

History of Modern Psychology

Slide One:

William Wundt and students at the University of Leipzig in Germany conducted the first laboratory studies in psychology in the 1870s. His work marks the beginning of modern psychology because he applied the scientific method to the study of the human experience.

Slide Two:

A student of Wundt's, Edward Titchner sought to determine the elemental structure of the human mind using introspection. This method required people to report elements of their experience in detail. His quest to describe the structure of human experience is known as structuralism.

Slide Three:

William James, reacting against the inner-focused Structuralists with their Introspective techniques, focused on how mental and behavior processes function.

While a professor at Harvard, James mentored Mary Whiton Calkins who later became the first female president of the American Psychological Association.

Slide Four:

Beginning in the 1920 and continuing into 1960s, psychologists rejected structuralism and functionalism in favor of a new perspective.

This new perspective, first proposed by John B. Watson, focused entirely on observable behavior.

Behaviorists did not study thought-processes since it was impossible to see first-hand what was happening inside the human mind.

Watson conducted studies with Rosalie Rayner to condition a young boy he called "Little Albert" to fear white, furry objects.

Slide Five:

Another famous behaviorist was B.F. Skinner who conducted numerous experiments demonstrating the power of consequences to shape behavior.

Slide Six:

Today modern psychologists define psychology as not only the science of behavior but of thought-processes as well. Beginning in the 1960s, a new generation of psychologists became interested in how our minds process information. These cognitive psychologists reintroduced the study of mental processes into psychology and designed very clever experiments to discover how we think.

Today there are a number of perspectives in psychology that provide different ways of looking at human behavior. You might think of it as how several people can view the same sculpture or painting and see very different things. They are all looking at the same problem but from different angles.