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Introduction to Psychology

Are you curious?

We hope so. We also hope you enjoy a good story. Those are the two themes—curiosity and storytelling—that we’ve used to write this book. All four of us (the book’s authors) truly *love* psychology. We want you to love it too. We think you will, because psychology answers questions your curiosity has naturally led you to ask about why people think, feel, and act the way we do.

Psychology is a comprehensive and diverse scientific field, with a tremendous number of subspecialties and applications. Every conversation you have—with every person, every day—is steeped in psychology. No matter what career you choose, every job path benefits from a foundational understanding of behavior. This book discusses just a tiny fraction of what psychologists are working on right now. We hope that these chapters are an appetizer that makes your curiosity and hunger for understanding grow.

We’re excited—so let’s get started.

After reading this chapter, you will get answers to several questions you’ve been curious about:

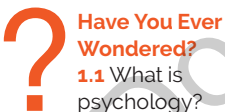
Have You Ever Wondered?

- 1.1 What is psychology?
- 1.2 How has psychology grown and changed over time?
- 1.3 How has diversity helped psychology?
- 1.4 How should I use this book?

Learning Objectives

- LO 1.1 Define psychology and explain the American Psychological Association’s Introductory Psychology Initiative.
- LO 1.2 Explain important historical figures and approaches to psychological inquiry.
- LO 1.3 Discuss the history of prejudice in psychology and identify key diverse voices in the field over time.
- LO 1.4 Analyze how the ideas in this book can relate to you, personally.

STARTING YOUR PSYCHOLOGY JOURNEY



Have You Ever Wondered?

1.1 What is psychology?

>> LO 1.1 Define psychology and explain the American Psychological Association’s Introductory Psychology Initiative.

Are you curious about what is in this book?

If you’re reading as part of an introduction to psychology course at a college or university, you’re not alone. Over a million students take that course *every year* in the United States alone (Steuer & Ham, 2008). It’s the second most popular college course in the nation, following only intro to English composition (Adelman, 2004). You probably have a general idea of “psychology”—but you may also harbor some misconceptions. Many new students of psychology, for example, are surprised to learn that mental disorders, counseling, and therapy are just one part of a much larger science studying the entire human experience.

Defining Psychology

You're using psychology right now.

One of your amazing abilities is perceiving marks on a page as letters, turning them into sounds, transforming those patterns into words, and then combining them into sentences and meaningful ideas (in other words, sensation and perception). Psychology is also about making decisions, learning from mistakes, remembering information, managing difficult relationships, developing a personality, dreaming, using (and misusing) your brain, and analyzing whether people are inherently good, evil, or somewhere in between. One of the people we interview about careers in psychology may have said it best: "A degree in psychology is a degree without limits."

More formally, **psychology** is the scientific study of mental processes and behaviors. "Mental processes" include perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and decisions we make at every point in life. Psychology has only been an official, separate science since the late 1800s (American Psychological Association [APA], 2014; Shaughnessy et al., 2009). Before that, mostly either philosophers or physiologists addressed mental processes and behaviors. So as sciences go, psychology is a relatively "young" field but with deep historical roots.

Humans are complicated. We sometimes make decisions that turn out to be bad for us—or good for us (in a selfish way), but bad for society overall. However, human history is also filled with simple, selfless acts of heroism by people sacrificing their own well-being to save others. Psychology studies the best and the worst parts of living in a social world. What could be more interesting and important? Many modern psychologists spend their careers trying to apply their knowledge to make the world a better place, and there are hundreds of career opportunities, both with and without graduate training. You'll learn about many of those careers throughout this book.

Psychology: The scientific study of mental processes (perceptions, thoughts, and feelings) and behaviors.

The American Psychological Association

The diversity of research topics in psychology might amaze you.

While wandering door to door around one graduate department, one of your authors met people studying the tongue and taste perception, what makes people laugh, how to treat social anxiety, using GPS systems in smartphones to map the prevalence of mental disorders, interventions for the fear of failing, neural paths in the brain for empathy, whether animals have a sense of self, and predictors of interpersonal attraction. If you're curious, then having access to psychology insights might make you feel like a kid in a candy store.

To embrace that diversity of information, there's a large group of professional psychologists called the **American Psychological Association**, or APA for short. The APA has over 130,000 members in North America and calls itself the "leading scientific and professional organization representing psychology" (at least, on this continent; see www.apa.org). Members of the APA can join the overall organization and/or join subdivisions or interest groups aligned with their specialty, such as "military psychology," "clinical neuropsychology," and "addiction psychology." Many other subdivisions match the names of this book's chapters (such as developmental or social psychology). Table 1.1 is a full list of their divisions and research subfields. Which look the most interesting to you?

American Psychological Association: The largest professional organization for psychologists in North America, including over 50 subdivisions or interest groups.

TABLE 1.1

American Psychological Association Divisions

| | |
|---|---|
| General Psych | Teaching of Psych |
| Experimental Psych and Cognitive Science | Quantitative and Qualitative Methods |
| Behavioral Neuroscience & Comparative Psych | Developmental Psych |
| Personality and Social Psych | Psych of Social Issues |
| Psych of Aesthetics, Creativity, and Arts | Clinical Psych |
| Consulting Psych | Industrial and Organizational Psych |
| Educational Psych | School Psych |
| Counseling Psych | Psychologists in Public Service |
| Military Psych | Adult Development and Aging |
| Engineering Psych | Rehabilitation Psych |
| Consumer Psych | Theoretical and Philosophical Psych |
| Behavior Analysis | History of Psych |
| Community Psych | Psychopharmacology and Substance Abuse |
| Psychotherapy | Society of Psychological Hypnosis |
| State, Provincial, and Territorial Psych | Society for Humanistic Psych |
| Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities | Environmental Psych |
| Psych of Women | Psych of Religion and Spirituality |
| Child and Family Policy and Practice | Health Psych |
| Psychoanalytic Psych | Clinical Neuropsych |
| American Psych-Law Society | Psychologists in Independent Practice |
| Couple and Family Psych | Psych of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity |
| Psych of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race | Media Psych and Technology |
| Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psych | Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psych Division |
| Group Psych Psychotherapy | Addiction Psych |
| Psych of Men and Masculinities | International Psych |
| Clinical Child and Adolescent Psych | Pediatric Psych |
| Prescribing Psych | Trauma Psych |

There are a wide variety of subfields within psychology.

Source: Adapted from <https://www.apa.org/about/division>.

The Introductory Psychology Initiative

Psychologists often gather at conferences to share their cutting-edge research and teaching innovations. One of these meetings resulted in an initiative to create guiding principles for high-quality teaching of introductory psychology courses at the college and university level. Over the years, many individuals and task forces have

contributed to that goal, which the field refers to as the **Introductory Psychology Initiative** (APA, 2014, 2023). The vision statement of the most recent version (from 2023) of that initiative is that “psychological science will be recognized as a high-impact undergraduate major that empowers people from all backgrounds to make a difference in their lives and communities.”

The initiative suggests that introduction to psychology courses have learning goals around five major topics:

1. *Content knowledge and applications*: Identify key concepts, subfields, and aspects of psychology’s history; apply content to solve problems; and provide examples of integrative themes.
2. *Scientific inquiry and critical thinking*: Exercise scientific reasoning; interpret, design, and evaluate research; incorporate sociocultural factors; and use statistics to evaluate findings.
3. *Values in psychological science*: Employ ethical standards and values to psychological inquiry, practice interpersonal and intercultural responsiveness, strengthen the community, and improve quality of life.
4. *Communication, psychological literacy, and technology skills*: Interact effectively with others, write and present effectively, show psychological literacy, and exhibit tech skills.
5. *Personal and professional development*: Exhibit self-regulation, refine management skills, display effective judgment, cultivate collaboration skills, demonstrate tech skills, and develop direction for life after graduation.

Each goal also has subgoals. These goals run throughout every chapter of this entire book, and we encourage you to keep them in mind as your knowledge grows and you’re able to make connections from one concept to the next.

The initiative also suggests that instructors should teach content using an approach represented in Figure 1.1. It has three components; we’ll briefly describe each of them for you.

The Five Pillars

The vertical lines in Figure 1.1 are the five “pillars” of the APA’s Introductory Psychology Initiative (APA, 2014, 2023). They represent five major subfields: biological, cognitive, developmental, social and personality, and mental and physical health. As you saw in Table 1.1, we can get much more detailed if we want, but these five large categories cover enough to give new students a good overview of the field for an initial course.

When you look at this book’s table of contents, you’ll notice that we follow the pillar model, with two bonus features (like secret levels you’ve unlocked in a video game!). First, you’ll see chapters that fit nicely into each of the five main pillars:

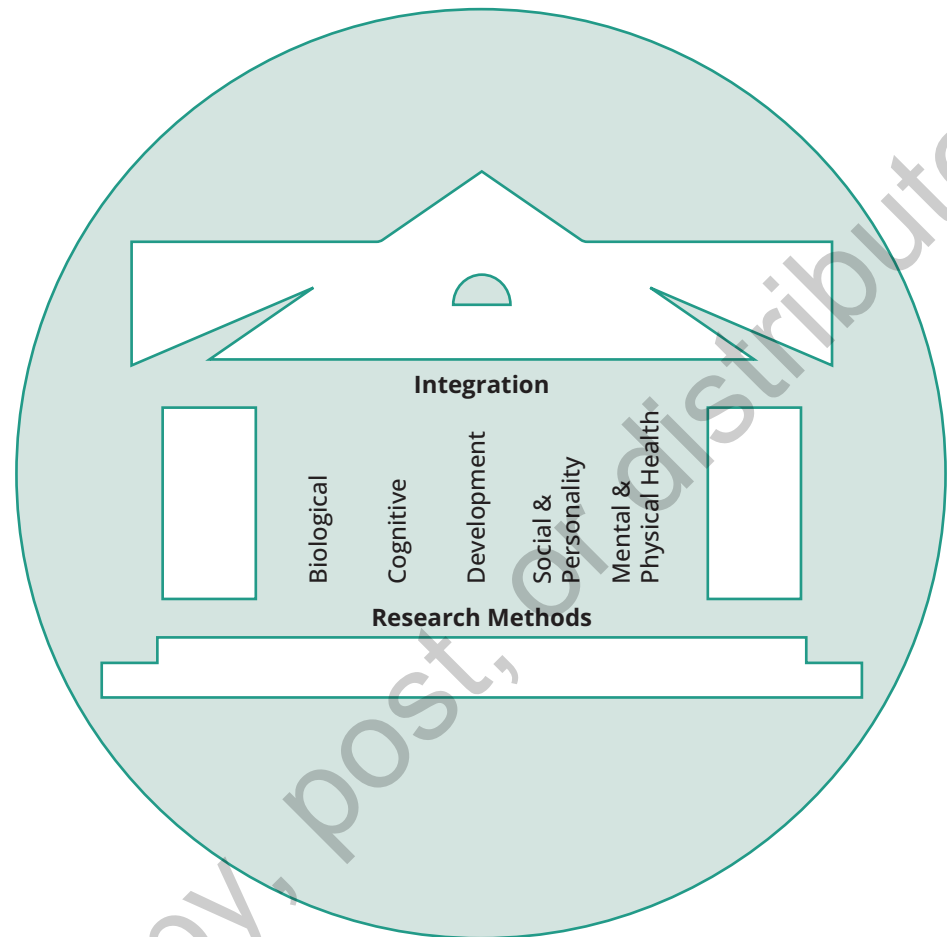
- **Biological**: *Biological psychology* is a complex subfield covering a wide variety of topics. Mostly, biological aspects of psychology will be a focus in the chapters titled “Biology and Your Brain” (Chapter 3), “Sensation and Perception” (Chapter 6), and “Consciousness” (Chapter 7).
- **Cognitive**: *Cognitive psychology* is the study of thought, learning, memory, and perception. These topics are most clearly the focus of the chapters titled “Learning” (Chapter 9), “Memory” (Chapter 10), “Motivation and Emotion” (Chapter 11), and “Cognition and Intelligence” (Chapter 12).

Introductory Psychology Initiative: The APA’s suggested approach to teaching high-quality initial, general psychology courses for the college level.

FIGURE 1.1

A Structure for the Undergraduate Introductory Psychology Course

The American Psychological Association suggests that Intro Psych books and courses include five “pillars” or subfields, guided by integrative themes and a foundation of research methods.



Source: American Psychological Association. (2014). *Strengthening the common core of the introductory psychology course*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, Board of Educational Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ed/governance/bea/intro-psych-report.pdf>.

- **Development:** *Developmental psychology* is the study of how we change and grow over our lifetime. This pillar is highlighted in the chapter titled “Human Development” (Chapter 8).
- **Social and personality:** *Social psychology* is the study of how we interact with other people, while *personality psychology* studies how we tend to act consistently across different situations and over time. The chapters titled “Personality” (Chapter 13) and “Social Psychology” (Chapter 14) are devoted most closely to this pillar.
- **Mental and physical health:** The last pillar aligns with the last two chapters of the book, which are titled “Psychological Disorders” (Chapter 15) and “Mental Health: Therapy and Treatment” (Chapter 16). Generally, subfields related to mental health are called either *clinical psychology* (which usually focuses on more severe or biologically based illnesses) or *counseling psychology* (which usually focuses on social or psychologically based illnesses and challenges).

The pillars are a traditional way of thinking about psychology, and they guide most of the book. After this chapter, Chapter 2 provides a foundation of research methods and Chapter 3 establishes important concepts regarding neurobiology and the brain. But then, we diverge from the pillars with two chapters that allow you to explore the exciting part of *why* psychology really matters in our curious world.

The next two chapters are applied topics that allow you to think about the APA's five learning goals. The topics are (1) identity and intersectionality and (2) health and positive psychology. *Intersectionality* is an exciting new area of psychology (borrowed from its original home, legal studies) that emphasizes how the human experience changes based on diversity issues. *Health psychology* is the study of how mental processes and behaviors affect both psychological and physical health, while *positive psychology* is the study of happiness and fulfilling our potential.

After exploring these very applied topics, we go back to the traditional pillar model.

A Foundation of Research Methods

Psychology is interesting because it's all around us. Chances are that you've recently encountered psychological ideas in the last week, whether it was something you read online, an item you saw in a magazine, or a theory you learned about on TikTok. However, what sets this course and textbook apart is like the pillars shown in Figure 1.1: Everything we share with you here stands on research methods. This is important, because it gives us more confidence in the information.

Psychology is a *science*, meaning that ideas, theories, and evidence-based therapies advance through the scientific method. Chapter 2 focuses on how to study humans and other animals while maintaining ethical standards. Psychology is a particularly difficult science because many concepts are abstract and hard to directly measure (such as bias, memory, or decision-making) and because ethics are paramount.

Over the years, many popular ideas have been rejected because scientific testing could not validate them. Psychology has also been in the news for the past few years because several famous studies from the 1960s and 1970s were tried again—a scientific technique called *replication*—and they failed to show the same results. We discuss this “scandal” in the chapter and what it has meant (and continues to mean) for the field. Humans are flawed and science is a human endeavor, so it's critical that we acknowledge any potential biases we have if we want to improve.

Author, anthropologist, and filmmaker Zora Neale Hurston was a master storyteller. Known best for her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston wrote about prejudice in the American South, religion, struggle, and science. We appreciate her love of curiosity when she noted, “Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.” One of the things that has made teaching psychology and writing this textbook so fun for us is all the poking and prying we've done into so many interesting topics.



Zora Neale Hurston, American author and anthropologist, said, “Research is formalized curiosity.”

Historical/Corbis Historical/via Getty Images



Consider global issues like pollution. How do different subfields in psychology all contribute to help understand—and hopefully solve—this problem?

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Integrative Themes

All the subfields of psychology work together (APA, 2023). To show that, the word *integration* also appears across the top of Figure 1.1. The initiative's seven guiding integrative themes are the following:

1. Psychological science relies on empirical evidence and adapts as new data develop.
2. Psychological science explains general principles that govern behavior while recognizing individual differences.
3. Psychological, biological, social, and cultural factors influence behavior and mental processes.
4. Psychological science values diversity, promotes equity, and fosters inclusion in pursuit of a more just society.
5. Our perceptions and biases filter our experiences of the world through an imperfect personal lens.
6. Applying psychological principles can change our lives, organizations, and communities in positive ways.
7. Ethical principles guide psychological science research and practice.

The reason integration matters is because all of us live in a world where our goals and decisions affect each other. For example, when you consider major global problems such as pollution, resource depletion, poverty, climate change, pandemics, crime, and terrorism, solutions can't be found without collaboration. Psychologists are needed to change people's motivations and behaviors. In addition, we must find solutions that respect everyone's needs and that work with people from other relevant fields, like communication, biology, physics, chemistry, political science, and business (APA, 2014). This kind of integration means that unlike some other academic fields, most research papers in psychology are published with multiple authors who take a team approach.

Sage Vantage

Practice what you learn in **Knowledge Check 1.1**

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES

Have You Ever Wondered?
1.2 How has psychology grown and changed over time?

>> LO 1.2 Explain important historical figures and approaches to psychological inquiry.

Are you curious about how psychology got started?

Like all epic tales, psychology has an origin story. It all began when innovative minds connected and applied different methods and theories about knowledge to create a new science. Philosophers and other scholars had been debating about mental processes and explanations for behavior for hundreds of years without considering

it “psychology.” For example, in the personality chapter of this book (Chapter 13), you’ll learn about how ancient Greeks believed liquids in your body influence your tendencies—but that theory wasn’t tested in any kind of scientific way. Psychology didn’t become what it is today until the scientific method became its most fundamental principle.

European Psychology’s Origin Story: Wilhelm Wundt

Picture Germany in the late 1800s.

Philosophers, medical doctors, some biologists, and others had considered mental processes and behaviors for years. But there wasn’t a clear devoted area of scientific study just for those questions. The person now considered the founder of psychology as a separate science was a physiologist named **Wilhelm Wundt** (pronounced VILL-helm Vunt).

In 1874, he wrote a textbook called *Principles of Physiological Psychology*. In it, he argued that psychology should be a separate field of study, using scientific experiments to understand thoughts and behaviors. Just a few years later, in 1879, he established the first psychology lab at the University of Leipzig in Germany (Kohls & Benedikter, 2010). He was also the first person to officially call himself a psychologist. Wundt gained international recognition as thousands of people traveled to hear his lectures on this exciting new science (Blumenthal, 1998).

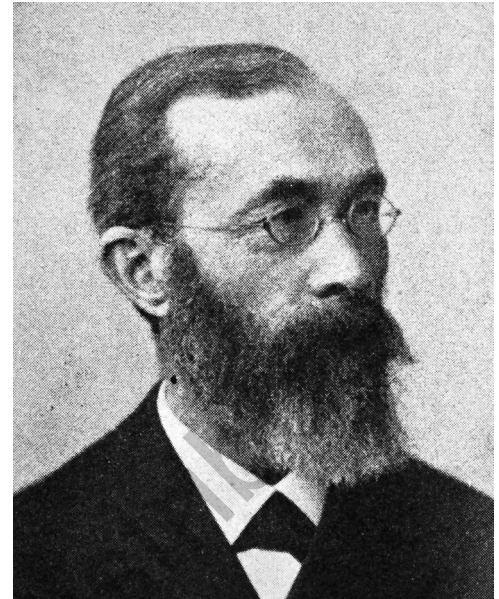
Wundt studied sensation and perception with simple but groundbreaking experiments. Many of them focused on reaction time. Back then, that was cutting-edge science. For example, he asked people to press a button when they saw a white circle on a screen or when they heard a dropped ball hit a platform (Hunt, 1993). How quickly and accurately could they do these tasks? How many mistakes would they make? He concluded there was a fraction of a second between when the visual or auditory stimulus actually *happened* and when we *perceive* that it happened (Fancher & Rutherford, 2012). The study of sensation and perception—and of the difference between the two—was born as one small part of what would evolve into modern psychology.

Famous Names and Approaches to Psychology

Wundt is where we start.

The men in Figure 1.2 were integral to psychology’s growth over the past 150 years or so. This part of the chapter briefly explains each person’s valuable contribution. In later chapters, we’ll come back to these ideas in further detail, in the context of the relevant subfield and topic.

But for now, please note what these classic figures all have in common: They are all White men. That’s not meant as a value judgment, simply as a statement of fact. Psychology wouldn’t have progressed the way it did without them, and we need to acknowledge their important contributions. We also need to acknowledge that their own backgrounds shaped, and may have limited, their perspectives (just as anyone’s perspective is limited, no matter who they are). That’s not a slight on them, but an honest recognition of the reality of how culture influences the development of science. So in the next section, we’ll explicitly address psychology’s history of systemic prejudices not to assign blame, but to recognize and celebrate how diverse voices are now enlarging psychology and making it better.



Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), who many people today consider the founder of psychology.


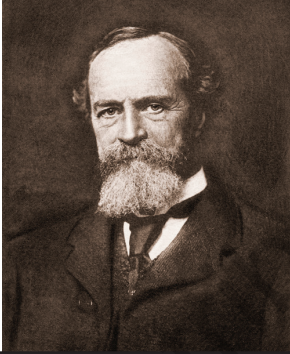
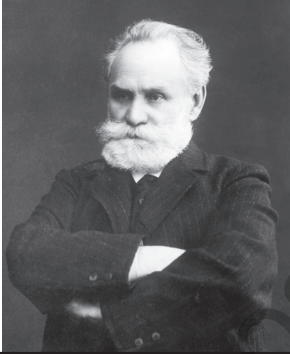
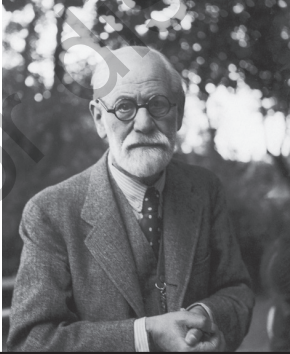
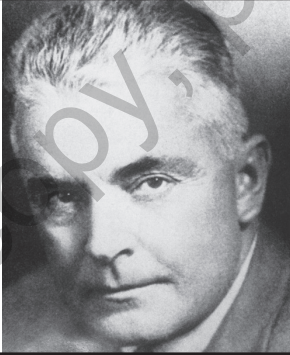


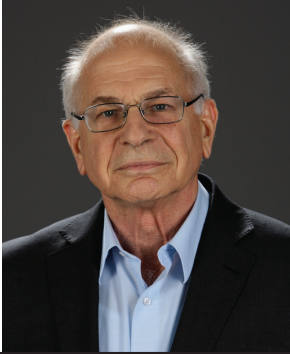
Bildagentur-online/Universal Images Group/via Getty Images

Wilhelm Wundt: Considered by many to be the founder of psychology as a separate scientific field of study.

FIGURE 1.2

Some Famous Historical Figures in Psychology

In addition to Wundt, here are some important people in the history of the field. Notice, however, what they all have in common and read the next section for more diversity.

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| Edward Titchener (1867–1927) | William James (1842–1910) |
|  |  |
| Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936) | Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) |
|  |  |
| John Watson (1878–1958) | Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) |
|  |  |
| Carl Rogers (1902–1987) | Daniel Kahneman (1934–2024) |

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Wundt, Titchener, and Structuralism

Wilhelm Wundt's general approach assumed that sensation and perception could be broken down into smaller experiences. In chemistry, a "compound" is a substance made up of smaller elements (like how water is a combination of hydrogen and oxygen). Wundt wanted people to use *introspection*, inner observation and analysis of personal mental experiences, to break down thoughts in the same way (Fancher & Rutherford, 2012).

Wundt and his student Edward Titchener developed their ideas into an approach now known as **structuralism**, the idea that complex mental experiences can be broken down into smaller parts. Imagine you are in a lab and a scientist puts a rose in front of you. You might notice the smell, the color, the feeling when you touch the thorns, and any memories or associations you have with roses from your past (Titchener, 1896/2009). Listing each component of your experience is the process of introspection.

Wundt was aware that introspection was tricky, unverifiable, and unreliable. Two people confronted with a rose might have very different inner experiences, and neither could really be measured. There were other problems, too. For example, introspection isn't going to work very well when you're trying to understand the psychology of animals or children, who can't fill out surveys or verbalize their experiences. Wundt also knew that our perceptions are full of biases and mistakes. These realizations led to a drop in the popularity of structuralism and made way for different approaches.

Structuralism: An early approach to psychology in which people attempted to break down sensation and perception experiences into their smaller parts.

James and Functionalism

Philosopher William James taught the first-ever psychology course in the United States at Harvard University in 1875. While James was inspired by Wundt's ideas about psychology being a separate science, he wasn't very impressed with structuralism. James and his student Edward Thorndike developed their own approach called functionalism.

Functionalism emphasized the *purpose* of thought, sensation, perception, memory, and so on (Fancher & Rutherford, 2012). So, while structuralism asked, "How does perception work?" functionalism asked, "Why does it work like that?" James, Thorndike, and their fans relied less on introspection as a research method and instead favored observation and measurement of behaviors, often in animals. Thorndike conducted a series of studies measuring how quickly cats could get out of puzzle boxes—which are basically little feline escape rooms (Thorndike, 1911).

Functionalism appealed to many early psychologists because it seemed more scientific than the methods used in structuralism. Still, changing times brought even more new ideas that helped shape the field.

Functionalism: Studying psychology by focusing on the purpose of mental processes and behaviors.

Pavlov and the Biological Approach

One of the biggest bombshells in the history of science was Darwin's 1859 book *On the Origin of Species*. If animals evolved slowly through natural and sexual selection, that also includes humans. Many psychologists started using animals in their lab studies, and that helped connect biologists and physiologists with psychologists.

For example, the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov was studying how digestion reflexes worked in dogs (Pavlov, 1927). But he quickly realized that the dogs would pick up on environmental cues that indicated that they were about to get fed, and the dogs would respond with anticipation, such as salivating. This kind of scholarly crossover influenced psychology's **biological approach** that explores, for example, how hormones, genetics, and neurotransmitters influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Biological approach: Studying psychology in terms of how thoughts and behaviors are influenced by biological factors in the body (genes, hormones, etc.).

Psychodynamic

approach: Studying psychology by focusing on how our mental processes are affected by childhood and by thoughts and fears (which we are often unaware of).

Freud and the Psychodynamic Approach

No history of psychology would be complete without mentioning Sigmund Freud. Freud is certainly not the “founder” or “father” of the science of psychology—that’s Wundt—but many do consider Freud to be the pioneer of therapy and counseling. His **psychodynamic approach** proposed that our childhood experiences, along with our hidden hopes and fears, drive our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Even while alive, Freud was controversial. Many early psychologists (like Wundt and James) were doing research in the lab with scientific methods, but Freud was more interested in the individual patients’ mental health. Trained as a medical doctor, Freud realized that talking about issues and tracing them back to when they began, often in childhood, could treat at least some mental illness symptoms (Freud, 1920/1966, 1933). Despite his claims, Freud’s approach was not particularly scientific or objective. Many of his ideas were based on case studies and even secondhand reports about particular patients, friends, or family members. His interpretations reflected his culture, personal upbringing, and life experiences.

But it’s undeniable that Freud’s work greatly influenced psychotherapy. Many of his ideas still inform psychology today, although usually in a modified and updated form.

Watson and the Behaviorist Approach

Wundt’s introspection fell out of favor as a scientific methodology because it was inherently biased and inconsistent. Similarly, many people criticized Freud’s approach to psychology as untestable and, frankly, sexist. Many people loved the growing field of psychology but wanted to emphasize that it should, above all else, be a *science*.

In the first half of the 1900s, especially in the United States, many psychologists embraced an approach called behaviorism, or the **behaviorist approach**. Behaviorism recognized that “thoughts,” “perceptions,” and “feelings” existed and were important but that they couldn’t be directly measured, which made them less scientific. Behaviorists believe the only way to be objective and scientific is to focus on observable *behaviors* (Skinner, 1954; Watson, 1913).

John Watson is credited with officially starting the behaviorist approach in 1913. He explicitly criticized introspection, asserting that psychology was “a purely objective experimental branch of natural science” (Watson, 1913, p. 158) and that there was absolutely no difference between the mental processes of humans and other animals. He believed that psychology should predict and control behaviors rather than describe or explain mental processes (Fancher & Rutherford, 2012). Watson later became infamous for an extremely controversial and unethical study in which he and his student, who later became his wife, created fear in a human baby (we’ll talk about this study in the chapter on learning, Chapter 9; Watson & Rayner, 1920).

Lewin and the Sociocultural Approach

The history of psychology we’ve discussed so far has focused on three general subjects: (1) human sensation and perception (Wundt, James), (2) animal research (Pavlov, Watson), and (3) the start of psychological therapy (Freud). These are still important topics, but psychology is also about falling in love, starting friendships, creating memories, aggression, prejudice, career development, leadership, social cooperation, and every other part of living in a social world.

In the period between World Wars I and II, Kurt Lewin immigrated to the United States to escape the rapidly escalating anti-Semitism in Europe that would climax in the Holocaust. Lewin joined many other psychologists studying aggression, prejudice,

Behaviorist

approach: Studying psychology with the belief that the only truly scientific approach to the field is to measure only objective, observable behaviors in humans and other animals.

and topics relevant to world events and people’s lives. Lewin particularly called for what he labeled *action research*, the application of psychology to solving problems and making the world a better place, including promoting independence, respect, and cooperation (Lewin, 1946; see also Adelman, 1993).

The **sociocultural approach** in modern psychology echoes and incorporates Lewin’s ideas by focusing on the social dynamics of interaction, including the influence of culture. Specific topics like conformity, identity, religious rituals and practices, aggression and altruism, and prejudice all fall within this approach to understanding mental processes and behaviors.

Sociocultural approach: Studying psychology by considering how social dynamics and culture interact in our everyday lives.

Rogers and the Humanistic Approach

After World War II, psychology was more popular than ever—and cultural values were changing. Civil rights were on everyone’s mind as people started to demand equal treatment across the board for historically marginalized groups (such as women, people of color, people with disabilities, and so on). Psychology responded in kind.

The **humanistic approach** of psychology focused on helping people achieve their own personal best potential and positive self-esteem. One of the leaders of the movement was Carl Rogers, a therapist who developed a new system of counseling that helped people feel respected and accepted, no matter what (Rogers, 1957). Humanism still guides many therapists and has been reinvigorated through the positive psychology movement, which emphasizes how people move from simply surviving to thriving.

Humanistic approach: Studying psychology by exploring how individuals can achieve their personal potential and positive self-esteem.

Kahneman and the Cognitive Approach

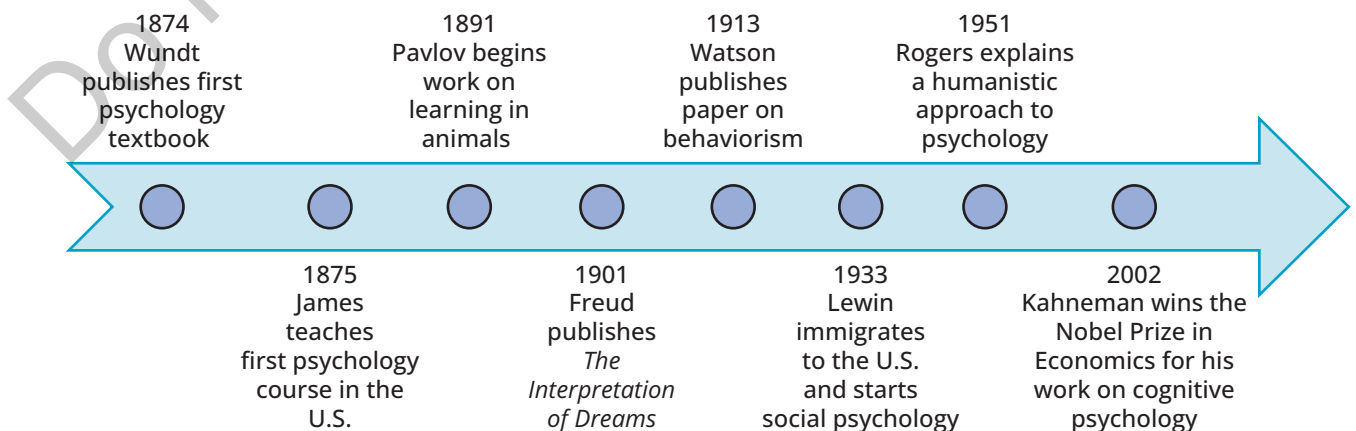
At about the same time the humanistic perspective was ramping up, so was the final approach we’re going to discuss. Psychologists trained by the behaviorists in the first half of the 1900s were now scholars and professors themselves. Many now wanted to focus more on studying internal mental processes (not just behaviors). The **cognitive approach** did just that, studying topics such as memory, motivation, problem-solving, and thinking in general.

Cognitive approach: Studying psychology with a focus on inner mental processes such as memory, decision-making, and thought structures.

FIGURE 1.3

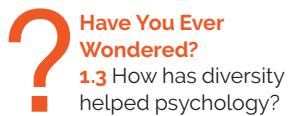
Some Important Moments in the History of Psychology

Psychology grew and changed over time; here are some classic names in the history of psychology (but note that more diversity is discussed in the next section of this book).



One of the most famous scholars within the cognitive perspective is Daniel Kahneman. His career was spent researching mistakes that people often make when they process information and make decisions (Kahneman, 2011). Often our thinking leads to mistakes because we rely too much on intuition or on logic; we need a healthy balance of both. Kahneman's fascinating series of studies and applications to consumer behaviors led to his winning the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2002.

THE BEAUTY OF DIVERSITY



>> LO 1.3 Discuss the history of prejudice in psychology and identify key diverse voices in the field over time.

Are you curious about other perspectives in psychology?

Everyone lives with some combination of social and cultural advantages and disadvantages; it's simply part of being human. Admitting our personal biases is a big step toward overcoming them. Academic scholarship is guided by flawed humans with these biases, so acknowledging how our field has been affected is important and is, again, a needed step toward doing better.

In this section, we emphasize three things. First, we need to honestly acknowledge when the field has fallen short of our ideals for equality and respect, so we can learn from our mistakes. Second, we recognize neglected contributions by honoring ideas and innovations from women, people of color, people from the LGBTQIA2S+ population, people with disabilities, and so on. Third, we'll summarize how psychology has become committed to a better future.

A History of Prejudice

Prejudice comes in many forms.

You have probably encountered sexism, homophobia, transphobia, discrimination against people due to their size, disabilities, immigration status, mental health status, and so on. You might not expect those prejudices in a scientific field—but it has happened many times.

For example, in 1962, three men received the Nobel Prize for discovering the double-helix structure of DNA (Watson, Crick, and Wilkins). But their “discovery” came after going through the research diagrams of Rosalind Franklin—without her permission—in which she clearly laid out the double helix. They essentially stole her work. In Watson's book, he admitted that Franklin had no idea they were going over her materials and that she had to either “go or be put in her place” (Watson, 1968; see also Maddox, 2003). Many people looking back now believe it was Franklin who should have received credit for this landmark discovery.

Psychology, like all human endeavors, has a history of *systemic prejudice* (also known as structural or institutional prejudice). Sexism, racism, heterosexism, and other forms of prejudice have affected theory development and unethical treatment of participants in studies. There are many examples, and we will mention some throughout this book in the context of their subject area.

In October 2021, the American Psychological Association published a formal apology for contributing to racist ideas, theories, policies, or any other aspect of a racist society (APA, 2021). The opening paragraph reads,

The American Psychological Association failed in its role leading the discipline of psychology, was complicit in contributing to systemic inequities, and hurt many through racism, racial discrimination, and denigration of people of color, thereby falling short on its mission to benefit society and improve lives. APA is profoundly sorry, accepts responsibility for, and owns the actions and inactions of APA itself, the discipline of psychology, and individual psychologists who stood as leaders for the organization and field. (p. 1)

One year later, in October 2022, they sponsored another paper titled, “Historical Chronology: Examining Psychology’s Contributions to the Belief in Racial Hierarchy and Perpetuation of Inequality for People of Color in the U.S.” (Cummings & Cummings, 2022). This follow-up again acknowledged psychology’s contributions to systemic prejudice and offered a list of specific examples. Overall, the type of things discussed are

- theories and hypotheses that assume “race” is a biological, innate difference among people instead of a social construct;
- studies comparing races that treat White people as the default or standard, therefore biasing interpretations favoring any differences as somehow “inferior”;
- standardizing tests using White people as the norm, such that questions use references based on cultural norms more likely to be familiar with people from certain subcultures and therefore giving those populations advantages;
- failing to study negative effects of international policies like colonization or assimilation of language and culture; and
- research studies that assume findings are true of “people” in general, even when the participants really only represent a small portion of people (e.g., they are very limited in terms of their ages, ethnicities, language spoken, socioeconomic status, or education).

A Chronology of Racist Research and Theory

Although most of psychology is not racist, the field hasn’t always gotten it right. The APA-sponsored paper offers examples of when and where psychology has shown bias and contributed to prejudice, organized as a timeline (Cummings & Cummings, 2022). Here is a sample that you can map onto the timeline in Figure 1.3.

1850–1900:

- The American Psychological Association is founded in 1892. It has a White male president (G. Stanley Hall, whom William James mentored) and 31 White male members.
- A paper is published in 1895 with findings that Black and Native American people have better “primitive” reflexes like reaction time but that White Americans have more intelligence (Bache, 1895).
- A study compares Black and White children on a memory task. When the Black children did better, the author concluded it was because memory is needed in “primitive brains” (Stetson, 1897).

1900–1925:

- G. Stanley Hall (first APA president) writes a textbook in which he describes Native American people as childlike. He supports programs designed to “civilize” them such as forcing them to change their languages and religions (Hall, 1904, 1905).
- In 1910, the Eugenics Record office is established. It advocates for designer human reproduction, segregation of races, and forced sterilization of “unfit and inferior races” (Brigham, 1923). In the years from 1892 to 1947, 31 different APA presidents support eugenics organizations. By 1930, 35,000 people have been sterilized due to being labeled socially or biologically unfit; the majority of them are immigrants, people of color, poor people, and/or people with disabilities (Greenwood, 2017; Kevles, 1968).
- The “mulatto hypothesis” becomes popular; it’s the idea that for mixed-ethnicity individuals, positive traits such as reasoning, memory, and intelligence go up the lighter their skin color is (Ferguson, 1916; see also Guthrie, 2004).
- The U.S. military starts giving all recruits intelligence tests with culturally biased questions. Eighty-nine percent of Black recruits are labeled “morons” (Yerkes, 1921). These tests serve as the foundation for later standardized tests like the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

1925–1975:

- Belief in eugenics and biological differences based on race/ethnicity continues. For example, psychologist Raymond Cattell writes about the evils of “mixture of blood between racial groups” (Cattell, 1933, p. 155). He continues to publish this opinion at least through the 1990s (e.g., Cattell, 1972).
- Several Black psychologists publish studies that counter the results from previously published White psychologists. These studies are largely discounted or ignored (Guthrie, 2004).
- Several prominent psychologists participate in explicitly racist groups such as those supporting the Nazi agenda and White nationalists (cf. Jackson & Winston, 2021). Others argue in favor of keeping public schools segregated by race (Winston, 1998).
- In 1968, the Association of Black Psychologists is created. Seventy-five Black psychologists resign membership in the APA, calling for the organization to stop endorsing racist standardized tests (Nelson, 1968). The APA responds by saying any problems are due to misuse of the tests, not the tests themselves.

1975–Present Day:

- Two Chicana Studies professors publish a book arguing that very little research has been done on counseling techniques specifically validated within communities of color (Vásquez & Gold, 1981). Similarly, another paper notes that Puerto Rican and Black individuals are more likely to be diagnosed with mental illnesses than people from other ethnicities (Rogler, 1983).
- A paper published in 1988 reviews over 150 studies comparing White, Black, and Asian participants (Rushton, 1988). Some conclusions are that Asian people are the most restrained and highest achieving, while Black people are the most

sexual and criminal. The author notes that these conclusions are often based on biased methodologies and interpretations, perpetuating stereotypes.

- In 1998, psychologist Glayde Whitney writes the foreword to the autobiography of KKK leader David Duke. Whitney writes that the “truth” about racial differences has been suppressed by “organized Jewry.”
- By the year 2000, people of color make up 26.3% of the U.S. population but only 5.8% of APA’s members. By 2017, White people make up 60% of APA membership (APA, 2017).
- From 1974 to 2018, only 5% of editors of the top six professional psychology journals have been people of color (Cummings & Cummings, 2022).

Diverse Voices in Psychology

Well, that was depressing—especially since it only focused on one form of prejudice (racism) within psychology.

But the point of acknowledging the bias is that we have to admit problems if we want to do better. We all want to do better. Despite these significant challenges, inspiring pioneers overcame systemic discrimination by becoming leaders, publishing papers, and participating in professional organizations. Such representations matter; seeing people who look like us makes us feel welcome and validated (Hewer, 2015). For example, college students who feel like they belong, either within their major or within college overall, are more likely to persist through graduation (Tinto, 2017).

If implicit biases in psychology as a field seep into intro to psychology courses, it might hurt marginalized students who don’t feel that they belong. Junior and senior psychology majors at one university reviewed a list of 42 pioneers in psychology that included 21 women and 9 people of color (Cramblet Alvarez et al., 2019). This rising generation of psychologists were much more likely to recognize the names of White men on the list. This means that most curricula are emphasizing the names you saw earlier in this chapter, such as Wundt, James, and Freud.

Let’s emphasize just a few examples of some of the other important voices, who don’t always get the recognition they deserve.

Yūjirō Motora

One of the first people to bring psychology to Japan was Yūjirō Motora (1858–1912). After a childhood in Japan, he earned degrees at Boston University and at Johns Hopkins University before returning home and becoming a professor at the University of Tokyo. Motora studied physiological psychology and published work on sensation and perception with G. Stanley Hall in the very first edition of *The American Journal of Psychology* (Hall & Motora, 1887). He translated important writings by Wilhelm Wundt and William James to give them a broader audience, despite personally disagreeing with some of their conclusions.

He is also known for his own unique contributions. He created the first scientific psychology lab in Japan (Sato & Sato, 2005). As a practitioner of Zen Buddhism, Motora challenged the idea that students should accept whatever their teachers said. Instead, he argued that students should interpret what was important themselves. He also published ideas about how religion and science can be complementary friends, not enemies (Motora, 1905).

Perhaps most important, some of his research focused on troubled schoolchildren. Instead of blaming or giving up on them, he recognized and described challenges that would later be identified as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Takeda et al., 2015).



Yūjirō Motora (1858–1912).



Mary Whiton Calkins (1863–1930).

Mary Whiton Calkins

Mary Whiton Calkins (1863–1930) was born during the American Civil War. She fought hard to study psychology at Harvard—despite a formal policy blocking women from enrolling. She eventually completed all of Harvard’s requirements to earn a doctorate, but they still refused to give her one. She became the first woman president of the APA and of the American Philosophical Association. She published four books and over 100 research papers on memory, dreams, and identity. She also established the first psychology laboratory specifically studying women (e.g., Calkins, 1893). She reset expectations about what women could achieve within psychology.



Mamie Phipps Clark (1917–1983) and her husband, Kenneth Clark (1914–2005).

Library of Congress

Mamie Phipps Clark and Kenneth Clark

Mamie Phipps Clark (1917–1983) and Kenneth Clark (1914–2005) were a married African American couple who played an important role in social justice. Phipps Clark’s master’s thesis started the basic research that influenced one of the most famous Supreme Court cases (Clark & Clark, 1939). The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* ended segregation of public schools—and the justices cited her work as evidence in their decision. She and her husband were the first African Americans to earn PhDs in psychology from Columbia University (see Benjamin & Crouse, 2004).

Their famous “doll studies” vividly demonstrated the harmful effects of internalized racism on children. (You can search YouTube for the visual record of some of their interviews with children, as well as more modern replications.) In these studies, children playing with brown-skinned and white-skinned dolls preferred the white-skinned dolls, even when the children were African American themselves. Kenneth Clark later became the first African American president of the APA.



Robert Lee Williams II (1930–2020).

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Robert Lee Williams II

Robert Lee Williams II (1930–2020) was a leader in establishing the Black Studies department at Washington University and in organizing their African and Afro-American Studies programs. Many other universities followed his lead. Williams devoted many years to criticizing standardized tests, doing research studies establishing that they were culturally biased and that they disadvantaged people without privileged access to education.

Williams is also known for coining the term *Ebonics* (a combination of the words *ebony* and *phonics*), referring to common phrasing and slang terms used by some African Americans (Williams, 1975). He argued that Ebonics should be accepted as a regional dialect just like any other dialect in the country and that using it should not have a negative connotation.

Martha Bernal

Martha Bernal (1931–2001) grew up in Texas with parents who were immigrants from Mexico. When her elementary school banned her from speaking any Spanish, she felt shame about her family and ethnicity (see Vasquez & Lopez, 2002). She didn't let that stop her, though; she became the first Latina woman to earn a PhD in psychology in the United States (from Indiana University Bloomington). After years of struggling to find a university that would hire her as part of the faculty, Bernal got a job at Arizona State University and spent a career devoted to studying identity development and ethnicity in Mexican American children. She helped develop interventions for community resources and groups that served hundreds of children. The APA later gave her a Distinguished Life Achievement Award, and she became the second president of the National Latino Psychological Association.



Martha Bernal (1931–2001).

John Sunderland/Contributor/Denver Post/via Getty Images

Mahzarin Banaji

Born in India, Mahzarin Banaji is an experimental psychologist who has taught at Yale and is currently at Harvard University. She has received numerous recognitions for her work including election to the National Academy of Sciences, the William James Fellow Award from APS (an organization of which she was also president), and APS's Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award. Banaji and colleagues coined the term *implicit bias* to examine forms of discrimination of which we are not aware. These ideas are spelled out in a popular co-authored book *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. At present Banaji is focused on public teaching found at www.outsmartingimplicitbias.org.



Mahzarin Banaji.

Courtesy of Mahzarin Banaji

Laura King

Laura King, as part of the LGBTQ+ community, has broken through professional barriers. She became the first woman editor of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Personality Processes and Individual Differences*, the leading outlet for research on personality psychology. She has published over 100 articles and book chapters on her own work, which investigates individual well-being and happiness, often within the LGBTQ+ community. She promotes positive psychology and how to make meaning from life events, even when (and maybe especially when) we experience difficult times (e.g., King, 2001; King & Smith, 2004). She is a popular professor of psychology producing important work right now.



Laura King.

Courtesy of Laura A. King, PhD

Alette Coble-Temple

Did you know about the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant? In 2016, Alette Coble-Temple, who is a clinical and sport psychologist, earned the title Ms. Wheelchair America, where she spent a year advocating across the United States for “PRIDE - Parental Rights Include Disability Equality!” In her role as faculty member and program director, she embraces her cerebral palsy, especially her “CP accent,” to transform the perception of disability within society and dismantle ableism across academia, healthcare, and legal systems. She also uses her clinical expertise to assist the state of California in determining parole eligibility for convicted individuals. Additionally, she routinely serves in leadership positions on APA boards and committees connected to advancing women's rights, and she frequently delivers keynote addresses at conventions and business trainings on disability research, policy, law, and counseling.



Alette Coble-Temple.

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Building a Better Future

Now, we need to do better. How?

The American Psychological Association started by sincerely apologizing and admitting its mistakes of the past. Resolutions have now been passed that formalize how the field is explicitly working to improve. The APA is implementing these tactics in part through grant funding of over a million dollars to support the effort (APA, 2022). In short, grants prioritize scholarship that

- promotes research on cultural diversity and education about systemic prejudice,
- provides training and opportunities for students of all backgrounds in terms of graduate school and career paths (such as being editors for scientific journals, support for new professors, etc.),
- prioritizes efforts to address diversity in clinical and health practices (including trauma-informed mental health care), and
- shares data and progress on improvements.

Psychology undeniably has a checkered past. Though we can't change the past, we can learn from it, and the field is honestly trying to do better.

SageVantage

Practice what you learn in **Knowledge Check 1.3**

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

>> **LO 1.4** Analyze how the ideas in this book can relate to you, personally.

Are you curious about how psychology applies to you?

We wrote every chapter with three objectives: to stimulate, satisfy, and enhance your curiosity about human behavior. In every chapter, you'll see a table on the first page with two columns. Column 1 shows curiosity questions we hope you ask (or have already asked about human nature), and column 2 matches those questions with specific learning objectives in the chapter. The rows in the starting table tell you how many major sections you'll see in that chapter (one row per major section).

We bring the material to life through storytelling. At the start of each chapter, you'll be introduced to a narrative—some fictional, some nonfictional, some theoretical—that will carry you through from start to finish. We conclude with a summary of the main ideas, followed by some critical thinking questions. Your instructor might use these to help you apply what you've learned, or we encourage you to ponder them yourself.

Beyond these basics, how do we hope you use this book?

? Have You Ever Wondered?
1.4 How should I use this book?

Four Features

Don't skip the features.

We specifically designed them to help you experience and achieve all five of the APA Introductory Psychology Initiative goals. Sure, each chapter's main content is like your meal at a feast; it's what most introductory books cover. But this book offers you a figurative dessert with the four special features we're excited to share with you.

Feature 1 is the *Spotlight on Research Methods*. You'll learn about research designs and statistical analyses in the very next chapter (Chapter 2). But remember from Figure 1.1 that research methods are the foundation of our science, so we remind you of that importance throughout. Each chapter takes a deep dive into one or two studies to explain not just the results, but *how* we know what we know.

Feature 2 is *Psychology and Our Curious World*. Do you like movies about superheroes and supervillains? What's your favorite type of music or literature? Psychology should come alive for you both as you observe your own life and when you relax with popular culture. Several of your authors are dedicated fans of blockbuster franchises (Marvel Cinematic Universe vs. DC Universe? *The Mandalorian* vs. *Boba Fett*?), and we want to show you how to find psychology everywhere you look.

Next, check out Feature 3: *What's My Score?* If you enjoy BuzzFeed quizzes, we think you'll love taking this survey in each chapter. These show you a real self-report questionnaire that's been developed by qualified psychologists to measure a personality trait or another variable relevant to each chapter. By filling them out, you'll not only have a better understanding of how researchers measure these concepts in real studies but also be better able to apply the ideas to yourself.

Finally, Feature 4 is the *Career Corner*. Lots of people get excited about psychology when they take an introductory course, but they're not clear what career options exist beyond therapists or counselors. The *Career Corner* features real people who majored in psychology and went on to get a wide variety of jobs immediately after graduating—*without* going to graduate school. Being a counselor and/or going to graduate school is a fantastic aspiration, but there are so many more options to consider. This feature might help you brainstorm and find your own passion.

Applying Psychology to You

Be curious (please).

Even if you never take another psychology course, psychology is everywhere around you. Applying each concept throughout this book will help you both do better in terms of your grade (yay!), but it will also help you answer many of life's questions about human interactions, everyday decisions, mistakes we make along the way, and how we overcome obstacles. The next time you wonder, "Why did they do that?" we hope you'll turn to one of the chapters in this book.

We could spend a lot more time in this opening chapter talking to you about why psychology matters and about its history—but we don't want to waste your time. We want to get to the good stuff, and we're going to assume that if you're reading this, you're already hooked. So let's get started. ●

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Learning Objectives Summary

1.1 What is psychology?

>> LO 1.1 Define psychology and explain the American Psychological Association's Introductory Psychology Initiative.

Psychology is the scientific study of mental processes and behaviors. The American Psychological Association (APA) is the leading professional organization in North America, and the Introductory Psychology Initiative suggests that initial courses to the field emphasize research methods, integrative themes, and five "pillars" or major subfields: biological, cognitive, developmental, social/personality psychology, and mental/physical health.

1.2 How has psychology grown and changed over time?

>> LO 1.2 Explain important historical figures and approaches to psychological inquiry.

Many people consider Wilhelm Wundt to be the "founder" of psychology; he started the first scientific lab devoted to human sensation and perception in Germany in the late 1800s. Other important people in the history of psychology include Edward Titchener, William James, Ivan Pavlov, Sigmund Freud, John Watson, Kurt Lewin, Carl Rogers, and Daniel Kahneman (their work is discussed in future chapters).

1.3 How has diversity helped psychology?

>> LO 1.3 Discuss the history of prejudice in psychology and identify key diverse voices in the field over time.

Note that all the people listed in the previous section were White men. The APA has acknowledged years of systemic prejudice, including racism and sexism. Examples of important pioneers in helping advance diversity in psychology are Yūjirō Motora, Mary Whiton Calkins, Mamie Phipps Clark and Kenneth Clark, Robert Lee Williams II, Martha Bernal, Mahzarin Banaji, Laura King, and Alette Coble-Temple. Their work is very briefly summarized in this section.

1.4 How should I use this book?

>> LO 1.4 Analyze how the ideas in this book can relate to you, personally.

The APA provides grant funding to help research efforts devoted to improving the global community through scientific inquiry, ending systemic prejudice, and promoting equality.

This book believes in the same goals. Each chapter highlights curiosity and storytelling, including use of four special features (*Spotlight on Research Methods*, *Psychology in Your Curious World*, *What's My Score?* and *Career Corner*). The material will be more memorable if you apply it to your own life.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Go to <https://www.apa.org/about/division> to learn more about the APA subdivisions. Choose three of the divisions you find particularly interesting and click on the links provided by the website to investigate details. Then, share at least two things you learned about each division you picked. Why do you find these divisions interesting or important to psychology? Can you think of any divisions not currently on the list you think will be added in the future?
2. Consider the timeline of the history of psychology shown in Figure 1.3. Besides wars, think of at least two important national or international events that occurred between 1870 and present day that might have influenced culture and/or scientific thinking in psychology. Explain how each event may have had an impact on psychological theory or research.
3. Pick three of the people listed as influential in the history of psychology from this chapter (make sure at least one is from the "diverse voices" section). Find three additional pieces of information about each person's life or contribution to psychology. Then, find one person not listed in this chapter and discuss why they are also important to the growth of psychology over time.

4. Look again at the five goals the APA identified for introductory psychology courses. Rank order the goals in terms of how important they are for you, personally, and for what you hope to get out of this book and/or course. Explain why you put the goals in the order you did.

KEY TERMS

American Psychological Association, 3
Behaviorist approach, 12
Biological approach, 11
Cognitive approach, 13
Functionalism, 11
Humanistic approach, 13

Introductory Psychology Initiative, 5
Psychodynamic approach, 12
Psychology, 3
Sociocultural approach, 13
Structuralism, 11
Wilhelm Wundt, 9

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