

Abnormal Psychology: Decoding the Human Mind and Behavior

Authored by
mohammad looti

June 16, 2026

RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2026). *Abnormal Psychology: Decoding the Human Mind and Behavior*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=38027>

Abnormal Psychology

Abnormal psychology is the branch of psychology that studies unusual patterns of behavior, emotion and thought, which may or may not be understood as precipitating a mental disorder.

There is a long history of attempts to understand and control behavior deemed to be aberrant or deviant (statistically, morally or in some other sense), and there is often cultural variation in the approach taken. The field of abnormal psychology identifies multiple different causes for different conditions, employing diverse theories from the general field of psychology and elsewhere, and much still hinges on what exactly is meant by "abnormal". There has traditionally been a divide between psychological and biological explanations, reflecting a philosophical dualism in regard to the mind body problem, as well as different approaches to the classification of mental disorders.

Clinical psychology is the applied field of psychology that seeks to assess, understand and treat psychological conditions in clinical practice. The theoretical field known as "abnormal psychology" may form a backdrop to such work, but clinical psychologists are nowadays unlikely to use the term "abnormal" in reference to their practice. Psychopathology is a similar term to abnormal psychology but has more of an implication of an underlying pathology (disease process), and as such is a term more commonly used in the medical specialty known as psychiatry.

Activity Theory

Activity theory is a psychological meta-theory, paradigm, or framework, with its roots in Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology. Its founders were Alexei N. Leont'ev (1903-1979), and Sergei Rubinshtein (1889-1960) who sought to understand human activities as complex, socially situated phenomena and go beyond paradigms of psychoanalysis and behaviorism. It became one of the major psychological approaches in the former USSR, being widely used in both theoretical and applied psychology, in areas such as education, training, ergonomics, and work psychology.

Activity theory theorizes that when individuals engage and interact with their environment, production of tools results. These tools are "exteriorized" forms of mental processes, and as these mental processes are manifested in tools, they become more readily accessible and communicable to other people, thereafter becoming useful for social interaction.

Analytical Psychology

Analytical psychology (or Jungian psychology) is the school of psychology originating from the ideas of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. His theoretical orientation has been advanced by his students and other thinkers who followed in his tradition. Though they share similarities, analytical

psychology is distinct from Freudian psychoanalysis. Its aim is wholeness through the integration of unconscious forces and motivations underlying human behavior. Depth psychology, including archetypal psychology, employs the model of the unconscious mind as the source of healing and development in an individual. Jung saw the psyche as mind, but also admits the mystery of soul, and used as empirical evidence, the practice of an accumulative phenomenology around the significance of dreams, archetypes and mythology.

Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the science of controlling and predicting human behavior. Behavior analysts reject the use of hypothetical constructs and focus on the observable relationship of behavior to the environment. By functionally assessing the relationship between a targeted behavior and the environment, the methods of ABA can be used to change that behavior. Research in applied behavior analysis ranges from behavioral intervention methods to basic research which investigates the rules by which humans adapt and maintain behavior.

Areas of application

ABA-based interventions are best known for treating people with developmental disabilities, most notably autism spectrum disorders. However, applied behavior analysis contributes to a full range of areas including: AIDS prevention, conservation of natural resources, education, gerontology, health and exercise, industrial safety, language acquisition, littering, medical procedures, parenting, seatbelt use, severe mental disorders, sports, and zoo management and care of animals.

Definition

ABA is defined as the science in which the principles of the analysis of behavior are applied systematically to improve socially significant behavior, and in which experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for change in behavior. It is one of the three fields of behavior analysis. The other two are behaviorism, or the philosophy of the science; and experimental analysis of behavior, or basic experimental research.

Baer, Wolf, and Risley's 1968 article is still used as the standard description of ABA. It describes the seven dimensions of ABA: application; a focus on behavior; the use of analysis; and its technological, conceptually systematic, effective, and general approach.

Applied Psychology

The basic premise of applied psychology is the use of psychological principles and theories to overcome problems in other areas, such as mental health, business management, education,

health, product design, ergonomics, and law. Applied psychology includes the areas of clinical psychology, industrial and organizational psychology, occupational health psychology, human factors, forensic psychology, engineering psychology, as well as many other areas such as school psychology, sports psychology and community psychology. In addition, a number of specialized areas in the general field of psychology have applied branches (e.g., applied social psychology, applied cognitive psychology).

One founder of applied psychology was Hugo Münsterberg. He came to America from Germany, and, like many aspiring psychologists during the late 19th century, originally studied philosophy. Münsterberg had many interests in the field of psychology such as purposive psychology, social psychology and forensic psychology. In 1907 he wrote several magazine articles concerning legal aspects of testimony, confessions and courtroom procedures, which eventually developed into his book, *On the Witness Stand*. The following year the Division of Applied Psychology was adjoined to the Harvard Psychological Laboratory. Within 9 years he had contributed eight books in English, applying psychology to education, industrial efficiency, business and teaching. Eventually Hugo Münsterberg and his contributions would define him as the creator of applied psychology. In 1920, the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) was founded, as the first international scholarly society within the field of psychology.

Asian Psychology

Asian psychology is a branch of ethnic psychology that studies psychological concepts as they relate to Asian culture.

Behavioral Medicine

Behavioral medicine is an interdisciplinary field of medicine concerned with the development and integration of knowledge in the biological, behavioral, psychological, and social sciences relevant to health and illness. The term is often used interchangeably, and incorrectly, with health psychology, whereas the practice of behavioral medicine also includes applied psychophysiological therapies such as biofeedback, hypnosis, and biobehavioral therapy of physical disorders, aspects of occupational therapy, rehabilitation medicine, and physiatry, as well as preventive medicine. One of its academic forebears is the field of psychosomatic medicine. Practitioners of behavioral medicine include appropriately qualified nurses, psychologists, and physicians.

More recently, it has expanded its area of practice to interventions with providers of medical services, in recognition of the fact that the behavior of providers can have a determinative effect on patients' outcomes. For example, there exists a large interest in communication behaviors between clinician and patient within the field. Other areas include correcting perceptual bias in diagnostic behavior; remediating clinicians' attitudes that impinge negatively upon patient-treatment; and

addressing clinicians' behaviors that promote disease-development and illness-maintenance in patients, whether within a malpractice framework or not.

The International Society of Behavioral Medicine is the leading non-profit organization in the field, with many national daughter-organizations. Their yearly conferences have become a focus for professional and academic development.

Behavioral Neuroscience

Behavioral neuroscience, also known as biological psychology, biopsychology, or psychobiology is the application of the principles of biology (in particular neurobiology), to the study of physiological, genetic, and developmental mechanisms of behavior in human and non-human animals. It typically investigates at the level of nerves, neurotransmitters, brain circuitry and the basic biological processes that underlie normal and abnormal behavior. Most typically experiments in behavioral neuroscience involve non-human animal models (such as rats and mice, and non-human primates) which have implications for better understanding of human pathology and therefore contribute to evidence based practice.

Cognitive Neuropsychology

Cognitive neuropsychology is a branch of cognitive psychology that aims to understand how the structure and function of the brain relates to specific psychological processes. It places a particular emphasis on studying the cognitive effects of brain injury or neurological illness with a view to inferring models of normal cognitive functioning. Evidence is based on case studies of individual brain damaged patients who show deficits in brain areas and from patients who exhibit double dissociations. From these studies researchers infer that different areas of the brain are highly specialised. It can be distinguished from cognitive neuroscience which is also interested in brain damaged patients but is particularly focused on uncovering the neural mechanisms underlying cognitive processes.

Cognitive Neuroscience

Cognitive neuroscience is an academic field concerned with the scientific study of biological substrates underlying cognition, with a specific focus on the neural substrates of mental processes. It addresses the questions of how psychological/cognitive functions are produced by the brain. Cognitive neuroscience is a branch of both psychology and neuroscience, overlapping with disciplines such as physiological psychology, cognitive psychology and neuropsychology. Cognitive neuroscience relies upon theories in cognitive science coupled with evidence from neuropsychology, and computational modelling.

Due to its multidisciplinary nature cognitive neuroscientists may have various backgrounds. Other than the associated disciplines just mentioned, cognitive neuroscientists may have backgrounds in these disciplines: neurobiology, bioengineering, psychiatry, neurology, physics, computer science, linguistics, philosophy and mathematics.

Methods employed in cognitive neuroscience include experimental paradigms from psychophysics and cognitive psychology, functional neuroimaging, electrophysiology, cognitive genomics and behavioral genetics. Studies of patients with cognitive deficits due to brain lesions constitute an important aspect of cognitive neuroscience (see neuropsychology). Theoretical approaches include computational neuroscience and cognitive psychology.

Community Psychology

Community psychology deals with the relationships of the individual to communities and the wider society. Community psychologists seek to understand the quality of life of individuals, communities, and society. Their aim is to enhance quality of life through collaborative research and action.

Community psychology makes use of various perspectives within and outside of psychology to address issues of communities, the relationships within them, and people's attitudes about them. Through collaborative research and action, community psychologists (practitioners and researchers) seek to understand and to enhance quality of life for individuals, communities, and society. Rappaport (1977) discusses the perspective of community psychology as an ecological perspective with the person-environment fit being the focus of study and action instead of attempting to change the person or the environment when an individual is seen as having a problem.

Closely related disciplines include ecological psychology, environmental psychology, cross-cultural psychology, social psychology, political science, public health, sociology, social work, and community development.

Community psychology grew out of the community mental health movement, but evolved dramatically as early practitioners incorporated their understandings of political structures and other community contexts into perspectives on client services.

Comparative Psychology

Comparative psychology usually refers to the study of the behavior and mental life of animals other than human beings. However, scientists from different disciplines do not always agree on this definition. Comparative psychology has also been described as a branch of psychology in which emphasis is placed on cross-species comparisons--including human-to-animal comparisons.

However, some researchers feel that direct comparisons should not be the sole focus of comparative psychology and that intense focus on a single organism to understand its behavior is just as desirable, if not more. Donald Dewsbury reviewed the works of several psychologists and their definitions and concluded that the object of comparative psychology is to establish principles of generality focusing on both proximate and ultimate causation.

It has been suggested that the term itself be discarded since it fails to be descriptive of the field but no appropriate replacement has been found. If looking for a precise definition, one may define comparative psychology as psychology concerned with the evolution (phylogenetic history and adaptive significance) and development (ontogenetic history and mechanism) of behavior.

Using a comparative approach to behavior allows one to evaluate the target behavior from four different, complementary perspectives, developed by Niko Tinbergen. First, one may ask how pervasive the behavior is across species. Meaning, how common is the behavior in animals? Second, one may ask how the behavior contributes to the lifetime reproductive success of the individuals demonstrating it. Meaning, does it result in those animals producing more offspring than animals not showing the behavior? These two questions provide a theory for the ultimate cause of behavior.

Third, what mechanisms are involved in the behavior? Meaning, what physiological, behavioral, and environmental components are necessary and sufficient for the generation of the behavior? Fourth, a researcher may ask about the development of the behavior within an individual. Meaning, what maturational, learning, social experiences must an individual undergo in order to demonstrate a behavior? These latter two questions provide a theory for the proximate causes of behavior. For more details see Tinbergen's four questions.

Clinical Behavior Analysis

Clinical behavior analysis (or clinical behaviour analysis) has its origins in applied behavior analysis and behavior therapy. It is sometimes referred to as third-generation behavior therapy.

Clinical behavior analysis represents a movement in behavior therapy away from cognitivism and back toward radical behaviorism and other forms of behaviorism, in particular functional analysis (psychology) and behavioral models of verbal behavior. This area includes Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), community reinforcement and family training behavioral activation (BA), Kohlenberg & Tsai's Functional Analytic Psychotherapy, integrative behavioral couples therapy and dialectical behavioral therapy. These approaches are squarely within the applied behavior analysis tradition of behavior therapy. A related therapy but not behavior analytic in origins is cognitive behavioral analysis system of psychotherapy (McCullough, 2000).

Clinical Psychology

Clinical psychology is an integration of science, theory and clinical knowledge for the purpose of understanding, preventing, and relieving psychologically based distress or dysfunction and to promote subjective well-being and personal development. Central to its practice are psychological assessment and psychotherapy, although clinical psychologists also engage in research, teaching, consultation, forensic testimony, and program development and administration. In many countries, clinical psychology is a regulated mental health profession.

The field is often considered to have begun in 1896 with the opening of the first psychological clinic at the University of Pennsylvania by Lightner Witmer. In the first half of the 20th century, clinical psychology was focused on psychological assessment, with little attention given to treatment. This changed after the 1940s when World War II resulted in the need for a large increase in the number of trained clinicians. Since that time, two main educational models have developed--the Ph.D. scientist-practitioner model (focusing on research) and the Psy.D. practitioner-scholar model (focusing on clinical practice). Clinical psychologists are now considered experts in providing psychotherapy, and generally train within four primary theoretical orientations--psychodynamic, humanistic, behavior therapy/cognitive behavioral, and systems or family therapy.

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is the study of when, why, how, and where people do or do not buy a product. It blends elements from psychology, sociology, social anthropology and economics. It attempts to understand the buyer decision making process, both individually and in groups. It studies characteristics of individual consumers such as demographics and behavioural variables in an attempt to understand people's wants. It also tries to assess influences on the consumer from groups such as family, friends, reference groups, and society in general.

Customer behaviour study is based on consumer buying behaviour, with the customer playing the three distinct roles of user, payer and buyer. Relationship marketing is an influential asset for customer behaviour analysis as it has a keen interest in the re-discovery of the true meaning of marketing through the re-affirmation of the importance of the customer or buyer. A greater importance is also placed on consumer retention, customer relationship management, personalisation, customisation and one-to-one marketing. Social functions can be categorized into social choice and welfare functions.

Each method for vote counting is assumed as social function but if Arrow's possibility theorem is used for a social function, social welfare function is achieved. Some specifications of the social functions are decisiveness, neutrality, anonymity, monotonicity, unanimity, homogeneity and weak and strong Pareto optimality. No social choice function meets these requirements in an ordinal scale simultaneously. The most important characteristic of a social function is identification of the interactive effect of alternatives and creating a logical relation with the ranks. Marketing provides

services in order to satisfy customers. With that in mind, the productive system is considered from its beginning at the production level, to the end of the cycle, the consumer (Kioumarsis et al., 2009).

Counseling Psychology

Counseling psychology is a psychological specialty that encompasses research and applied work in several broad domains: counseling process and outcome; supervision and training; career development and counseling; and prevention and health. Some unifying themes among counseling psychologists include a focus on assets and strengths, person-environment interactions, educational and career development, brief interactions, and a focus on intact personalities. In the United States, the premier scholarly journals of the profession are the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* and *The Counseling Psychologist*.

In Europe, the scholarly journals of the profession include the *European Journal of Counselling Psychology* (under the auspices of the European Association of Counselling Psychology) and the *Counselling Psychology Review* (under the auspices of the British Psychological Society). *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* is an international interdisciplinary publication of Routledge (part of the Taylor & Francis Group).

In the U.S., counseling psychology programs are accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA), while counseling programs are accredited through the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). In all 50 states, counselors can be licensed at the masters degree level, once meeting the state and national criteria. To become licensed as a counseling psychologist, one must meet the criteria for licensure as a psychologist. Both doctoral level counseling psychologists and doctoral level counselors can perform both applied work, as well as research and teaching.

Critical Psychology

Critical psychology is an approach to psychology that takes a critical theory-based perspective. Critical psychology is aimed at critiquing mainstream psychology and attempts to apply psychology in more progressive ways, often looking towards social change as a means of preventing and treating psychopathology.

One of critical psychology's main criticisms of conventional psychology is how it fails to consider or deliberately ignores the way power differences between social classes and groups can impact the mental and physical well-being of individuals or groups of people.

Cross-Cultural Psychology

Cross-cultural psychology is the scientific study of human behavior and mental process, including

both their variability and invariance, under diverse cultural conditions. Through expanding research methodologies to recognise cultural variance in behaviour, language and meaning, it seeks to extend, develop and transform psychology Central themes, such as affect, cognition, conceptions of the self, and issues such as psychopathology, anxiety, and depression, are all re-examined in cross-cultural psychology in an attempt to examine the universality of these concepts. Critics have pointed to methodological flaws in cross-cultural psychological research and claim that serious shortcomings in the theoretical and methodological basis used impede rather than help this scientific search for universality. Cross-cultural psychology is differentiated from Cultural Psychology. The latter is the branch of psychology that holds that human behavior is significantly influenced by cultural differences meaning that psychological phenomena can only be compared with each other across cultures to a very limited extent. In contrast, Cross-Cultural psychology includes a search for possible universals in behavior and mental processes.

Various definitions of the field include: "the scientific study of human behaviour and its transmission, taking into account the ways in which behaviours are shaped and influenced by social and cultural forces"; "the empirical study of members of various cultural groups who have had different experiences that lead to predictable and significant differences in behaviour". Culture may also be defined as "the shared way of life of a group of people". They also outline various aims and goals of cross-cultural psychology, including a challenge to the limited cultural perspective that may result if one only studies cultural variables within one's own society.

Cultural Psychology

Cultural psychology is a field of psychology which assumes the idea that culture and mind are inseparable, and that psychological theories grounded in one culture are likely to be limited in applicability when applied to a different culture. As Richard Shweder, one of the major proponents of the field, writes, Cultural psychology is the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, and transform the human psyche, resulting less in psychic unity for humankind than in ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotion" (1991, p. 72). Cultural psychology is that branch of psychology which deals with the study and impact of culture, tradition and social practices on psyche for the unity of humankind.

Developmental Psychology

Developmental psychology, also known as human development, is the scientific study of systematic psychological changes that occur in human beings over the course of their life span. Originally concerned with infants and children, the field has expanded to include adolescence, adult development, aging, and the entire life span. This field examines change across a broad range of topics including motor skills and other psycho-physiological processes; cognitive

development involving areas such as problem solving, moral understanding, and conceptual understanding; language acquisition; social, personality, and emotional development; and self-concept and identity formation.

Developmental psychology includes issues such as the extent to which development occurs through the gradual accumulation of knowledge versus stage-like development, or the extent to which children are born with innate mental structures versus learning through experience. Many researchers are interested in the interaction between personal characteristics, the individual's behavior, and environmental factors including social context, and their impact on development; others take a more narrowly focused approach.

Developmental psychology informs several applied fields, including: educational psychology, child psychopathology, and forensic developmental psychology. Developmental psychology complements several other basic research fields in psychology including social psychology, cognitive psychology, ecological psychology, and comparative psychology.

Discursive Psychology

Discursive psychology (DP) is a form of discourse analysis that focuses on psychological themes. It was developed in the 1990s by Jonathan Potter and Derek Edwards at Loughborough University. It draws on the philosophy of mind of Ryle and the later Wittgenstein, the rhetorical approach of Michael Billig, the ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel and the conversation analysis of Harvey Sacks. Discursive psychology starts with psychological phenomena as things that are constructed, attended to, and understood in interaction. An evaluation, say, may be constructed using particular phrases and idioms, responded to by the recipient (as a compliment perhaps) and treated as the expression of a strong position. In discursive psychology the focus is not on psychological matters somehow leaking out into interaction; rather interaction is the primary site where psychological issues are live.

It is philosophically opposed to more traditional cognitivist approaches to language. It uses studies of naturally occurring conversation to critique the way that topics have been conceptualised and treated in psychology.

Ecological Psychology

Ecological psychology is a term claimed by a number of schools of psychology. However, the two main ones are one on the writings of James J. Gibson, and another on the work of Roger G. Barker, Herb Wright and associates at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Whereas Gibsonian psychology is always termed Ecological Psychology, the work of Barker (and his followers) is also sometimes referred to as Environmental Psychology. There is a considerable amount of overlap between the two schools, although the Gibsonian approach tends to be more philosophical.

Both schools emphasise 'real world' studies of behaviour as opposed to the artificial environment of the laboratory.

Educational Psychology

Educational psychology is the study of how humans learn in educational settings, the effectiveness of educational interventions, the psychology of teaching, and the social psychology of schools as organizations. Educational psychology is concerned with how students learn and develop, often focusing on subgroups such as gifted children and those subject to specific disabilities. Although the terms "educational psychology" and "school psychology" are often used interchangeably, researchers and theorists are likely to be identified in the US and Canada as educational psychologists, whereas practitioners in schools or school-related settings are identified as school psychologists. This distinction is however not made in the UK, where the generic term for practitioners is "educational psychologist."

Educational psychology can in part be understood through its relationship with other disciplines. It is informed primarily by psychology, bearing a relationship to that discipline analogous to the relationship between medicine and biology. Educational psychology in turn informs a wide range of specialities within educational studies, including instructional design, educational technology, curriculum development, organizational learning, special education and classroom management. Educational psychology both draws from and contributes to cognitive science and the learning sciences. In universities, departments of educational psychology are usually housed within faculties of education, possibly accounting for the lack of representation of educational psychology content in introductory psychology textbooks.

Engineering Psychology

Engineering psychology examines the capabilities and limitations to sense, perceive, store, and process information and how these human factors impact human interactions with technology. This knowledge is applied to the design, use, and maintenance of human-machine systems. Students are trained in both research methods of experimental psychology and application of the results in contemporary problems in industry.

Engineering psychologists are interested in how and why performance might be changed through the use of technology. For instance, a new interface for controlling the radio in a vehicle may cause errors because a control is too sensitive for human-motor performance or because the driver is confused as to how to use the interface.

Environmental Psychology

Environmental psychology is an interdisciplinary field focused on the interplay between humans and their surroundings. The field defines the term environment broadly, encompassing natural environments, social settings, built environments, learning environments, and informational environments. Since its conception, the field has been committed to the development of a discipline that is both value oriented and problem oriented, prioritizing research aiming at solving complex environmental problems in the pursuit of individual well-being within a larger society. *When solving problems involving human-environment interactions, whether global or local, one must have a model of human nature that predicts the environmental conditions under which humans will behave in a decent and creative manner. With such a model one can design, manage, protect and/or restore environments that enhance reasonable behavior, predict what the likely outcome will be when these conditions are not met, and diagnose problem situations. The field develops such a model of human nature while retaining a broad and inherently multidisciplinary focus. It explores such dissimilar issues as common property resource management, wayfinding in complex settings, the effect of environmental stress on human performance, the characteristics of restorative environments, human information processing, and the promotion of durable conservation behavior. This multidisciplinary paradigm has not only characterized the dynamic for which environmental psychology is expected to develop, but it has been the catalyst in attracting other schools of knowledge in its pursuit as well as from research psychologists. Geographers, economists, policy-makers, sociologists, anthropologists, educators, and product developers all have discovered and participated in this field. * Although "environmental psychology" is arguably the best-known and most comprehensive description of the field, it is also known as human factors science, cognitive ergonomics, environmental social sciences, architectural psychology, socio-architecture, ecological psychology, ecopsychology, behavioral geography, environment-behavior studies, person-environment studies, environmental sociology, social ecology, and environmental design research.

Experimental Psychology

Experimental psychology is a methodological approach rather than a subject and encompasses varied fields within psychology. Experimental psychologists have traditionally conducted research, published articles, and taught classes on neuroscience, developmental psychology, sensation, perception, attention, consciousness, learning, memory, thinking, and language. Recently, however, the experimental approach has extended to motivation, emotion, and social psychology.

Experimental psychologists conduct research with the help of experimental methods. The concern of experimental psychology is discovering the processes underlying behavior and cognition.

Experimental Analysis of Behavior

The experimental analysis of behavior is the name given to the school of psychology founded by B. F. Skinner, and based on his philosophy of radical behaviorism. A central principle was the inductive, data-driven examination of functional relations, as opposed to the kinds of hypothetico-deductive learning theory that had grown up in the comparative psychology of the 1920-1950 period. Skinner's approach was characterized by empirical observation of measurable behavior which could be predicted and controlled. It owed its early success to the effectiveness of Skinner's procedures of operant conditioning, both in the laboratory and in behavior therapy -- what is now called applied behavior analysis.

Forensic Psychology

Forensic psychology is the intersection between psychology and the criminal justice system. It involves understanding criminal law in the relevant jurisdictions in order to be able to interact appropriately with judges, attorneys and other legal professionals. An important aspect of forensic psychology is the ability to testify in court, reformulating psychological findings into the legal language of the courtroom, providing information to legal personnel in a way that can be understood. Further, in order to be a credible witness, for example in the United States, the forensic psychologist must understand the philosophy, rules and standards of the American judicial system. Primary is an understanding of the adversarial system. There are also rules about hearsay evidence and most importantly, the exclusionary rule. Lack of a firm grasp of these procedures will result in the forensic psychologist losing credibility in the courtroom. A forensic psychologist can be trained in clinical, social, organizational or any other branch of psychology. In the United States, the salient issue is the designation by the court as an expert witness by training, experience or both by the judge. Generally, a forensic psychologist is designated as an expert in a particular jurisdiction. The number of jurisdictions in which a forensic psychologist qualifies as an expert increases with experience and reputation.

Questions asked by the court of a forensic psychologist are generally not questions regarding psychology but are legal questions and the response must be in language the court understands. For example, a forensic psychologist is frequently appointed by the court to assess a defendant's competency to stand trial. The court also frequently appoints a forensic psychologist to assess the state of mind of the defendant at the time of the offense. This is referred to as an evaluation of the defendant's sanity or insanity (which relates to criminal responsibility) at the time of the offense. These are not primarily psychological questions but rather legal ones. Thus, a forensic psychologist must be able to translate psychological information into a legal framework.

Forensic psychologists provide sentencing recommendations, treatment recommendations, and any other information the judge requests, such as information regarding mitigating factors, assessment of future risk, and evaluation of witness credibility. Forensic psychology also involves training and evaluating police or other law enforcement personnel, providing law enforcement with

criminal profiles and in other ways working with police departments. Forensic psychologists work both with the Public Defender, the States Attorney, and private attorneys. Forensic psychologists may also help with jury selection.

Health Psychology

Health psychology is concerned with understanding how biological, psychological, environmental, and cultural factors are involved in physical health and the prevention of illness. Health psychologists work alongside other medical professionals in clinical settings, work on behavior change in public health promotion, teach at universities, and conduct research. Although its early beginnings can be traced to the kindred field of clinical psychology, four different divisions within health psychology and one allied field have developed over time. The four divisions include clinical health psychology, public health psychology, community health psychology, and critical health psychology. The allied field is occupational health psychology. Organizations closely associated with the field of health psychology include Division 38 of the American Psychological Association and the Division of Health Psychology of the British Psychological Society.

Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Industrial and organizational psychology (also known as I-O psychology, industrial-organizational psychology, work psychology, organizational psychology, work and organizational psychology, industrial psychology, occupational psychology, personnel psychology or talent assessment) applies psychology to organizations and workplaces. These organizations and workplaces include for-profit businesses, non-profits, government agencies, colleges, universities, and graduate and professional school programs. Industrial-organizational psychologists contribute to an organization's success by improving the performance and well-being of its people. An I-O psychologist researches and identifies how behaviors and attitudes can be improved through hiring practices, training programs, and feedback systems. In the academic context, an I-O psychologist's research might similarly focus on improving admissions systems, learning outcomes, academic achievement, degree completion, and teaching and assessment methodologies.

International Psychology

International or global psychology is an emerging branch of psychology that focuses on the worldwide enterprise of psychology in terms of communication and networking, cross-cultural comparison, scholarship, practice, and pedagogy. Often, the terms international psychology, global psychology, and cross-cultural psychology are used interchangeably, but their purposes are subtly and importantly different: Global means worldwide, international means across and between nations, cross-cultural means across cultures. In contrast, the term "multicultural" is more often

used to refer to ethnic and other cultural differences existing within a given nation rather than to global or international comparisons. This entry focuses predominantly on international psychology.

International psychology is concerned with the emergence and practice of psychology in different parts of the world. It advocates committed involvement in worldwide and regional psychology and policy-making organizations such as the International Union of Psychology Science (IUPsyS: it includes 71 national psychology associations), the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP), the International Council of Psychologists (ICP), the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA: it includes 31 national psychology associations), the Sociedad Interamericana de Psicología (SIP), and many others.

In contrast, the term "global psychology" is more frequently used to refer to the worldwide investigation of global issues and phenomena of interest from a psychological and psychocultural point of view. Examples include the investigation of subjective well being, identification and treatment of mental health problems, the psychological dimensions of family systems, gender roles and gender-typed behavior, childrearing practices, cognitive and emotional functioning, international attitudes, value systems, intergroup conflicts, threats to the natural environment, societal transformation and national development, the struggles of disempowered groups (such as women, children, and immigrants and refugees) as seen in global perspective.

Cross-cultural psychology may be defined as the comparative study of behavior and mental processes in different cultures. It aims to measure the psychological phenomena across cultures and looks for patterns, generalizability, and culture-specific differentiation. An example would be the investigation of child-rearing practices and their psychological consequences among distinctly different groups. Cross-cultural psychology focuses on the relationship between psychology and culture (such as language, traditions, and socialization practices) and how it affects individual human functioning. In this respect, cross-cultural psychology constitutes one important element of global psychology. Cross-cultural psychology emerged during the 1960s-1970s as a separate field of study with a definite identity; it is thus older than the more general field of international psychology, which is only now emerging as a distinct discipline.

Legal Psychology

Legal psychology involves empirical, psychological research of the law, legal institutions, and people who come into contact with the law. Legal psychologists typically take basic social and cognitive principles and apply them to issues in the legal system such as eyewitness memory, jury decision-making, investigations, and interviewing. The term "legal psychology" has only recently come into usage, primarily as a way to differentiate the experimental focus of legal psychology from the clinically-oriented forensic psychology.

Together, legal psychology and forensic psychology form the field more generally recognized as "psychology and law". Following earlier efforts by psychologists to address legal issues, psychology and law became a field of study in the 1960s as part of an effort to enhance justice, though that originating concern has lessened over time. The multidisciplinary American Psychological Association's Division 41, the American Psychology-Law Society, is active with the goal of promoting the contributions of psychology to the understanding of law and legal systems through research, as well as providing education to psychologists in legal issues and providing education to legal personnel on psychological issues. Further, its mandate is to inform the psychological and legal communities and the public at large of current research, educational, and service in the area of psychology and law. There are similar societies in Britain and Europe.

Mathematical Psychology

Mathematical psychology is an approach to psychological research that is based on mathematical modeling of perceptual, cognitive and motor processes, and on the establishment of law-like rules that relate quantifiable stimulus characteristics with quantifiable behavior. In practice "quantifiable behavior" is often constituted by "task performance".

As quantification of behavior is fundamental in this endeavor, the theory of measurement is a central topic in mathematical psychology. Mathematical psychology is therefore closely related to psychometrics. However, where psychometrics is concerned with individual differences (or population structure) in mostly static variables, mathematical psychology focuses on process models of perceptual, cognitive and motor processes as inferred from the 'average individual'. Furthermore, where psychometrics investigates the stochastic dependence structure between variables as observed in the population, mathematical psychology almost exclusively focuses on the modeling of data obtained from experimental paradigms and is therefore even more closely related to experimental psychology/cognitive psychology/psychonomics. Like computational neuroscience and econometrics, mathematical psychology theory often uses statistical optimality as a guiding principle, assuming that the human brain has evolved to solve problems in an optimized way. Central themes from cognitive psychology; limited vs. unlimited processing capacity, serial vs. parallel processing, etc., and their implications, are central in rigorous analysis in mathematical psychology.

Mathematical psychologists are active in many fields of psychology, especially in psychophysics, sensation and perception, problem solving, decision-making, learning, memory, and language, collectively known as cognitive psychology, and the quantitative analysis of behavior but also, e.g., in clinical psychology, social psychology, and psychology of music.

Psychophysics

Psychophysics is a discipline within psychology that quantitatively investigates the relationship between physical stimuli and the sensations and perceptions they affect. Psychophysics has been described as "the scientific study of the relation between stimulus and sensation" or, more completely, as "the analysis of perceptual processes by studying the effect on a subject's experience or behaviour of systematically varying the properties of a stimulus along one or more physical dimensions".

Psychophysics also refers to a general class of methods that can be applied to study a perceptual system. Modern applications tend to rely heavily on ideal observer analysis and signal detection theory.

Medical Psychology

Medical psychology refers to a growing specialty area of clinical psychological practice in which clinical psychologists, who have undergone specialized education and training at the post-doctoral level, integrate somatic and / or psychotherapeutic modalities into the management of mental illness. Medical Psychology is a specialty trained at the post doctoral level and designed to deliver advanced diagnostic and clinical interventions in Medical and Healthcare Facilities utilizing the knowledge and skills of clinical psychology, health psychology, behavioral medicine, psychopharmacology and basic medical science. In the United States, two states (Louisiana and New Mexico) and within the Department of Defense, medical psychology also includes the prescription of medications in the care and management of patients. In the United States, New Mexico and Louisiana, and all branches of the U.S. uniformed services currently authorize medical psychologists to prescribe medications. In Louisiana, the term of medical psychologist refers, in statute, specifically to those psychologists licensed by the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners and who are authorized and licensed to prescribe medications. The term mirrors precisely the terminology of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). It is important to note that the Division 38 of the American Psychological Association and The Academy of Medical Psychology does not agree or recognize that the term medical psychologist has, as a prerequisite, the ability, certification, or licensure to prescribe medications in the care and management of patients nor should the term be equated with having prescriptive authority.

Music Psychology

Music psychology, or the psychology of music, may be regarded as a branch of psychology, a branch of musicology or as a field integrating with clinical music therapy. It aims to explain and understand musical behavior and musical experience. Modern music psychology is mainly empirical: music-psychological knowledge tends to advance primarily on the basis of interpretations of data about musical behavior and experience, which are collected by systematic

observation of and interaction with human participants.

The modern, international field of music psychology is gradually exploring a multitude of issues that surround the question of why humans spend enormous amounts of time, effort, and money on musical activities. Music psychology may be regarded as scientific research about human culture. The results of this research have, and will continue to have, direct implications for matters of general concern: human values, human identity, human nature, and quality of life.

Neuropsychology

Neuropsychology studies the relation of structure and function of the brain related to specific psychological processes and behaviors. The term neuropsychology has been applied to lesion studies in humans and animals. It has also been applied to efforts to record electrical activity from individual cells (or groups of cells) in higher primates (including some studies of human patients). It is scientific in its approach and shares an information processing view of the mind with cognitive psychology and cognitive science.

In practice neuropsychologists tend to work in clinical settings (involved in assessing or treating patients with neuropsychological problems - see clinical neuropsychology), forensic settings or industry (often as consultants where neuropsychological knowledge is applied to product design or in the management of pharmaceutical clinical-trials research for drugs that might have a potential impact on CNS functioning).

Occupational Health Psychology

Occupational health psychology (OHP) emerged out of two distinct applied disciplines within psychology, health psychology and industrial/organizational psychology, and occupational health. OHP is concerned with the psychosocial characteristics of workplaces that contribute to the development of health-related problems in people who work. The field also speaks to ways to effect workplace changes that benefit worker health without adversely affecting productivity.

OHP researchers and practitioners are concerned with a variety of psychosocial work characteristics that may be related to physical and mental health problems. The physical health problems range from accidental injury to cardiovascular disease. The mental health problems include psychological distress, burnout, and depression. OHP researchers and practitioners are also concerned with the relation of psychosocial working conditions to health behaviors (e.g., smoking and alcohol consumption) and workplace morale (e.g., job satisfaction). Examples of psychosocial workplace characteristics that OHP researchers have linked to health outcomes include decision latitude and psychological workload, the balance between a worker's efforts and the rewards (e.g., pay, recognition, status, prospects for a promotion, etc.) received for his or her

work, and the extent to which supervisors and co-workers are supportive. Another topic of great concern to occupational health psychology is the problem of carryover of deleterious workplace experiences to the worker's home life. Given its roots occupational health, OHP is also concerned with factors that affect workplace safety and accident risk. In addition, occupational health psychologists document the adverse impact of deteriorating economic conditions, and identify ways to mitigate that impact.

Performance Psychology

Performance psychology is the branch of psychology that studies the factors that allow individuals, communities and societies to flourish. Most recently, performance psychology has included the study of the psychological skills and knowledge necessary to facilitate and develop peak performance guidelines into best practice for sport, business, fitness and the performing arts.

The past few years have seen an explosion in the field of performance psychology. This growth has been primarily in the study of performance excellence in sports as applied to the field of business. Important links have been made between world-class, championship individual and team sports performance and business results. In a similar vein, there has been an increase in the interest of coaching top performers and addressing their needs, not just providing remedial coaching for underachievers. During that time, more research has been devoted to understanding the characteristics of high achievers in sports as well as business.

Performance psychology studies why workers want to succeed in an organization. While it is obvious that sports teams and individual players will reap the rewards of pay and recognition in their sport when they are successful, it is less obvious why ordinary workers want to perform their best on the job. Although business often relies on the entry-level and front line worker to build the foundation of their company, the motivations of these workers are often ignored. It is the belief of performance psychologists that entry level and front-line workers are often the face (or the voice) of the brand to the customer. If that face (or voice) is unmotivated and untrained, the brand will suffer.

Personality Psychology

Personality psychology is a branch of psychology that studies personality and individual differences. Its areas of focus include:

- Constructing a coherent picture of a person and his or her major psychological processes
- Investigating individual differences, that is, how people can differ from one another
- Investigating human nature, that is, how all people's behaviour is similar

"Personality" can be defined as a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviors in various situations. The word "personality" originates from the Latin *persona*, which means mask. Significantly, in the theatre of the ancient Latin-speaking world, the mask was not used as a plot device to disguise the identity of a character, but rather was a convention employed to represent or typify that character.

The pioneering American psychologist Gordon Allport (1937) described two major ways to study personality: the nomothetic and the idiographic. Nomothetic psychology seeks general laws that can be applied to many different people, such as the principle of self-actualization, or the trait of extraversion. Idiographic psychology is an attempt to understand the unique aspects of a particular individual.

The study of personality has a broad and varied history in psychology, with an abundance of theoretical traditions. The major theories include dispositional (trait) perspective, psychodynamic, humanistic, biological, behaviorist and social learning perspective. There is no consensus on the definition of "personality" in psychology. Most researchers and psychologists do not explicitly identify themselves with a certain perspective and often take an eclectic approach. Some research is empirically driven such as the "Big 5" personality model whereas other research emphasizes theory development such as psychodynamics. There is also a substantial emphasis on the applied field of personality testing. In psychological education and training, the study of the nature of personality and its psychological development is usually reviewed as a prerequisite to courses in abnormal or clinical psychology.

Filipino Psychology

Filipino psychology, or *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, in Filipino, is defined as the psychology rooted on the experience, ideas, and cultural orientation of the Filipinos. It is regulated by the *Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, (National Organization of Filipino Psychology), in English, which was established in 1975 by Virgilio Enriquez, regarded by many as the Father of Filipino Psychology.

Filipino psychology is usually thought of as a branch of Asian psychology, the placement, determined primarily on culture. However, there is an ongoing debate on the make-up of Philippine culture, because this will generally determine whether Philippine Psychology is to be placed under the realms of either Asian psychology or Western psychology. The vast majority of Philippine psychologists seem to prefer to classify this field as Asian, but there is a steadily growing body that attempts to place the field as Eurasian.

Physiological Psychology

Physiological psychology is a subdivision of behavioral neuroscience (biological psychology) that studies the neural mechanisms of perception and behavior through direct manipulation of the brains of nonhuman animal subjects in controlled experiments. Unlike other subdivisions within biological psychology, the main focus of physiological psychological research is the development of theories that explain brain-behavior relationships rather than the development of research that has translational value. It is sometimes alternatively called psychophysiology, and in recent years also cognitive neuroscience.

One example of physiological psychology research is the study of the role of the hippocampus in learning and memory. This can be achieved by surgical removal of the hippocampus from the rat brain followed by an assessment of memory tasks by that same rat.

In the past, physiological psychologists received much of their training in psychology departments in major universities. Currently, physiological psychologists are also being trained in behavioral neuroscience or biological psychology programs that are affiliated with psychology departments, or in interdisciplinary neuroscience programs.

Political Psychology

Political psychology is an interdisciplinary academic field dedicated to the relationship between psychology and political science, with a focus on the role of human thought, emotion, and behavior in politics.

It analyzes political science as related to entities such as voters, lawmakers, local and national governments and administrations, international organizations, political parties, and associations. While the grammar of "political psychology" tends to stress psychology as the central field, the discipline could also be accurately labeled "the psychology of politics," so as to more evenly recognize the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

Also not fully conveyed by the label is the wide scope of the disciplines from which political psychology draws, including anthropology, cognitive and personality psychology, sociology and social psychology, psychiatry, international relations, and other more distant fields such as economics, philosophy, and the arts.

Popular Psychology

The term popular psychology (frequently called pop psychology or pop psych) refers to concepts and theories about human mental life and behavior that are purportedly based on psychology and that attain popularity among the general population. The concept is closely related to the human potential movement of the 1950s and '60s.

The term "pop psychologist" can be used to describe authors, consultants, lecturers and entertainers who are widely perceived as being psychologists, not because of their academic credentials, but because they have projected that image or have been perceived in that way in response to their work.

The term popular psychology can also be used when referring to the popular psychology industry, a sprawling network of everyday sources of information about human behavior.

The term is often used in a dismissive fashion to describe psychological concepts that appear oversimplified, out of date, unproven, misunderstood or misinterpreted; however, the term may also be used to describe professionally-produced psychological knowledge, regarded by most experts as valid and effective, that is intended for use by the general public.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is a recent branch of psychology whose purpose was summed up in 1998 by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: "We believe that a psychology of positive human functioning will arise that achieves a scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving in individuals, families, and communities." Positive psychologists seek "to find and nurture genius and talent", and "to make normal life more fulfilling", not simply to treat mental illness. The field is intended to complement, not to replace traditional psychology.

By scientifically studying how things go right, rather than wrong in both individuals and societies, Positive Psychology hopes to achieve a renaissance of sorts. Many researchers have joined the positive psychology movement, generating influential and well-cited articles journals.

Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology

Prenatal and perinatal psychology is an interdisciplinary study of the foundations of health in body, mind, emotions and in enduring response patterns to life. It explores the psychological and psychophysiological effects and implications of the earliest experiences of the individual, before birth ("prenatal"), as well as during and immediately after childbirth ("perinatal") on the health and learning ability of the individual and on their relationships. As a broad field it has developed a variety of curative and preventive interventions for the unborn, at childbirth, for the new born, infants and adults who are adversely affected by early prenatal and perinatal dysfunction and trauma. Some of these methods have not been without significant controversy, for example homebirth in the West and in earlier days, LSD psychotherapy for resolving birth trauma.

Examples of the diversity of interests in the subject are: in neurobiology where it is understood that "experience can change the mature brain - but experience during the critical periods of early

childhood organizes brain systems"; in psychoneuroendocrinology where there is evidence of an "umbilical affect exchange" which influences the immediate and long-term psychology of behavior; in bioengineering where the importance to development as well as growth of the fetomaternal system is increasingly understood; and in clinical maternal-fetal medicine where the unique symbiotic relationship between a mother and her fetus is explored, and where issues such as maternal stress and the development of later psychopathology in the child are considered through hormonal mechanisms particularly the HPA axis.

Although theoretical and psychotherapeutic approaches vary in their treatment of the topic, a common thread is the fundamental importance of pre- and perinatal experiences in the shaping of the personality and in future psychological development. Yet somewhat contrary to the evidence, this assertion is not widely supported in psychology. There are widespread doubts regarding the extent to which newborn infants are capable of forming memories, the effects of any such memories on their personality, and the possibility of recovering them from an unconscious mind, which itself is the subject of argument in the field. Only a minority of psychologists have had direct experience of the therapeutic modalities that explore these phenomena and many question the validity and even the existence of repressed memories. However, experience and memory are not synonymous, and while a fetal infant may not be able to recall his or her experiences, he or she still lived in those moments and possibly had neurological, psychological or physiological responses to them, which may influence the ongoing development of the mind and/or brain structures.

Legal Psychology

Legal psychology involves empirical, psychological research of the law, legal institutions, and people who come into contact with the law. Legal psychologists typically take basic social and cognitive principles and apply them to issues in the legal system such as eyewitness memory, jury decision-making, investigations, and interviewing. The term "legal psychology" has only recently come into usage, primarily as a way to differentiate the experimental focus of legal psychology from the clinically-oriented forensic psychology.

Together, legal psychology and forensic psychology form the field more generally recognized as "psychology and law". Following earlier efforts by psychologists to address legal issues, psychology and law became a field of study in the 1960s as part of an effort to enhance justice, though that originating concern has lessened over time. The multidisciplinary American Psychological Association's Division 41, the American Psychology-Law Society, is active with the goal of promoting the contributions of psychology to the understanding of law and legal systems through research, as well as providing education to psychologists in legal issues and providing education to legal personnel on psychological issues. Further, its mandate is to inform the psychological and legal communities and the public at large of current research, educational, and service in the area of psychology and law. There are similar societies in Britain and Europe.

Psychology of Art

The psychology of art is an interdisciplinary field that studies the perception, cognition and characteristics of art and its production. For the use of art materials as a form of psychotherapy, see art therapy. The psychology of art is related to architectural psychology and environmental psychology.

The work of Theodor Lipps, a Munich-based research psychologist, played an important role in the early development of the concept of art psychology in the early decade of the twentieth century. His most important contribution in this respect was his attempt to theorize the question of *Einfuehlung* or "empathy", a term that was to become a key element in many subsequent theories of art psychology.

In the narrow sense, there is no discipline "the psychology of art", for unlike other branches of psychology, with their numerous academies and research programs, there are few Psychology of Art programs in the universities. Nonetheless, the literature on the topic is extensive, given that the issues addressed by art psychology have attracted both professional psychologists as well as non-professionals; it has attracted those who write about the arts, including music and architecture, and those who produce it.

The general principles that guide most of the work in art psychology are:

that art is perceptual and that it can thus be studied by asking questions about our perceptions.

that art operates in a cultural continuum and that one can come to terms with the continuum through analysis of art.

that the production of art is a meaningful enterprise and as such is an important avenue by which one comes to terms with human creativity.

Art psychology developed in opposition to 19th century philosophical aesthetics which approached art by first asking about beauty and metaphysics. For most art psychologists, beauty is culturally or socially contingent. Art psychology was, however, also developed initially in opposition to Husserlian phenomenology which made no normative judgments about meaning. Most branches of art psychology emphasize the primacy of consciousness, but there are variants which engage the question of the subconscious. Generally speaking, however, those interested in the psychology of art express an optimism about art and its meanings that moves them away from the concepts discussed by Freud.

Psychology of Religion

Psychology of religion consists of the application of psychological methods and interpretive frameworks to religious traditions, as well as to both religious and irreligious individuals. The

science attempts to accurately describe the details, origins, and uses of religious beliefs and behaviours. Although the psychology of religion first arose as a self-conscious discipline as recently as the late 19th century, all three of these tasks have a history going back many centuries before that.

Many areas of religion remain unexplored by psychology. While religion and spirituality appear to play a role in many people's lives, it is uncertain how they lead to outcomes that are at times positive, and at other times negative. Thus, the pathways and outcomes that underlie these associations (and sometimes causations) need additional research. Continued dialogue between psychology and theology may foster greater understanding and benefit both fields.

The challenge for the psychology of religion is essentially threefold: (1) to provide a thoroughgoing description of the objects of investigation, whether they be shared religious content (e.g., a tradition's ritual observances) or individual experiences, attitudes, or conduct; (2) to account in psychological terms for the rise of such phenomena; and (3) to clarify the outcomes--the fruits, as William James put it--of these phenomena, for individuals and for the larger society.

The first, descriptive task naturally requires a clarification of one's terms, above all, the word religion. Historians of religion have long underscored the problematic character of this term, noting that its usage over the centuries has changed in significant ways, generally in the direction of reification. The early psychologists of religion were fully aware of these difficulties, typically acknowledging that the definitions they were choosing to use were to some degree arbitrary. With the rise of positivistic trends in psychology over the course of the 20th century, especially the demand that all phenomena be measured, psychologists of religion developed a multitude of scales, most of them developed for use with Protestant Christians. Factor analysis was also brought into play by both psychologists and sociologists of religion, in an effort to establish a fixed core of dimensions and a corresponding set of scales. The justification and adequacy of these efforts, especially in the light of constructivist and other postmodern viewpoints, remains a matter of debate.

In the last several decades, especially among clinical psychologists, a preference for the terms "spirituality" and "spiritual" has emerged, along with efforts to distinguish them from "religion" and "religious." Especially in the United States, "religion" has for many become associated with sectarian institutions and their obligatory creeds and rituals, thus giving the word a negative cast; "spirituality," in contrast, is positively constructed as deeply individual and subjective, as a universal capacity to apprehend and accord one's life with higher realities. In fact, "spirituality" has likewise undergone an evolution in the West, from a time when it was essentially a synonym for religion in its original, subjective meaning. Today, efforts are ongoing to "operationalize" these terms, with little regard for their history in their Western context and with the apparent realist assumption that underlying them are fixed qualities identifiable by means of empirical procedures.

Social Psychology

Social psychology is the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others. By this definition, scientific refers to the empirical method of investigation. The terms thoughts, feelings, and behaviors include all of the psychological variables that are measurable in a human being. The statement that others may be imagined or implied suggests that we are prone to social influence even when no other people are present, such as when watching television, or following internalized cultural norms.

Social psychologists typically explain human behavior as a result of the interaction of mental states and immediate social situations. In Kurt Lewin's famous heuristic formula, behavior can be viewed as a function of the person and the environment, $B = f(P, E)$. In general, social psychologists have a preference for laboratory based, empirical findings. Social psychology theories tend to be specific and focused, rather than global and general.

Social psychology is an interdisciplinary domain that bridges the gap between psychology and sociology. During the years immediately following World War II, there was frequent collaboration between psychologists and sociologists. However, the two disciplines have become increasingly specialized and isolated from each other in recent years, with sociologists focusing on "macro variables" (e.g. social structure) to a much greater extent. Nevertheless, sociological approaches to social psychology remain an important counterpart to psychological research in this area.

In addition to the split between psychology and sociology, there has been a somewhat less pronounced difference in emphasis between American social psychologists and European social psychologists. As a broad generalization, American researchers traditionally have focused more on the individual, whereas Europeans have paid more attention to group level phenomena. See Group dynamics.

Sport Psychology

Sport psychology (or sports psychology) is a branch of psychology. It is the study of the psychological factors that affect participation and performance in sports. It is also a specialization within the brain psychology and kinesiology that seeks to understand psychological/mental factors that affect performance in sports, physical activity, and exercise and apply these to enhance individual and team performance. It deals with increasing performance by managing emotions and minimizing the psychological effects of injury and poor performance. Some of the most important skills taught are goal setting, relaxation, visualization, self-talk, awareness and control, concentration, confidence, using rituals, attribution training, and periodization.

Applied sport and exercise psychology involves extending theory and research into the field to educate coaches, athletes, parents, exercisers, fitness professionals, and athletic trainers about

the psychological aspects of their sport or activity. A primary goal of professionals in applied sport and exercise psychology is to facilitate optimal involvement, performance, and enjoyment in sport and exercise.

The practice of applied sport and exercise psychology usually involves a combination of individual and group consulting or counseling depending on the style of the professional conducting the intervention and the needs of the client.

AASP Certified Consultants and specially trained licensed psychologists are typically the most competent practitioners in applied sport and exercise psychology. Although there are many specific concepts within applied sport and exercise psychology (e.g., goal setting, concentration, motivation, relaxation, imagery), the general goal is to teach mental skills necessary to perform consistently in training and competition, increase adherence to exercise programs, and to help individuals realize their potential.

Currently, AASP is the only sport and exercise psychology professional association in North America that offers certification to its members.

Systems Psychology

Systems psychology is a branch of applied psychology that studies human behaviour and experience in complex systems. It is inspired by systems theory and systems thinking, and based on the theoretical work of Roger Barker, Gregory Bateson, Humberto Maturana and others. It is an approach in psychology in which groups and individuals are considered as systems in homeostasis. Alternative terms here are "systemic psychology", "systems behavior", and "systems-based psychology".

In the scientific literature different kind of systems psychology have been mentioned:

Applied Systems Psychology

De Greene in 1970 described applied systems psychology as being connected with engineering psychology and human factor.

Cognitive Systems Theory

Cognitive systems psychology is a part of cognitive psychology and like existential psychology, attempts to dissolve the barrier between conscious and the unconscious mind.

Contract-Systems Psychology

Contract-systems psychology is about the human systems actualization through participative

organizations.

Family Systems Psychology

Family systems psychology is a more general name for the subfield of family therapists. E.g. Murray Bowen, Michael E. Kerr, and Baard and researchers have begun to theorize a psychology of the family as a system.

Organismic-Systems Psychology

Through the application of organismic-systems biology to human behavior Ludwig von Bertalanffy conceived and developed the organismic-systems psychology, as the theoretical prospect needed for the gradual comprehension of the various ways human personalities may evolve and how they could evolve properly, being supported by a holistic interpretation of human behavior.

Traffic Psychology

Traffic psychology is a young, expanding and wide field in psychology. Whereas traffic psychology is primarily related to the study of the behaviour of road users and the psychological processes underlying that behaviour (Rothengatter, 1997, 223) as well as to the relationship between behaviour and accidents, transportation psychology, sometimes referred to as mobility psychology, focuses on mobility issues, individual and social factors in the movement of people and goods, and travel demand management (TDM).

There is no single theoretical framework in traffic psychology, but, instead, many specific models explaining, for example, the perceptual, attentional, cognitive, social, motivational and emotional determinants of mobility and traffic behaviour. One of the most prominent behavioural models divides the various tasks involved in traffic participation into three hierarchical levels, i.e. the strategic, the tactical and the operational level. The model demonstrates the diversity of decision and control tasks which have to be accomplished when driving a vehicle. However, until now, most of the psychological models have had a rather heuristic nature, e.g. risk theories such as the risk compensation hypothesis, Fuller's task capability model, and thus are not sufficiently precise to allow for concrete behavioural prediction and control. This is partly due to the importance of individual differences, a major topic of psychology which has not yet been sufficiently accounted for in traffic and transportation. On the other hand, social and psychological attitude/behaviour models, such as Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, have been helpful in identifying determinants of mobility decisions.

Transpersonal Psychology

Transpersonal psychology is a form of psychology that studies the transpersonal, self-transcendent

or spiritual aspects of the human experience.

A short definition from the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology suggests that transpersonal psychology "is concerned with the study of humanity's highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness" (Lajoie and Shapiro, 1992:91). Issues considered in transpersonal psychology include spiritual self-development, self beyond the ego, peak experiences, mystical experiences, systemic trance and other sublime and/or unusually expanded experiences of living.

Transpersonal psychology developed from earlier schools of psychology including psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanistic psychology. Transpersonal psychology attempts to describe and integrate spiritual experience within modern psychological theory and to formulate new theory to encompass such experience. Types of spiritual experience examined vary greatly but include mysticism, religious conversion, altered states of consciousness, trance and spiritual practices. Although Carl Jung and others explored aspects of the spiritual and transpersonal in their work, Miller (1998: 541-542) notes that Western psychology has had a tendency to ignore the spiritual dimension of the human psyche.

Lajoie and Shapiro (1992) reviewed forty definitions of transpersonal psychology that had appeared in literature over the period 1969 to 1991. They found that five key themes in particular featured prominently in these definitions: states of consciousness, higher or ultimate potential, beyond the ego or personal self, transcendence, and the spiritual. Walsh and Vaughan (1993) have criticised many definitions of transpersonal psychology, for carrying implicit ontological or methodological assumptions. They also challenge definitions that link transpersonal psychology to healthy states only, or to the "Perennial Philosophy". These authors define transpersonal psychology as being the branch of psychology that is concerned with transpersonal experiences and related phenomena, noting that "These phenomena include the causes, effects and correlates of transpersonal experiences, as well as the disciplines and practices inspired by them" (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p203).

Caplan (2009: p. 231) conveys the genesis of the discipline, states its mandate and ventures a definition:

"Although transpersonal psychology is relatively new as a formal discipline, beginning with the publication of The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology in 1969 and the founding of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology in 1971, it draws upon ancient mystical knowledge that comes from multiple traditions. Transpersonal psychologists attempt to integrate timeless wisdom with modern Western psychology and translate spiritual principles into scientifically grounded, contemporary language. Transpersonal psychology addresses the full spectrum of human psychospiritual development -- from our deepest wounds and needs, to the existential crisis of the human being, to the most transcendent capacities of our consciousness."