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PSYC 101-004

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9/16/14

Psychological Science (Mod 1-2)

It’s interesting to see how the views on psychology has evolved. It started very primitive with structuralism and functionalism. Just the beginnings of when people began to think about humans, the way we are, how we think, and why we think that way. This approach was very non-scientific, or just very inaccurate, since it relied on people being able to express one’s feelings and/or emotions. Then psychologists B. F. Skinner and John B. Watson come back to redefine what psychology is. Again and again history redefined psychology, until we are left with today’s modern psychology methods.

The more I learn about our subconscious and how it affects our very thoughts, the more I’m intrigued by how complicated and tricky the human brain can be. We think we know one thing for sure, but then we realize we were either biased, overlooking the facts, or overconfident. It seems that when I listen to music on shuffle mode, my device likes to pick some songs over others, but that’s probably just my brain trying to recognized nonexistent patterns in a completely random list. Another topic I was able to relate to in the literature was when hindsight bias was discussed. I have found myself countless times agreeing to one’s argument and then a week later come across a different argument that seems to make equal (or even more) sense. Similar to a creative invention, it gives you that “Why didn’t I think of that in the first place?” thought.

I am amazed by the wide variety of fields related to psychology. There are the usual, stereotypical fields like counseling, in order to help people cope with everyday stress. But there are also the researchers and testers. The ones who actually do the tests to give you the statistics that you read in an article one day. There are even some who work for marketing, discovering the best way to increase profit using what we know of the subconscious. Psychology can be applied nearly everywhere, and in places that may surprise you.

Biology of Behavior-Neuroscience (Mod 3-5)

The brain is a massively complex system, it’s no wonder so many books have been published about neuroscience or other brain-related subjects. What fascinates me most is the brain’s ability to adapt, or more specifically its use of neuroplasticity. One sometimes hears stories about people with bizarre surgeries, removing parts (or even half) of a patient’s brain. Neuroplasticity makes me lean toward the idea that the brain is similar to a muscle, being able to grow and fill in “the void”. Another study that stood out to me was where two surgeons split a man’s brain in half because of issues with epileptic seizures. It makes me wonder if medication wasn’t tried first. Or other methods of analysis to find other ways of preventing the seizures. Perhaps many tests were made and severing the corpus callosum was the only way, or time was so short it was either the surgery or death.

Just as the brain is complex, the minds personality and variables that influence it seem complex as well. Nature or nurture? still holds as the million dollar question. But it seems that both affect an individual on significant levels. It’s weird how two identical twins, removed from each other, will have some of the exact same traits many years later. Same hobbies, favorite food, personality, etc.

Evolution is an interesting concept when grouped with psychology. Every day we study the brain and its behavior, and what the subconscious forces us to do. But over time every species is evolving. Evolution takes a large amount of time compared to how long humans (Homo sapiens) have existed. But would evolution change the way our primitive, subconscious mind works? Does this mean we will have to adapt psychology to evolutionary changes in the brain say every 50,000 years? Now this is a very slow rate of change, almost unnoticeable, but what if that was reality? It’s as if we are studying something that is constantly changing, on an evolutionary level.

Consciousness (Mod 6-8)

Dreams are a concept that will forever puzzle me. No matter what you are imagining, feeling, doing, when you wake up you know that you’ve been dreaming. Yet it was so real, so vivid, the brain is quite the liar. The theories behind what dreams mean also intrigue me, especially the idea that REM sleep may be used to do maintenance on neural pathways in the brain.

I once visited a stage hypnotist. Curious of who they were, what they could do, and why and how exactly hypnotism worked. I was surprised to hear that hypnotism doesn’t necessarily work on everybody. You have to be in the correct mental state, or have divided consciousness. But I have heard of people who have benefited quite well from hypnotism or just positive psychology.

It’s amazing how people are affected by drugs. Meth is a great example of one of the drugs that has obvious external affects. But its internal affects are quite disastrous. Most of it has to do with too much artificial stimulation.