or facial hair). "Gender" is a term that refers to social or cultural differences with a given sex, (i.e., masculinity or femininity). Gender is considered to be a socially constructed concept in the field of psychology. Gender identity is the extent to which an individual identifies with their sex assigned at birth. Those who identify with a gender role or identity that is different from their biological sex are often referred to as transgender. "Human sexuality" is explored in psychology, as well. This refers to human sexual behavior from a biopsychosocial perspective. This topic is explored from biological, evolutionary, social, and cultural perspectives.

Reference

OpenStax. (2020). *Psychology 2e*. <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>

Industrial and Organizational (I-O) Psychology

According to the APA, this branch of psychology studies human behavior in the work environment and applies general psychological principles to work-related issues and problems., This can involve employee selection, training, employee evaluation, leadership, team effectiveness, and work motivation. I/O psychologists conduct empirical research to increase understanding of individual and group behavior within organizations. Their research findings serve to improve organizational effectiveness and the welfare of employees.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Industrial Psychology. In APA Dictionary of Psychology. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/industrial-and-organizational-psychology>

Learning

Life is a process of continual change. From infancy to adolescence to adulthood to death, we are changing. Many factors produce those changes, but one of the most important is the process of learning. Through our experiences, we learn new information, new attitudes, new fears, and new skills. We also learn to understand new concepts, to solve problems in new ways, and even to develop a personality over a lifetime. In psychology, the term learning refers to any relatively permanent change in behavior brought about through experience.

Reference

Lahey, B. (2009). *Psychology: An introduction* (10th ed). McGraw Hill Education.

Lifespan Development

The Lifespan Developmental Approach has provided an overarching framework for understanding human development from conception to death. This approach includes the following concepts:

- Lifespan development is a continuous process influenced jointly by biology and environment.
- Development unfolds as a process that includes both gains and losses across the lifespan that results in a multidimensional, multidirectional and multifunctional perspective.
- Development across the lifespan results in variations in the interaction between biological and environmental influences that impact the allocation of resources.
- Lifespan development is an adaptable process that is responsive to intervention.

Additional studies using the Lifespan Developmental Approach have substantial implications the application of research to the real world. Examples include the role and impact of interventions and plasticity across the lifespan as evidenced in the areas of mental health, developmental disabilities, neurodegenerative disorders, cognitive aging and epigenetics.

Reference

Staudinger, U. & Bluck, S. (2001). A view of midlife development from life-span theory. In Lachman, M. Editor (Eds.). *Handbook of midlife development* (pp.3 – 32) Wiley.

Memory

Psychologists have developed theories of memory using the computer as a model. These information-processing theories of memory are based on the apparent similarities between the operation of the human brain and that of the computer. This is not to say that psychologists believe that brains and computers operate in exactly the same way. Clearly they do not, but enough general similarity exists to make the information-processing model useful. In the information-processing model, information can be followed as it moves through the following operations: input, storage, and retrieval. At each point in the process, a variety of control mechanisms (such as attention, storage, and retrieval) operate. Information enters the memory system through the sensory receptors. This is like your entering a term paper into your computer by typing on the keyboard. Attention operates at this level to select information for further processing. The raw sensory information that is selected is then represented — or encoded — in a form (sound, visual image, meaning) that can be used in the next stages of memory. Other control mechanisms might then transfer selected information into a more permanent memory storage, like saving your term paper on a computer disk. When the stored information is needed, it is retrieved from memory. Before printing out your paper, you must first locate your file on the disk and retrieve it. Unfortunately, with both computers and human memory, some information may be lost or become irretrievable. Some information needs to be stored in memory for only brief periods of time, whereas other information must be tucked away permanently. The influential stage theory of memory (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968; Baddeley, 1999, as cited in Lahey, 2009) assumes that we humans have a three-stage memory that meets our need to store information for different lengths of time. We seem to have one memory store that holds information for exceedingly brief intervals (sensory memory), a second memory store that holds information for no more than 30 seconds unless it is “renewed” (short-term memory), and a third, more permanent memory store (long-term memory).

Reference

Lahey, B. (2009). *Psychology: An introduction* (10th ed). McGraw Hill Education.

Motivation

Psychology defines motivation as the process by which action is initiated, directed, and sustained for the purpose of meeting a goal or satisfying a need. Needs can be psychological (e.g., needing validation or attention) or physical (i.e., needing food or water). Motivation is what guides us to accomplish a goal or to avoid a non-preferred outcome or situation. Psychology students and professionals who study behavior in any capacity want to understand motivation.

Reference

OpenStax. (2020). *Psychology 2e*. <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>

Nature/Nurture

The nature versus nurture debate is one of the most significant topics of discussion in the field of psychology. To what extent are certain aspects of behavior the result of inherited (i.e., genetic) or acquired (i.e., learned) factors? Nature is what we think of as the hard wiring. How much do genetic, biological and inherited influences define who we are and how we behave? Nurture is the other side of the coin. It is the influence of external factors beginning from the time of conception. These factors are the sum of experiences and learning on an individual. The nature-nurture debate explores the relative contribution that both influences make to human behavior, in areas like personality, cognitive traits, temperament and psychopathology.

Reference

OpenStax. (2020). *Psychology 2e*. <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>

Personality

Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. The study of personality focuses on two broad areas: One is understanding individual differences in particular personality characteristics, such as sociability or irritability. The other is understanding how the various parts of a person come together as a whole. Most psychologists believe that each person's personality develops early in life and is probably firmly established by the time the person reaches adulthood. There are many tests in the psychology field designed to measure personality. The most famous and widely used is the MMPI — the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Personalities can be classified into types, for which there are various labels and sometimes competing systems of classification. When someone's personality consistently causes them a lot of distress in two or more life areas, it is possible that they have a personality disorder. Personality disorders are dysfunctions in a person's characteristic style of thinking, behaving, and feeling that negatively affect their ability to function in almost all situations.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Personality. In APA Dictionary of Psychology. Retrieved

September 17, 2021, from <http://apa.org/topics/personality/>

Psychological Disorders

According to the DSM-5: “A mental disorder is a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual’s cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning. Mental disorders are usually associated with significant distress in social, occupational, or other important activities. An expectable or culturally approved response to a common stressor or loss, such as the death of a loved one, is not a mental disorder. Socially deviant behavior (e.g., political, religious, or sexual) and conflicts that are primarily between the individual and society are not mental disorders unless the deviance or conflict results from a dysfunction in the individual, as described above.”

Reference

Psychiatry Online. (n.d.). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, fifth edition*. <https://dsm.psychiatryonline.org/doi/book/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>

Psychotherapy

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than a quarter of American adults experience depression, anxiety, or another mental disorder in any given year. Others need help coping with a serious illness, losing weight, or stopping smoking. Still others struggle to cope with relationship troubles, job loss, the death of a loved one, stress, substance abuse, or other issues. And these problems can often become debilitating. A psychologist can help individuals work through such problems. Through psychotherapy, psychologists help people of all ages live happier, healthier, and more productive lives. In psychotherapy, psychologists apply scientifically validated procedures to help people develop healthier, more effective habits. There are several approaches to psychotherapy — including cognitive-behavioral, interpersonal, and other kinds of talk therapy — that help individuals work through their problems. Psychotherapy is a collaborative treatment based on the relationship between an individual and a psychologist. Grounded in dialogue, it provides a supportive environment that allows people to talk openly with someone who is objective, neutral, and nonjudgmental. The client and the psychologist or counselor work together to identify and change the thought and behavior patterns that are keeping the client from feeling their best.

Reference

American Psychological Association (2020, July 31). *Understanding psychotherapy and how it works*. <https://www.apa.org/topics/psychotherapy/understanding>

Research Experiment

An experiment is a carefully designed and controlled study that attempts to isolate an exact cause-and-effect relationship through the following steps:

- Pose a question to be researched.
- Do background research.

- Construct a hypothesis (an educated guess to answer the research question).
- Test your hypothesis by doing an experiment.
- Analyze your data and draw a conclusion.
- Communicate your results.

Every formal experiment has at least two variables. The independent variable is what the researcher arranges to allow a comparison of the participants' behavior under different conditions. The dependent variable is the measure of the specific behavior of interest that may (or may not) be related to the independent variable. In the simplest formal experiments, one group is placed in the condition that is hypothesized to influence the behavior of the participants and is called the experimental group. A second group receives none of the supposedly "active" condition of the independent variable and is called the control group. If the behavior of the participants in the experimental group differs from the behavior of the participants in the control group, the hypothesis that differences in the independent variable cause differences in the dependent variable is supported, but under only two circumstances:

1. Formal experiments are valid only when the participants are randomly assigned to the experimental or the control group. The experimenter must follow a random procedure, such as putting the names of all participants in a hat and drawing the names of the participants in the two groups without looking.
2. Formal experiments are valid only if all alternative explanations for the findings have been ruled out through strict experimental control.

Reference

Lahey, B. (2009). *Psychology: An introduction* (10th ed). McGraw Hill Education.

Sensation and Perception

Sensation and perception are two separate processes that are very closely related. Sensation is input about the physical world obtained by our sensory receptors, and perception is the process by which the brain selects, organizes, and interprets these sensations. Sensory information (such as taste, light, odor, pressure, vibration, heat, and pain) is perceived through the body's sensory receptors. These sensory receptors include the eyes, ears, mouth, nose, hands, and feet. In other words, senses are the physiological basis of perception. Perception of the same senses may vary from one person to another because each person's brain interprets stimuli differently based on that individual's learning, memory, emotions, and expectations. The perceptual process is a sequence of steps that begins with stimuli in the environment and ends with our interpretation of those stimuli. This process is typically unconscious and happens hundreds of thousands of times a day. An unconscious process is simply one that happens without awareness or intention.

OpenStax. (2020). *Psychology 2e*. <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>

Social Psychology

What causes people to become murderously violent? Why do some people maintain their racial prejudices throughout their lives whereas others replace their hatreds with tolerance and respect?

When do people work best as a group and when are they better off alone? If you find questions such as these intriguing, you should consider a career in personality and/or social psychology. How do people come to be who they are? How do people think about, influence, and relate to one another? These are the broad questions that personality and social psychologists strive to answer. By exploring forces within the person (such as traits, attitudes, and goals) as well as forces within the situation (such as social norms and incentives), personality and social psychologists seek to unravel the mysteries of individual and social life in areas as wide-ranging as prejudice, romantic attraction, persuasion, friendship, helping, aggression, conformity, and group interaction. Although personality psychology has traditionally focused on aspects of the individual, and social psychology on aspects of the situation, the two perspectives are tightly interwoven in psychological explanations of human behavior.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Social Psychology. In APA Dictionary of Psychology. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/social-psychology>

Reference this document as:

Purdue Global. (n.d.). Core principles in psychology. https://kapextmediassl-a.akamaihd.net/artsSCi/PS115/2001A/PS115_CorePrinciples.pdf