

Exploring Psychology CCA - Spring Term 2023: What did we learn?

The Spring term saw an exciting addition to NLCS Jeju's CCA schedule, a new weekly session for Y10s and Y11s interested in learning what psychology is all about.

Over the course of 10 weeks, students engaged in learning on a wide variety of introductory topics, some of which are outlined below.

Thanks to Y12 students Ally Lee and Haeun Jeon for planning such an amazing programme of activities.

Topic 1: Freudian Psychology

by Julius

Freudian psychology, also known as psychoanalytic theory, is a psychological approach developed by Sigmund Freud, a famous Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis. Freudian psychology emphasises the importance of unconscious mental processes and childhood experiences in shaping human behaviour.

According to Freud, the human psyche is composed of three parts: the id, ego, and superego. The id is the most primitive part of the psyche and is responsible for instinctual drives and desires. The ego is the conscious, rational part of the psyche that mediates between the demands of the id and the constraints of reality. The superego is the moral and ethical component of the psyche, representing the internalised values and ideals of society.

Another well-known but often misunderstood theory from Freud is the Oedipus Complex and Electra Complex. These are referred to a young boy's unconscious desire for his mother and rivalry with his father for her affection or the other way around for the Electra Complex, where it is the case for a young girl. He explains that this occurs between the age of 3 to 6, during the phallic stage of psychosexual development. One thing that is very important to note is that this concept is related to how people develop their gender identity, and it is not that dirty and what we should avoid, but a necessary step for a child to complete their sexual ego formation.

Topic 2: Origins of Psychopaths

by Sophie

As part of the CCA, we spent a session examining psychopaths, beginning with the introduction of who they are. A psychopath is a former name for an individual with an antisocial personality disorder. It is not an official diagnosis, it is considered a severe form of antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). There are several traits of psychopaths such as the absence of empathy, impulsivity and manipulation. These characteristics result in their antisocial nature. Even though psychopaths have a stereotypical image of being highly brutal and violent, they could appear normal or charming, showing narcissism.

During the discussion, it was a common question about psychopaths, whether they are born to or developed to be. The answer depends on both biological and environmental factors a psychopath has had during life. Neurological and genetic factors that cause a lack of emotions can directly lead to antisocial behaviour in a child. However, as a child is at younger age yet, it is possible to cover the influences of these factors and prevent them from being psychopaths in adulthood. This can be achieved by experiencing love and care from families and being properly educated in a specialised way. Environmental factors definitely have a great impact on a child's development. If a child had an early developmental problem such as childhood neglect, abuse or trauma, they are likely to gain psychopathic traits. Thus, we concluded that the development of psychopaths is heavily influenced by genetic and environmental factors experienced in childhood.

There are several more debatable points about psychopaths, investigating deeper into their origin and behaviours. As a psychopath is well-known in relation to psychology in society, it will be interesting to have further research about who they truly are. The discussions about them would bring up a wide range of perspectives and points about the psychology behind psychopaths.

Topic 3: Mental disorders

by Sunwoo

Mental disorders vary in a wide range, with different causes and forms, as well as in individual patients and their characteristics. Sometimes it is hard to define a single mental disorder as its symptoms are completely different from one another, even between people who are diagnosed with the same disorder.

DSM 5 was where we could start to know about the basic concept of mental disorders. According to the DSM 5, a mental disorder is a syndrome characterised by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behaviour that reflects a dysfunction in psychological, and biological development process underlying mental functioning. We've learnt and researched about how the DSM has been modified through the past years.

Exploring what causes mental disorders, we discussed 3 possible factors that can cause a mental disorder: Biological, Sociocultural, and psychological influence. Through this I noticed that the mental disorder can be caused not solely by a single factor, but such 3 collectively leading in showing the symptoms.

Topic 4: Being in Love

by Hyochan

Being in love

Have you ever loved someone? The word 'love' can be divided into different ways. The definition of love is an 'intense feeling of affection' from someone. Another definition is 'to like another adult very much and be romantically and sexually attracted to them, or to have a strong feeling of liking a person in your family.' Whereas love can exist between different genders, love exists in the family even between people of the same gender.

Distinction of love

First of all, we discussed the distinction of love. According to Zick Rubin's, an American psychologist's scales of liking and loving, the three elements of love are attachment, caring, and intimacy. To maintain a romantic relationship we need physical contact and approval, valuing each other's happiness, and sharing private thoughts, feelings and desires with each other. The components of love are feeling of closeness to each other, desire of physical attraction, and feeling of a person to remain with each other and move towards the shared goals. Lastly, do you think love is a drive or an emotion? For me, I think love is an emotion because love can exist between two people regardless of gender.

Rise of attraction

Now let's think about what makes people attractive. According to Zajonc's mere exposure effect, people get attracted to people that they see most frequently. This doesn't mean that someone who sits besides you all the time is attractive. There are lots of factors that attract someone. For example, People can be attracted to other people with similar characteristics such as personality, appearance, social standing, and interests. In addition, there is also the idea of the possibility of attraction coming from evolution for survival and passing on genes to the next generation.

Impact of love

When we experience love it can affect our health. This includes euphoria, increase in obsessive behaviours, pain relief and cause the oxytocin level to increase. This may lead to love addiction. The symptoms of love addiction are feeling lost without a partner and being over dependent on your partner.

Topic 5: Developmental psychology

by Haeun

Having the last theoretical session before exploring exciting art therapies, the topic we chose to investigate was Developmental Psychology. Being a growing teenager who is still going through the last stages of development to become an adult, it was one aspect of psychology we couldn't ignore. It was fascinating and way more complicated than expected even learning a small bit of developmental psychology where different theories and experiments existed.

Moving onto our learning, we learnt about the changes that can occur in various aspects of development, including physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Having first insight into the area of developmental psychology, we have started with looking at 10 principles of development which is a framework for comprehending developmental psychology. These principles include the concepts of development being a continuous process that involves both gains and losses, is multidirectional, is influenced by a variety of backgrounds, and incorporates both nature and nurture.

Next thing we learnt was Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, which is one of the most influential theories in developmental psychology. The four phases of cognitive development identified by Piaget are sensorimotor intelligence, preoperational thought, concrete operational thought, and formal operations. Each stage is distinguished by different cognitive capacities and modes of thought.

Another aspect of development we had a look at was influences on development, focusing on Attachment. Attachment refers to the emotional connection that develops between an infant and its caregiver. Attachment is often said to be composed of 4 stages following the order of pre-attachment, indiscriminate, discriminate, and multiple. As well as the stages, there are also different types of attachment which have a significant role in shaping one's development. It was interesting investigating depending on the types of attachment the child has formed, how the child could possibly be impacted in later their life.

Topic 6: Art Therapies

by Ally

Art therapy is a form of psychotherapy that incorporates artistic and creative expression into the therapeutic processes. It is generally known to gain insight into their deep inner thoughts and unconscious behaviours, and hence may diminish intense negative emotions. In this term's CCA, our team explored various methods of art therapies that are often utilised for patients in real life over 2 CCAs. This section of the article will explore the effects of the examples of therapies. I personally hope these activities can be incorporated into the school curriculum, since the impact on students was very positive.

First of all, we designed a "Never-Sent Postcard." The leaders let the students write a situation or a person who he/she had a conflict with, and what they want to say to that situation or the person. Also, they were reminded that there is no need to share or communicate the comment they have made in the postcard. The idea behind creating postcards that will never be sent is to allow individuals to express their emotions and feelings without fear of judgement or consequence.

Drawing emotions is another art therapy technique that can be used to help individuals express their emotions in a nonverbal way. This technique involves drawing images that represent how the individual is feeling, using colours, shapes, and symbols to convey their emotions. It seemed to be useful for individuals who may find it difficult to articulate their feelings verbally or who may feel overwhelmed by their emotions. The leaders prepared various artistic materials for this activity, namely, coloured pencils and markers.

Another way to express emotions, writing negative emotions in a balloon and blowing them away, was used to help the students relieve extreme academic stress, since they were in a stressful situation of IGCSE. By physically confining the negative emotions in a balloon, they have expressed that their stress also has seemed to be gone from their sight and the mind. I have also felt that my worries were swiftly blown away. We concluded that this was the most effective method.

One limitation of incorporating art therapy into CCA time was the time limit. Because our aim was to try to experience as many branches of art therapies as possible, we had to intervene with the students' drawing or colouring. If we had more time, the session would have been much more relaxing. Despite the limitations, I believe art therapy still can be a powerful tool for individuals who may be struggling with mental health issues, or even to people who want to relax after a long day.

Topic 7: Observations

by Hannah

Psychology is full of fascinating theories about human behaviour and mind. But how do psychologists obtain evidence to elaborate their ideas? This is where observation comes in. Observation is one method for collecting research data, which involves watching a unit of participants and recording relevant behaviour for later analysis.

There are various methods in observation, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. An example would be between covert and overt. Covert observation is where the group being studied does not know they are being observed, or where the research goes 'undercover'. The participants thus would act more naturally, as they do not know that they are being observed. Overt observation is where the group being studied knows they are being observed. Although this method is more ethical as the participants are aware of being observed, it can lead to demand characteristics. Demand characteristics are variables which can nudge participants to consciously or unconsciously change their responses- like when a participant deduces the purpose of an observation and starts to respond in favour of your hypothesis.

Another method of observation we learned was deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is when you don't have a hypothesis, and you are planning to deduce a conclusion based on your findings without any clear restrictions. On the other hand, inductive reasoning is when you have a clear hypothesis which you want to test through observation.

Lastly, an important part of psychology research that was emphasised was that it is crucial to keep the ethical guidelines when making observations. The participants should be aware of being observed, have the freedom to withdraw from the research, and be guaranteed confidentiality.

Overall, in our last session of Exploring Psychology we explored how the theories of psychology are able to form a strong foundation with evidence based on observations. We even had the chance to apply our learnings by taking a mini field trip around the campus, taking notes and observations about student behaviours in different situations. I enjoyed learning about so diverse and interesting theories in psychology, and how these theories can come to life.