

Introducing Psychology: Theory, Scope and Content

Overview

Welcome to PSYC 1000 Introduction to Psychology: Social, Developmental and Abnormal. The purpose of Unit 1 is to provide you with an insight into the *breadth* of psychology and to give you the opportunity to explore the *depth* of the subject area. Psychology can be briefly described as the scientific study and explanation of human behaviour, mental processes and consciousness. This contrasts with common sense views of why people behave in the ways that they do. Understanding the role of psychology in explaining human behaviour in diverse settings will improve your relationship with the individuals and groups in your personal and professional environment.

This introduction to psychology will be covered in two sessions, in separate but related packages, so that you can read the session over two days, fully absorb the information and complete the in-unit activities and assessment exercises. In the first session, we will define psychology and examine the history, scope and content of the discipline. Consideration will be given to the characteristics of what makes a discipline scientific. The mainstream psychological theories are psycho-analytic, behavioural, cognitive, biological, humanistic and social psychological. These will be outlined and critically evaluated. In the second session, the emphasis switches to psychology's role in understanding youths. The findings from a survey conducted with a sample of youths aged 15-17 years in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are cited in unit activity 1.3. These findings will provide you with an insight into the concerns of young people and their proposed solutions for addressing these concerns. In this unit when we refer to young people the age range under consideration is from 13 years to 25 years.

Knowledge of psychology can help you to think about, to design, execute or evaluate policies and programs related to youth development work. The case for a Caribbean psychology as an alternative to the mainstream theories identified in the preceding paragraph will be assessed. These issues will be discussed using material from published scientific articles written by the region's experts. The realities of Caribbean people, the cultural sensitivities of residents in different countries in the region, and the unique experiences of the region's citizens will be reviewed as we seek to specifically understand the factors that motivate the behaviour and attitudes of our Caribbean people. There is worldwide academic recognition of the necessity of having cultural competence and sensitivity in the health services, health sector employees, and in policy-making teams (e.g. Hickling & Paisley, 2012). By the end of this unit you would have an enhanced awareness of how

culture impacts society and its citizens. This knowledge can be utilized to develop suitable psycho-social interventions in ways that would be accepted by the targeted groups. For example, programs geared towards HIV awareness and prevention amongst the general public should recognize that affected persons tend to be stigmatized. Therefore, culturally sensitive communication campaigns are required to break the silence and remove the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS. Special emphasis in this unit will be placed on the factors that cause adolescents to become '**at risk**'- a term reserved for persons who by virtue of their circumstances are statistically more likely to fail academically and to be challenged in finding and maintaining sustainable relationships and employment that those persons who have the requisite psycho-social support for success. One of the aims of this unit is to demonstrate how the challenges that individuals face can be reversed by encouraging positive behaviours such as **prosocial** behaviour and positive **traits** such as **altruism**.

Course delivery is guided by **pedagogical** theories which provide the framework for the presentation and assessment of new knowledge. For example, constructivist theory and cognitive theory encourage you to reflect upon, to construct and to actively participate in your learning process. Behavioural theory encourages learning through action such as the use of reflective practice (e.g. the completion of unit activities) and a work-based approach (e.g. importing relevant knowledge and experiences from your work place to bear on the discussions and activities outlined in the unit). You should use your relevant examples and experiences to engage with the psychological literature and the unit discussions. You will benefit from timely feedback on your performance on submitted assignments. A systematic set-by-step approach is taken to provide the foundation or building blocks for understanding psychology by building on core psychological theories and principles before moving on to more complex concepts in the course.

You will have the opportunity to reflect on the comments made by the authors of the scientific papers and to share your views with your colleagues by posting your contributions in the discussion forum in the Learning Exchange. Each week there will be a Black Board Collaborate Session to identify the key points of the unit and to answer any questions that you may have about the unit. In Unit 1 we will initiate a community of enquiry and continue to sustain it through out the course. You will also be able to post questions on any aspect of the Unit material or the unit activities that you do not understand and you will receive a reply to your query so that you can proceed smoothly through this lesson and the course plan. You will be encouraged at all times, but particularly during the activity assignments, to reflect upon and to apply what you already know about human behaviour – your perceptions and intuitive knowledge – to the task at hand. You will be called upon to identify challenging social problems in your own environment particularly those that relate to youths and youth work that can be explained and resolved using the psychological theories, **concepts** and principles outlined here.

Although you will be exposed to a wealth of information you are also required to embark upon your own active internet and UWllinC searches to clarify topics that you do not fully understand or to critically evaluate the points stated in the unit discussions. There are prescribed hyperlinks and recommended e-resources readings. Collectively, the literature would help you to focus on psychological content and analysis. You will be introduced to

the course's Glossary. Concepts written in bold font are defined in the Glossary of Terms which appears at the end of the unit and copied in the Glossary Tool in the Learning Exchange. You will be given the links to an on-line dictionary of psychology and other e-resources so that you can look up words and concepts that you do not know. This course supports the development and use of a set of regionally agreed upon skills set and knowledge-based competencies for your degree program and these competencies will be listed at the beginning of each unit.

It is strongly recommended that you purchase a copy of the course text by Denise Boyd and Helen Bee (Eds, 2012), Lifespan Development, 6th edition, Pearson Education, Inc which will be extensively used for PSYC 1000 'Introduction to Psychology: Social, Developmental and Abnormal' in Year 1 and PSYC 2015 'Developmental Psychology' in Year 2. Reading the relevant chapters in this text serves four key purposes. First, this unit is a guide to what is in the course text but you would benefit from reading the details in the course text and making further notes to supplement the unit material. Second, the text provides a link of the course material across the 10 units so that you can read ahead of time and be better prepared to engage in the tutorial discussions and to complete your assignments. Third, the text will expose you to other key, relevant areas of psychology that are not included in the course outline but which may interest you or assist you in your youth development work. Fourth, the text is accompanied by MyLab facilities and activities which you will be required to undertake. Laboratory activities and experiments are integral aspects of tertiary level studies in psychology.

Competencies/Skills Lined to Youth Development Work

1. YDWCYP0263: Enable young people to become active and responsible citizens.
2. YDWCYP0293: Contribute to the development and implementation of a national youth policy.
3. YDWCYP0413: Undertake research activities to support programme development.

Key Concepts in Unit 1: objectivity; typology; empiricism; psychodynamic; behaviourism, psycho-analytic, cognitive, humanistic, scientific, at risk, prosocial, traits, altruism.

Structure of the Unit

This Unit is divided into two sessions as follows:

Session 1.1: Psychology as the Science of Behaviour

- Defining psychology: Nature, scope and content.
- Distinguishing commonsense observations from scientific data on human behaviour.
- Foundational psychological theories: Principles, concepts and critique

Session 1.2: Psychology's role in youth development work

- How knowledge of psychology relate to youth development work.
- The case for a Caribbean psychology.
- Selected readings on Caribbean psychology/Caribbean social psychology.

Unit 1 Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

1. Explain in written form the scientific basis underlying the discipline of psychology;
2. Utilize the information in the on-line community of enquiry to complete the unit activities and assignments;
3. Outline in written form the merits and demerits of the psychological theories documented in the unit;
4. Conduct relevant web searches using UWllinC to and use the academic material to complete the unit activities;
5. Discuss in tutorials psychology's contribution to human development and youth development work;
6. Demonstrate the ability to think globally and strategically when suggesting policies for the local community in your tutorial activities;
7. Critically evaluate using the unit notes the relevance of Caribbean psychology for explaining and resolving named psycho-social challenges in your country of residence;
8. Reference citations in your assignments using APA styling outlined in <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/>



Essential Reading and Resource

Boyd, D. & Bee, H. (2012). Chapter 1 Basic Concepts and Methods. In D. Boyd & H. Bee. *Lifespan Development*, 6th Ed (pp. 1-22). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Session 1.1

Outlining the Parameters of Psychology, Traditional and Contemporary Psychological Theories

Introduction

In this session psychology will be defined and the scientific neighbours of psychology identified. Attention will also be placed on the parameters of the discipline and the unit notes will explain the need for this unique level of analysis. A key goal of this unit is to outline the basis of scientific inquiry. Another important goal of Unit 1 is to present and to offer a critical evaluation of the four main psychological theories commonly used in the academic literature. The **concepts** that are used to explain each theory will be identified. When outlining the scientific process special attention will be placed on the importance of testing **hypotheses**, the need to establish **cause** and **causal effect** by exerting **control over variables** and to strive for **internal validity** and **external validity**. Unit 1 is a foundational unit in which the concepts and salient points outlined will be restated and elaborated upon in subsequent units.

Session 1.1 Objectives

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

1. Define psychology and outline the core tenets of the discipline in the unit assignments;
2. Explain in tutorials the process for deriving scientific facts about human behaviour;
3. Identify in written form the uniqueness and potential of each psychological theory documented in the session for explaining and predicting human behaviour;
4. Articulate using examples and in written form the merits and demerits of a Caribbean psychological perspective;
5. Identify in the discussion forums **variables** of interest from the unit notes and recommended readings that psychology shares with youth development work.

Psychology's Development

Psychology is broadly defined as the scientific study of human behaviour. The American Psychological Association defines psychology as “the study of the mind and behavior. The discipline embraces all aspects of the human experience – from the functions of the brain to the actions of nations, from child development to care for the aged. In every conceivable setting from scientific research centers to mental health care services, “the understanding of behavior” is the enterprise of psychologists.”¹

¹ <http://www.apa.org/support/about/apa/psychology.aspx#answer>

The history of psychology is interesting as the discipline was influenced by physiology, sociology, biology, anthropology, computer science and psychiatry at different points in time. Philosophers and other thinkers pondered psychological issues over the centuries. According to Carlson (1991) the science of psychology can be traced to Germany in the late 19th Century and the first person to self classify as a psychologist was Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). Wundt founded the first psychological laboratory in Leipzig Germany in 1879 and he shared the conviction of other German scientists that all aspects of nature, including the human mind, could be studied scientifically. His book *Principles of Physiological Psychology* (1874) is thought to be the first textbook of psychology. Both philosophy and the natural sciences contributed to the development of psychology and these disciplines continue to influence the research methods—such as observations and experiments— that psychologists utilize to study human behaviour today. Philosophers focus on consciousness and existence while psychologists consider how behaviour is affected by consciousness and mental states.

The goal of psychologists is to develop hypotheses that would explain and predict human behaviour, both individual behaviour and the general behaviour of people. The word science is derived from the Latin word *scire* which means to know. The scientific study of human behaviour represents a systematic approach to the gathering of knowledge, the development of cause as well as cause and effect laws and truths that can be upheld over time. The discipline has been described as ‘humanity’s looking glass’ (Newman & Newman, 1983, p. 6) because the study of psychology is a journey in self-understanding. Early research in psychology was conducted on animals primarily dogs, mice, pigeons or monkeys and the findings applied to humans by contemporary psychologists. Questions were raised regarding the **internal validity** and **external validity** of the results conducted on animal subjects. For example, B.F. Skinner used pigeons to try to identify and document the role of reward and reinforcement in the learning process. A video illustrating Skinner’s experiment with pigeons is the subject of viewing activity 1.1 below.



LEARNING ACTIVITY 1.1 •

Please look at the YouTube video illustrating B.F. Skinner’s experiment on operant conditioning with pigeons which can be accessed via the hyperlink below.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_ctJqjlrHA

What did this video teach you about the learning process? To what extent can results with pigeons be applied to humans? Were controls used as part of the scientific process in this study?

Post your reflections in 100 words in the Learning Exchange and reply to the post of two other colleagues. **This activity is due by the end of week 2.**

Human behaviour is wide ranging and psychology has evolved into specialist sub-fields to concentrate attention on specific types of behaviour that interests psychologists. The branch of psychology that discusses the description, causes, and treatment of abnormal behaviour patterns, for example depression or drug addiction, is referred to as abnormal psychology. Psychologists who evaluate the effects of different cultures on human

behaviour have their genesis in anthropology and their studies are in the domain of cross-cultural psychology. The examination of a subject's location in the social order such as how we perceive individuals outside our racial group is the purview of social psychology. Social psychology will be covered in greater detail in Part III of this course but for the moment Figure 1.1 illustrates the very close relationship between sociology, psychology and social psychology.

Subfields of Social Psychology

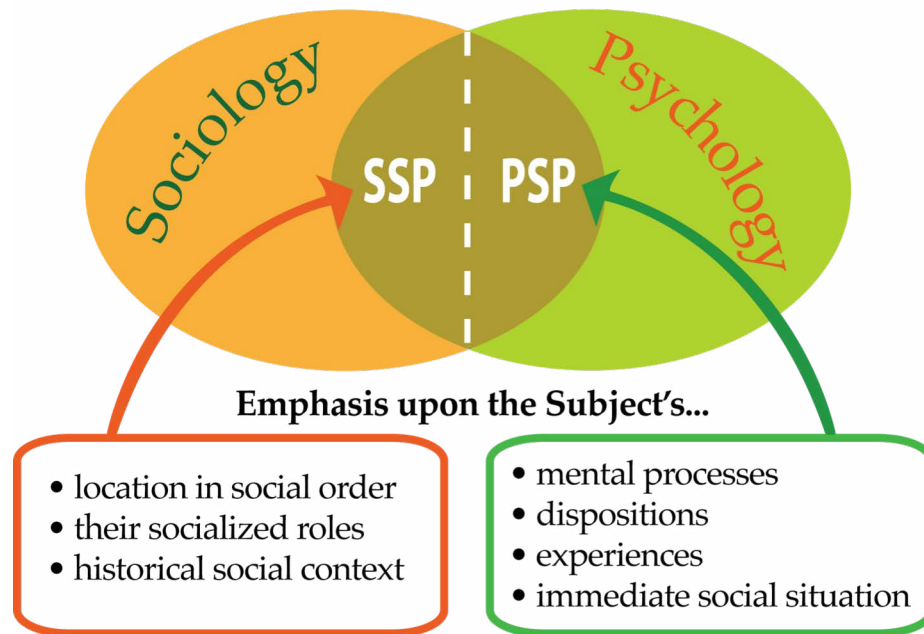


Figure 1.1

Sociology is the study of human social behaviour, especially the study of the origins, organization, institutions, and development of human society. Social psychology is the branch of human psychology that deals with the behaviour of groups and the influence of social factors on the individual. It is important to note that behaviour is not merely controlled by the environment but it in turn shapes and influences the environment. The intersection of psychology and social psychology is reflected in the development of concepts from perception in psychology (defined as the process in which sensory experiences are organized and made meaningful) to social perception in social psychology (defined as the process through which we seek to know and understand other people). Attempts are often made to manipulate social perception by offering the best impressions of our self to others in our social environment. Self presentation on the internet such as on Facebook, internet dating sites and chat rooms can often be deceptive as depicted in the cartoon of the dating dog in Figure 1.2 shown below.



Figure 1.2

The parameters of psychology are wide ranging. Traditional areas of psychological study include the sequence of physical, emotional and cognitive development through the life span; awareness and sensory processing; sensation and sensory deprivation; learning thinking and communication; motivation; and emotion. Contemporary psychological interests incorporate new ideas, new aspects of life, and the analysis of cutting edge issues in society. These include the role of the media and how it reports on human behaviour; the application of technology in diagnosis and treatment (e.g. how the public relies on the internet for on-line diagnosis and counselling for issues relating to weight loss, relationship problems and grief); new issues in childhood and adolescence (such as eating disorders, pregnancy and self-harm); the increasing incidence of specific disorders such as autism and eating disorders; as well as crime victimization and post-traumatic stress disorder. All of the areas require the intervention of psychology for diagnosis and treatment.

Distinguishing Commonsense Observations from Scientific Data on Human Behaviour

You would recall the working definition of psychology stated in the overview which describes psychology as the scientific study and explanation of human behaviour, mental processes and consciousness. Psychology can be distinguished from mere commonsense observations of human behaviour because of the scientific research methods employed to acquire the data about human beliefs, feelings and actions.

Boyd and Bee (2012) outline the goals of developmental science which equally pertain to the science of psychology. The authors noted that researchers who study human development use the scientific method to achieve four goals: to describe, to explain, to predict, and to influence human development from conception to death. Description flows naturally from the systematic collection of facts and observations about any social phenomenon. For example, the causes of domestic violence or what factors lead individuals to become career criminals. Explaining development involves telling why a particular event occurs.

To generate the explanation, developmentalists rely on **theories** or sets of statements (hypotheses) that propose general principles of development. Theories are important because they offer explanations from different perspectives. For example, the view that elderly persons forget information may be based on the biological theory that cells degenerate with age and degeneration is linked to reduced performance. Alternatively, an experiential perspective suggests that elderly persons have less opportunity to practise memory skills than younger adults who are either in continuous learning or in employment, hence the reduced memory performance of senior citizens.

Prediction is an important part of the scientific process. Using **hypotheses** researchers can test if changes in the brain can in fact cause a decline in memory function by measuring both brain structure and brain function. The information derived supplements the body of information that constitutes the theory. It is often difficult to predict the behaviour of any one individual with complete accuracy, in a variety of situations and over time. It is easier to predict patterns of behaviour common to individuals or groups by specifying the probability that a group of respondents will engage in a particular kind of behaviour. Prediction is better when there is scientific control over when or whether a behaviour or social phenomenon will occur. Generally, it is assumed that presenting or withholding a **stimulus** will result in the presence or absence of a behavioural response.

Thus results are often limited to the conditions of an experiment that have been designed to answer specific questions using selected research methods and with a particular group of experimental subjects. Hence scientific publications contain a discussion by the authors of the limitations of their findings. In the book chapter *Using State of Awareness Judgements to Improve Eyewitness Confidence-Accuracy* (Seemungal & Stevenage, 2002) used an experimental method to test the accuracy of eyewitness memory. The study was first presented as a conference paper at a scientific meeting of leading cognitive psychologists in France. Researchers frequently use this method of presenting ideas for peer review by their colleagues to ensure that experimental findings can withstand the test of academic scrutiny and critical evaluation. This is one means of ensuring that description, explanation, prediction and control have been adhered to as part of the scientific process.

According to Boyd and Bee (2012) scientists use their findings to influence outcomes. This is a critical point as it speaks to your use of psychological knowledge as a means for understanding youths and their concerns in ways that lead to the creation, execution and evaluation of tailored programs, policies and strategies that benefit youths. While reflecting on the contribution of psychology and scientific knowledge in evidence-driven policy formulation it is useful to bear in mind the comments of social psychologists Baron, Branscombe and Bryne (2009). Baron et al. noted that the term science refers to two things: (1) a set of values, and (2) several methods that can be used to study a wide range of topics. In deciding whether a body of knowledge is scientific or not, the critical question is: Does the body of knowledge adopt these values and methods? To the extent that it does, it is scientific. The authors identified four core values of scientific claims.

1. Accuracy –this is a commitment to gathering and evaluating information about the world (including social behaviour and thought) in as careful, precise, and error-free a manner as possible.
2. Objectivity –a commitment to obtaining and evaluating information in a manner that is as free from bias as humanly possible.
3. Scepticism – this is a commitment to accepting findings as accurate only to the extent they have been verified again.
4. Open-mindedness is a commitment to changing one’s views – even views that are strongly held – if existing evidence suggests that these views are inaccurate.

Having scrutinised the scientific method let us now turn our attention to the core psychological theories that form main stream psychology. Please bear in mind that as you read more extensively about psychological theories from your textbook and internet sources you will realise that there have been contemporary refinement and development of the core theories.

Psychological Theories

Human behaviour is complex and multi-faceted so although psychology has been working towards comprehensive theories, no single theory has been successful in explaining all of human behaviour. In fact, many authors in their publications identify the theoretical perspective that shapes their research topic, the questions posed and the data collection methods that are used to investigate their research questions or hypotheses.

According to the American psychologists Newman and Newman (1983) six perspectives dominate much of psychology. These are the behavioural approach, the cognitive approach, the psychoanalytic approach, humanistic approach, the biological approach and the social psychological approach. Let us examine and critically assess these approaches by identifying the strengths and limitations of each theory and examples of how these theories can be applied to real world, every-day situations.

1. Behavioural Approach

The behavioural approach emphasizes the role of experience in modifying behaviour. One of the earliest psychologists who advocated for a behavioural approach to understanding human actions was John Watson. Watson argued that the only appropriate domain for the science of psychology was observable behaviour. Specifically, only when a particular behaviour is observed by more than one person is it possible to determine the nature of that behaviour and build systematic laws about the conditions that influence that specific behaviour. In addition, Watson noted that the study of thoughts, fantasies, or emotions which are unobservable and unverifiable mental events are outside the domain of an empirically based science of psychology. His approach influenced the theory building and research focus of American psychologists in the first half of the 20th Century. During this period of time behaviorism was defined as ‘the study of the relation between people’s environment and their behaviour, without appeal to hypothetical events occurring within their heads.’ (Carlson, 1991, p. 15) It is only more recently that behavioural psychologists embarked on systematic studies of thoughts, emotions, imagery and attention.

Two of the most prominent behaviorists are Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist, and B.F. Skinner whose work focuses on learning. You would recall viewing Skinner's experiment in Activity 1.1 depicting learning in pigeons. In his early research Skinner studied the conditions under which rats and pigeons learned to make new responses. He demonstrated that the more control one had over the conditions of learning, the more accurately one could predict behaviour. Skinnerian and other research findings on learning have been applied to the educational context. For example, (1) the introduction of rewards and positive reinforcement to motivate and encourage a targeted behaviour; (2) the mechanism of providing immediate feedback on performance for correct and incorrect responses on a designated task to improve subsequent performance on the same or a similar task; and (3) students are guided in a step-by-step approach from simpler to more complex material. The principles of behaviorism are not restricted to educational settings but they have been applied to employee training and productivity in the business sector and to the treatment of patients in mental hospitals. One can envisage the applicability of the behavioural approach for youth development work as dysfunctional or negative youth behaviours can be re-shaped into new, positive behaviours when the nature of the targeted behaviour is clearly defined and when they are followed by certain consequences. The behavioural approach is not without its criticism. In fact, the cognitive approach in psychology emerged as a reaction against behaviorism's rejection of mental states and the restriction of the subject matter of psychology to observable behaviours. Cognitive psychologists now advocate for, and use, objective methods rather than introspective ones to examine issues of memory, information processing and consciousness. The cognitive approach will be discussed in more detail below.

2. Cognitive Approach

Psychologists whose research and writings are influenced by the cognitive approach developed their theories in response to the limitations of behaviorism. They proposed an alternative, holistic view, which emphasized the role of emotions and cognitions as mediating factors in the stimulus-behaviour relationship. In the early 1900s a group of German psychologists, called the **Gestalt** theorists, claimed that behaviour is more than an automatic, conditioned response or a passive action. Instead, thoughts and feelings play a significant role in the way in which stimuli are perceived, interpreted and even the decisions that are made to display or withhold a certain type of behaviour. In other words, humans shape their existence by their experiences as people are active processors of information. They can filter out and select certain elements in the environment to attend to while blocking out other aspects. The capacity to give meaning to experiences, to problem solve in creative ways, to synthesize information, and to critically analyze statements are working examples of cognition in action. With respect to youth development work the cognitive approach can explain why young persons apply filters to the information that is available to them and perhaps selectively choose to either listen to or to ignore the well-meaning advice of parents, teachers or professionals. Young people often prefer to share in the seemingly more exciting experiences of their cohorts and peers.

A popular Gestalt phrase is 'the whole is more than the sum of its constituent parts'. Newman and Newman (1983) offered the example of toothpaste to explain the concept of Gestalt. Recognition of an item in a tube as toothpaste is a composite memory of the

taste, smell, and function of toothpaste. There is usually something extra that is added to the composite parts that defines the whole experience. For example, the knowledge underlying toothpaste may be linked to an emotion or memory of a visit to the dentist in which the importance of brushing regularly with toothpaste was emphasized by the dentist to avoid the dire consequences of cavities and painful extractions. The modern cognitive approach is influenced by the work of Jean Piaget who held the view that knowing is a product of continuous interaction between the person and the environment. Piaget's theories will be elaborated upon later in this course in our discussions of human development in Part III *Developmental Psychology*.

The cognitive approach has also inspired social psychology. For example, social cognition demonstrates that people organize their observations of social experiences to make them meaningful and coherent. The cognitive approach can be applied to adolescents who are at risk and prone to drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, pornography or other addictions through the administration of cognitive interventions to re-shape their thinking (i.e. attitude change) which can in turn lead to positive and functional behaviour. The primary limitation of the cognitive approach is that the focus on the function of the human brain, mental processes such as imagery, attention, and mental states of awareness such as 'remembering' and 'knowing' as responses to environmental events, to a large extent, excludes the study of physiological explanations of behaviour.

3. *Psychoanalytic Approach*

According to the psychoanalytic approach much of human behaviour can be understood on more than one level. For example, if you do not respond to a friend's text message this can be interpreted by your friend in many ways: You are very busy and cannot reply or you are aggrieved by something the friend said or did and you are maintaining your social distance. Perhaps your real reason for not replying to your friend is the simple fact that you did not believe that the message warranted a reply. The psychoanalytic approach to behaviour focuses on the motives and conflicts that direct behaviour. According to Newman and Newman (1983) the psychoanalytic approach to behaviour focuses on the motives and conflicts that direct behaviour. An assumption of psychoanalytic theory is that all behaviour is at some level an expression of sexual or aggressive motives. Behaviour does not occur at random or without purpose. When behaviour does not seem to make sense, one must look beneath the surface for the conflicts or the unacceptable wishes that might be pressing for expression.

The main proponent of psychoanalytic theory (sometimes referred to in the literature as the psychodynamic model) was the Viennese psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). He was the first person to employ psychoanalytical methods in his treatment of patients. In doing so he successfully treated illnesses that seemed to have no apparent organic explanation. Freud believed such illnesses were manifestations of an unconscious mental life and to successfully treat the patient, one had to bring to the conscious level facts and circumstances of earlier, repressed experiences and feelings. Freud formulated the concepts id, ego and superego in his psychoanalytic theory. Freud's tripartite view of human personality is that it comprises of the id, the superego and the ego. According to Freud, within the id, sexual and aggressive instincts are waiting to spring forth; the superego comprises thoughts, beliefs and fears instilled in us as the result of early socialization by

parents and other authorities. The ego is the rational manager of both our un-socialized instincts and our fears and anxieties. The best known of the ego's many functions is the **defence mechanisms**, which operate at an unconscious level to help us deny reality and reduce tensions arising from the id and the superego. You are encouraged to look at the YouTube video on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory below and access other relevant information from the American Psychology Association's website cited below to undertake Activity 1.2. By the end of this activity you will have a clear understanding of the psychoanalytic approach. You should add your notes to the ones documented in this unit.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1.2 •

Please look at the YouTube video on psychoanalytic theory which can be accessed via the hyperlink below.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4vla_JUmAE&feature=related

What did this video teach you about psychoanalytic theory? – 200 words

Please refer to the hyperlink below to answer the question. How does psychoanalytic theory differ from the behavioural approach and the cognitive approach? – 200 words

<http://www.apa.org/topics/index.aspx>

Using the two sources of information above, what are the limitations of psychoanalytic theory? – 200 words

Post your reflections in the Learning Exchange and reply to the post of two other colleagues.
This activity is due by the end of week 2.

4. Humanistic Approach

The humanistic approach focuses on the uniqueness of individuals and the subjective experiences of the self. In this approach the emphasis is on understanding the ways in which people define and live out their lives. More importantly, the key to understanding human behaviour is individual choice and responsibility. This flexibility in considering how people respond to both their perceptions and emotions along with the context of their environmental conditions is regarded as the strength of the humanistic approach.

Consider the following scenario. How would different groups of people in your society react to the fact that their basic needs are not being met? Would some individuals be creative and try to obtain a second job to fund their basic needs? Would persons decide that a career in criminal activities is the better option? According to Newman and Newman (1983) the humanistic view focuses on the motives that lead people to develop their talents and to live up to their potential. It values self-fulfillment and views humans as ambitious, constantly striving to grow and to become more than they are at the present time. In other words, humans strive for self-actualization by reaching out for higher goals and ideals. The humanistic approach suggests that in order to understand human behaviour one must first understand an individual's aspirations. The major proponents of this approach are Gordon Allport, Carl Rogers, and Abraham Maslow.

In some important ways, the humanistic approach directly opposes the behavioural and the psychoanalytic approaches. First, in the humanistic approach the person's interpretation of events is more important than the observable behaviour. Second, behaviour is viewed as a product of free will. Third, humanists do not believe that behaviour is caused by either environmental conditions or unconscious motives. Other criticisms levied against the humanistic approach include attributions of vague concepts, subjective experiences are difficult to verify, and an experience (e.g. self actualization) that is real for one individual may not be real for another person.

5. Biological and Instinctual Approaches

The biological and instinctual approaches, sometimes referred to as evolutionary psychology, adopt the view that inborn or innate characteristics control human behaviour. The focus of interest includes the central nervous system, the brain, genetics, and the hormonal system. The belief is that mammals can provide vital clues to human behaviour so biological psychologists study both human and animal subjects. Some theorists suggest that there are genetically programmed aggressive instincts and **altruistic** instincts. This view is consistent with the theory of socio-biology. The main proponent is E.O. Wilson (1978) who claimed that behaviour is genetically determined but there is an evolution in line with a particular set of genes. Hence, if a gene predisposes a person towards certain kinds of responses such as aggressive behaviour, but aggression is necessary for survival, then the gene of aggression is more likely to be passed on to future generations. There is some overlap between the biological and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory as the latter relies heavily on the idea that humans have certain built-in instincts and drives and people are constantly striving to manage their impulses rationally. Some academics believe that the biological approach to understanding behaviour —such as the study of the effects of drugs on the brain and behaviour— is more scientific and rigorous than the study of moods and emotions on behaviour as the former can impose stricter controls during the scientific process. These controls are largely due to the improved technology that is available for experiments such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to map the brain and its activities. Perhaps the main criticism of the biological approach is the explanation that behaviour is biologically driven. For example, sex offending has been linked to psychopathy and drug use in individuals (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

6. Social Psychological Approach

Social psychology is the branch of human psychology that deals with the behaviour of groups and the influence of social factors on the individual. It is important to note that behaviour is not merely controlled by the environment but it in turn shapes and influences the environment. This interactive relationship is aptly described by a Trinidadian social psychologist in the following statement. "It is not a matter of elevating either the individual or the social system as a unit of **intrinsic** priority. Rather, it is the need to give each unit equivalent or complementary treatment recognizing the dynamic relationship between both." (Deosaran, 1992, p. 7). Furthermore, Deosaran believes that social psychology is a leading discipline in examining the "total person." (Deosaran, 1992). The history of social psychology can be traced to European and American roots. Social psychology focuses on understanding how and why individuals behave, think and feel in social situations.

The masters of the discipline attempted to be more specific about their focus of inquiry as illustrated in the following definition by Gordon Allport (1968). Allport draws our attention to the fact that social interactions, individual processes and group dynamics, possess affective (feeling), cognitive (thoughts) and behavioural components. Specifically, social psychology is regarded as “an attempt to understand ... how the thought, feeling and behaviour of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others.”

Professor Steven Penrod had a commonsense approach to the discipline. He states that, “Social psychology is the discipline that tries to analyze and understand human interaction, the extraordinary as well as the everyday.” (Penrod, 1986, p. 4) Despite the differences in words used to describe the discipline, academic writers are in agreement that social psychology is a scientific study of human behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal.

No single psychological theory can answer all the questions about human behaviour because such responses are complex, the product of a constant interplay between the social environment, the human **psyche** and human behaviour. Academic psychologists often seek, via their publications, to assist their readers to make sense of their experiences and actions. For example, it has been suggested that the meaning that is attached to behaviour is a matter of theoretical perspective, cultural background or personal behaviour (Hogg & Vaughn, 1998). Collectively these suggestions justify our need for exploring the case for a Caribbean social psychological perspective. This will be examined in Session 1.2.

Session 1.1 Summary:

Reflect and Review

The preceding discussion examined the major psychological theories and hinted at their influence on social and developmental psychology. In review, it is important to note that the major perspectives do not compete with one another to explain the same event or behaviour. Instead, psychological theories describe which problems or phenomena will be explained and may also identify the research methods that will be used to scientifically examine a particular phenomenon. For example, is nature more influential in children’s developmental progress than nurture? An important objective of this session was to provide the necessary information about the range of psychological theories or approaches that are available to help you to develop your knowledge base and skill set to achieve various competencies, including competency YDWCYP0263. YDWCYP0263 aims to empower you to assist young people to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing their community, country and region. Your training in the development of competency YDWCYP0263 begins when you explore, read and assess the documentation regarding young persons, their weaknesses, needs and what must be done to facilitate their psychosocial development. By giving you the opportunity to post recommendations and suggestions to questions pertinent to young persons in your course assessments and assignments your reflective and critical evaluative skills will develop. These are the tools that contribute to the crafting of sound and relevant youth development policies.

Before reading the summary outlining the six approaches to the study of psychology in Table 1.1 you are encouraged to test yourself for your understanding and memory of the theorists associated with the various psychological theories documented in Session 1.1.



SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Name any theorist associated with the following:

1. Cognitive Approach.....
2. Humanistic Approach.....
3. Psycho-Analytic Approach.....
4. Social Psychological Approach.....
5. Biological Approach.....
6. Behavioural Approach.....



Key Points

1. Psychology offers a scientific method both for resolving inconsistencies in 'commonsense knowledge' of the world and for explaining why people behave as they do.
2. We looked at six mainstream theoretical approaches – cognitive, behavioural, humanistic, psycho-analytic, social psychological and biological.
3. Each theory and orientation stresses a different aspect of behaviour as human behaviour is a very complex phenomenon that defies a single explanation mainly because it is wide ranging and can vary from situation to situation as well as across the life span.
4. Psychologists are involved in studying different aspects of human behaviour in diverse settings. This has given rise to various professionals such as cognitive psychologists, developmental psychologists, police psychologists, engineering and industrial psychologists, educational psychologists and counselling psychologists.

Approach	Focus	Example
Behavioural	The role of experience in modifying behaviour.	Re-shaping minds by teaching or re-programming young people to be less promiscuous to reduce teenage pregnancies.
Cognitive	How people organize and interpret experience.	Application of cognitive interventions such as reducing stress by re-defining the problem or using meditation.
Psychoanalytic	The motives that direct behaviour and the symbolic meaning of behaviour.	Psychological symptoms are interpreted as an expression of unconscious wishes such as sex or aggression.
Humanistic	The uniqueness of individuals and the subjective experiences of the self.	People can learn to overcome a narrow, rigid view of themselves in order to achieve their full potential.
Biological	The physical structures of the body that account for behaviour.	For example using MRI scans to identify the location of the brain that is responsible for decision-making when an experimental subject is given a gambling task.
Social Psychological	The interaction of individuals and their social environments.	The influence of peer pressure on youth involvement in gang or drug culture.

Table 1.1

Session 1.2

Psychology's Role in Youth Development Work

Introduction

In this session we will continue to build on the foundational information presented in Session One. We will first consider the contribution that psychological theories, principles and concepts play in youth development work. This will be followed by a discussion of the case for a Caribbean psychology using publications by expert Caribbean authors.

Session 1.2 Objectives

At the end of this session, learners will be able to:

1. Evaluate in written form psychology's role in facilitating youth development work;
2. Demonstrate in forum postings familiarity with the literature outlining the case for a Caribbean psychology;
3. Outline in tutorial discussions why cultural sensitivities have a role to play in understanding the region's social issues or challenges and creating suitable policies, programs and interventions to redress the challenges.

Psychology's Role in Youth Development Work

A careful examination of the general competencies that support this course as well as the specific ones documented at the beginning of this unit amply demonstrates that psychology has a vital role to play in understanding youths. The information from this unit will equip you to undertake professional youth development work by adding to your existing knowledge. You will also be encouraged to think about relevant policies aimed at addressing the psychosocial challenges faced by youths in your country of residence. For example, **YDWCYP0263 'Enable young people to become active and responsible citizens'** requires you to be able to apply theories of growth and development, to work with young people to identify and access the kinds of information they need, and to assist young people to recognize their roles. This speaks clearly to the six approaches to psychology discussed in Session 1.1 and also to the relevance of developmental psychology, which you will encounter in more detail in Part III of this course. Your knowledge of the diverse cultures and traditions embraced by other Caribbean nations is also essential. Understanding the effects of the social milieu on individual attitudes and behaviour is the domain of social psychology.

Development of the requisite skills to enable young people to understand the effect of their actions on other groups and individuals and for you to work in a way that is

sensitive to social and cultural traditions is also critical and is explicitly documented in **YDWCYP0263**. Similarly, competency **YDWCYP0293** 'Contribute to the development and implementation of a national youth policy' encourages you to engage in the collection of information on the views of young people using sources such as newspaper articles, national development plans and youth presentation networks. The information in Session 1.1 and Session 1.2 are the building blocks for Unit 2 which focuses in more detail on scientific methods and how psychologists undertake research to collect the data that drives policy making and policy evaluation. Collectively, the competencies identified in Unit 1 will enable you to become a more efficient youth development worker and will prepare you to make a contribution to the development and evaluation of youth policies and interventions in your country of residence and beyond.

There are numerous articles and textbooks on the topic adolescents and risk. Collectively there is growing evidence for making sense of adolescent psychology which provides learners with broad perspectives on some of the greatest challenges of the day affecting the psychological growth and development of children, adolescents and emerging adults. Given the age group under consideration – essentially from 13 years to 25 years- there are ethical considerations as well as cultural sensitive issues involved in designing suitable programs for this group. Ethical considerations when undertaking research is the subject of Unit 2 but this session will examine the merits of a Caribbean psychology because culture and societal norms are key concepts in this framework.

The phase of youth has been associated with terms like innocent confusion, developing identity and identity crisis, risk taking, an over emphasis on peer influence as a validation of self, anxiety, anger, frustration, perceived isolation and loneliness. This group can be regarded as inexperienced young decision-makers and while some youths are able to successfully navigate through these difficult years from 13 to 25, largely due to positive environmental factors, personal skills, attributes or self determination, many youths appear to be lost in the system and fall through the cracks of society. The role of the professional youth development worker is critical to national plans for improving the welfare and circumstances of young persons at risk. Examples of adolescent risk behaviour identified by the Americans Johnson and Malow-Iroff (2008) include fast driving, drug use, gambling, unprotected sex, violence and self harm which collectively may result in mental disorders. In the United Kingdom there is huge concern over the propensity for young people to engage in binge drinking. An interesting view of what is normal and abnormal in adolescent behaviour is cited below. What do you think about the following statement? **You will be asked to share your views to this question in our BlackBoard Collaborate session on this topic.**

When adolescents experiment with alcohol or engage in sexual experimentation, they are not necessarily behaving much differently than their peers, from a statistical perspective. In fact, as they move through adolescence, those who do not engage in one or more of these risky activities are abnormal in comparison to the larger group of adolescents. (Johnson & Malow-Iroff, 2008, p. 1)

Johnson and Malow-Iroff (2008) summarised the current theories for explaining the risk taking behaviour of youths. These theories have their genesis in the psychological approaches outlined in Session 1.1.

1. *Rebellion* – Adolescents take risks to rebel against adult authority.
2. *Problem Behaviour Theory* – Adolescents who engage in risk taking take multiple risks and do so as a form of their unconventionality.
3. *Sensation Seeking* – A subset of adolescents possesses a biological predisposition to engage in activities associated with heightened physiological arousal. This theory assumes a genetic component to adolescent risk taking.
4. *Invulnerability* – Adolescents engage in risk-taking behaviour because they see themselves as invulnerable to the potential risks associated with their actions.
5. *Conscious Decision* – Adolescents consciously decide to take risks because they perceive personal benefits from doing so.
6. *Immaturity and Present Orientation* – Adolescents take risks because they are not yet mature enough to see the potential risks associated with their actions and because they tend to live in the present moment, making it difficult for them to consider future consequences.

Youth related issues are of national and regional interest and concern. Activity 1.3 is designed to encourage you to read the Caribbean e-resources on this topic and to reflect on the comments cited in the resource material. This task will provide the context for you to consider the case for a Caribbean psychology that may supplement the six approaches to psychology discussed in Session 1.1, Activity 1.3 will also help you to formulate a plan for research in order to identify the needs of young people and to establish the links between data and targeted policy plans to address these needs.



LEARNING ACTIVITY 1.3 • Tutorial debate

The tutorial class will be divided into two groups. Each group will **debate either the case for and against** a Caribbean psychology using illustrated examples. Two groups in the course will be selected to give a presentation in the Black Board Collaborate session on January 27th. The presentation for each group must not exceed 5 minutes and the content should reflect the key points in your tutorial discussion.

You are encouraged to incorporate your knowledge of psychology's scope, theories and concepts into activity 1.3. Select a social problem that is an issue in your country of residence and identify how a Caribbean psychological perspective can (1) explain the social problem and (2) offer solutions to that particular problem.

Useful resource materials that would simulate your thinking for the successful completion of Activity 1.3 include the following:

Sutherland. M. (2011). Toward a Caribbean Psychology: An African Centered Approach *Journal of Black Studies* available as a pdf file in the Unit 1 reading folder.



LEARNING ACTIVITY 1.3 • Tutorial Debate Cont'd

An article from the Small Island Voice; St. Vincent and the Grenadines titled **'Youth concerns in Bequia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines'** reports on the results of a survey of youths ages 15-17 years. The survey was designed to examine their specific concerns and solutions for addressing these concerns. The concerns related to environmental, sexual, violence in the community, and drug abuse in the community.

<http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/Caribbean/svg-youth.htm>

Caribbean 260 titled **'High cost of living concerning Caribbean youth'** (2009) reports on the issues of unemployment and rising cost of living affecting Caribbean youths.

<http://www.caribbean360.com/index.php/news/14303.html#axzz1uXVNZHCG>

Defining and Assessing the Merits of a Caribbean Psychology or Caribbean Social Psychology

To assist your understanding of the article by Sutherland (2011) *Toward a Caribbean Psychology: An African Centered Approach* some key points from the article are cited to guide your reading. The references below were cited by Sutherland.

1. Caribbean psychologists should reconstruct mainstream psychology to address the psychological needs of these Caribbean people.
2. The African-centered and constructionist viewpoint is argued to be of utility in addressing the psychological growth and development of people of African descent living in the Americas and Caribbean region.
3. Western psychology was developed to explain the psychology of people of European descent. Indeed, people of African descent have largely been neglected in psychological research and, when studied, were negatively portrayed.
4. An examination of the culture, philosophy, and language defining the Caribbean social reality and the cultural context in which Caribbean peoples live is appropriate. Such explorations can contribute to the development of the discipline of Caribbean Psychology that can inform culturally appropriate theoretical frameworks and research approaches to address the important areas of human relations and geopolitical realities in the Caribbean region.
5. In contemporary Caribbean societies, pervasive interpersonal violence, child abuse, elder abuse, drug abuse, suicides, homicides, and the personal, familial, economic, and social consequences of these acts of violence have preoccupied politicians and scholars. Several explanations exist for the high rates of psychosocial violence in Jamaica and in other English-speaking islands.
6. Similar to the work being done in the United States by some Black psychologists (reconstructionists), Caribbean psychologists will need to identify and correct the errors in Western psychology and, if possible, reconstruct Western psychology to more appropriately address the needs of Caribbean populations.

7. Errol Miller (1999) wrote, Jamaicans have the mentality of “taking the opportunity to exploit those who are in a weak position.” Miller is correct in arguing that enslavement and colonial conditions have set Jamaicans against each other and against their cultural and historical foundation. Yet in the contemporary era, social scientists need to examine the internal dynamics of Jamaica’s family structures, which are related to these negative attitudes and behaviors. Analysts have discussed the fragmentation of the extended family structure because of economic constraints; rural-to-urban migration; transnational migration to the United States, the United Kingdom, and other foreign countries; urbanization; and the absence of, or the breakdown of, parenting skills. Hence, it is not unusual for poor children to be raising themselves (Narcisse, 2000). The physical and emotional violence inflicted on Caribbean children has also been documented (Barrow, 1996). In other extreme instances, there are those hostile parents who mold their children into violent and ruthless individuals who prey on and destroy their communities for personal self-aggrandizement.
8. African beliefs that the African personality is simultaneously teachable and perfectible; it has the capacity for free will and the need to be morally and socially responsible. In traditional African wisdom and philosophy, all things are created by and are of God. All phenomena are characterized by unity through the complementarity of masculine and feminine principles. It is a reasonable contention that the transmittal of such cultural knowledge to children by parents and by significant adults could aid in the optimal development of Caribbean children. These interventions could also contribute to the diminishing of African Caribbeans’ and other Caribbean people’s sense of hopelessness and despair. They could assist in decreasing the high rates of domestic violence, murder, suicide, and other aberrant occurrences. Hence, Caribbean Psychology will eventually make contributions to improve the applications of psychology to solve problems in the Caribbean region on the basis of appropriate conceptualizations and research findings.
9. In Caribbean societies, masculinity is defined by traits of aggressiveness, power over others, and by sexual prowess (Narcisse, 2000). The distortions of the male image have led to Black males who developed a “go-for-bad/rude bowy (boy)” male image. These are men who refuse to back down if challenged (White & Cones, 1999). In Jamaica’s garrison communities, the primary aspiration of some men is to be “a shotta” and to make “his duppy.” Other males place emphasis on “looking good” to insulate feelings of failure and a sense of inadequacy. Some males adopt the “cool pose” by suppressing their emotions (White & Cones, 1999). Black males have internalized these scripts without examining how their own African cultural traditions could positively influence their lives. White and Cones (1999) noted that as part of the African-centered masculine ideal, having harmonious relationships could enhance mutually enriching bonds between men and women. Harmonious relationships can build unity in Caribbean communities and reduce domestic violence and other forms of violence.

The issue of cultural sensitivity is also discussed by Hickling and Paisley (2012). In particular, these authors shared similar views to that put forward by Sutherland (2011).

What is particularly noteworthy is that as late as 2012 there continues to be a paucity of knowledge about how traditional psychology can be applicable to Caribbean people, their culture and problems. With respect to health psychology it was noted that, "Few mental health professionals in receiving countries have had much diagnostic and therapeutic experience working with Caribbean people with psychopathology, and relatively little has been written on cultural competence in this ethno-cultural group." (Hickling & Paisley, 2012, p. 225) The consequence of this is that, "diagnostic errors can be made in cross-cultural clinical encounters, and the devastating effects this can have on the patient's mental health status." (Hickling & Paisley, 2012, p. 227)

Key terms and concepts such as **culture, society, race, and social structure** will be briefly discussed and summarized in the glossary at the end of this unit because they are incorporated in the scientific articles on Caribbean psychology and Caribbean social psychology. Defining these concepts will improve your understanding of the need for cultural sensitivities when identifying and addressing the needs of Caribbean citizens, specifically youths. A useful e-resource for gaining a working knowledge of sociology and the main concepts associated with the discipline can be found at hyperlink <http://www.sociologyguide.com/>. Knowledge of these concepts will also help you to first, distinguish between the disciplines of social psychology and sociology; second, to appreciate the overlapping areas of interest; and third, to be able to critically evaluate the unit material on social psychological theory.

"Sociology is the study of human social behaviour, especially the study of the origins, organization, institutions, and development of human society." Sociologists Haralambos and Holborn (2008) in their discussion of the sociological perspective emphasize the relationship between culture and society by referring to the limited knowledge of a newborn human baby. A baby acts primarily on instinct and biological drives and the newborn lacks the behaviour patterns necessary for living and surviving in human society which can only be gained by learning the way of life or the culture of its society. The culture of a society is the way of life of its members: the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation. Without a shared culture, members of a society would be unable to communicate and co-operate resulting in chaos and disorder. Culture has two essential qualities: it is learned and it is shared. Culture also defines accepted ways of behaving for members of a particular society. Thus culture would vary from society to society. Classical sociologists such as Gouldner² (1971) explain that concepts such as culture and society stress the manner in which men are shaped and influenced by their groups and group heritage. However, the terms 'culture' and 'society' also have a life apart from the men (and women) who create and enact them. For instance, pop culture or the culture of social networking and social media constantly evolve in exciting and unpredictable ways. Other key sociological concepts are race and social structure. **Race** in the biological sense refers to a group of people who possess certain distinctive and conspicuous physical characteristics. **Social structure** is defined as two or more people interacting and interrelating in certain expected ways, regardless of the unique personalities involved.

² Gouldner, A.W. (1983). *Sociology's Basic Assumptions*. In K. Thompson & J. Tunstall (Eds.), *Sociological Perspectives*, (p. 15). Middlesex: Penguin Education.

The discussion on Caribbean psychology includes comments from the collection of essays by Trinidadian Professor Ramesh Deosaran *Social Psychology in the Caribbean: Directions for Theory and Research* (1992). The book addresses issues such as the impact of television on cultural and racial identity but we can extend the discussion to the impact of foreign media on national identity, violence, and criminal activities. The publication is a good illustration of the new multidisciplinary perspective in applied social psychology and an excellent example of material published by Caribbean scholars for Caribbean students on Caribbean matters. Although the book was published in 1992 the ideas can stand the test of time. There is an opportunity to test and extend the mainstream international theories –behavioural, cognitive, social psychological, psychoanalytic, humanistic, biological and social psychological– in a Caribbean social laboratory. In the Caribbean behaviour is very much influenced by the national and regional culture, the presence of various ethnic groups, the dynamics of politics and the culture of authority.

Deosaran demonstrates the applicability of cognitive theory to international and Caribbean social issues by noting that, “The nature of the stimulus and response may change from society to society, but the basic principle of reinforcement still exists. ... “When we speak of ‘psychological man’ we usually see ‘man’ as thinking man, as ‘man’ with a mind that treats information, sometimes in unpredictable ways. In this way we move from mechanical man to cognitive man.” (Deosaran, 1992, p. 16). Generating information from youths and citizens of all ages to test mainstream theories or to develop and evaluate policies must adhere to the scientific method as outlined in Session 1.1.

In subsequent units of this course selected excerpts from Deosaran’s publications will be used as a reference for exploring the relevance of psychology for youth development work.

Session 1.2 Summary

Reflect and Review:

The focus in Session 1.2 was on exploring the potential contribution that the discipline of psychology as the scientific study of human behaviour, mental processes and consciousness can offer for the study of youth development work. More importantly, the approaches to studying psychology can be linked to certain theories of why young people and adolescents engage in risk taking behaviour as delineated by Johnson and Malow-Iroff (2008). These theories include rebellion, problem behaviour theory, sensation seeking, invulnerability, conscious decision, immaturity and present orientation. The case for a Caribbean perspective to mitigate the inadequacy of mainstream Western or European psychological approaches was considered. Specifically, Sutherland (2011) argued that Caribbean psychologists need to identify and correct the errors in Western psychology and, if possible, reconstruct Western psychology to more appropriately address the needs of Caribbean populations. A similar view was expressed by Deosaran (1992) who described the region as a Caribbean social laboratory where behaviour is very much influenced by the national and regional culture, the presence of various ethnic groups, and the dynamics of politics as well as the culture of authority.

In summary, it is important to note that your perception of which psychological approach or theoretical perspective might be best for investigating a social phenomenon of your choice or for developing and evaluating youth policies is a combination of personal preference, the adequacy of the theory and the recommendations of academic writers. Similarly, your thoughts on issues of theoretical and practical concerns that are not mentioned in this session but which you believe must be considered by researchers when undertaking psychological and policy driven research are extremely relevant. Please document your ideas and share them in the discussion forum in the Learning Exchange.



Key Points

1. Psychology as the scientific study of human social behaviour requires the consideration of appropriate theoretical methods and ethical guidelines to produce relevant and reliable data for empirically driven policies, strategies and interventions.
2. We looked at the case for a Caribbean perspective for facilitating a better understanding of the social ills facing youths and the wider regional community.
3. An overview was given of the relevance of psychology in the professionalization of youth development work.
4. There is no right or wrong theoretical approach to understanding social phenomena. Instead, the central concern should be the appropriateness of a theory (or a combination of theories) to explaining the psychosocial problem under investigation.
5. When undertaking empirical studies influential factors include the knowledge base of the investigating team, the resources available (including both financial and human resources) to carry out the research and the objectives of the research exercise.
6. Research can be undertaken for a variety of reasons; for example, the identification of guidelines for policies or the need to evaluate the success or shortfalls of existing programs.
7. The socio-cultural context or level of analysis (e.g. individual respondents or focus group knowledge) that is required to generate the information needed should be considered when planning the research exercise.

Unit Summary

This unit was designed to support the competencies, skills and knowledge based of YDWCYP0263; YDWCYP0293; YDWCYP0413. The issues examined in Unit 1 provided an introduction to the discipline of psychology and provided the foundational and procedural knowledge that will help you to understand the subsequent units in this course. The in-unit activities are designed to help you to reflect on the material presented and they function as a self-check measure of your understanding of the theories, methods and concepts that constitute the framework of the discipline of psychology. We began by defining the parameters of psychology as a distinct area from its nearest disciplines. The six psychological approaches discussed were behaviorism, cognitive, humanistic, cognitive, biological and social psychological. Very importantly, the need for a Caribbean social psychological perspective was argued by the Trinidadian social psychologist, Professor Ramesh Deosaran and by Marcia Sutherland.

In Unit 2 the focus will be on outlining in more detail the scientific method and how psychologists do research. Psychological research methods to be discussed include experiments, case studies, descriptive method, and surveys. Other topics to be covered are ethics to be considered in human research and how to critique a published scientific paper. Please refer to the course text Boyd, D. & Bee, H. (2012) for the range of qualitative and quantitative research methods that are available to psychologists and the diversity of issues that psychologists are called upon to explain and address. This information is also relevant to youth development workers. The following e-resource will also assist in your preparatory reading for Unit 2. E-Source Book *Behavioural and Social Sciences Research*, Chapter Appropriate Research Methods <http://www.esourceresearch.org/Default.aspx?TabId=615>

Unit 2 will utilize Caribbean examples to illustrate key points. The discussion in subsequent units will tap into your memory for the foundational areas covered in Unit 1. So please make all efforts to ensure that you understand unit 1 before moving on to the other units of this course.

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Glossary of Terms Used in Unit 1

Other free access on-line psychology dictionaries are available at the following links <http://allpsych.com/dictionary/> and <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/psychology>

Affective (adj.)	Affect: Emotion or subjectively experienced feeling, such as happiness, sadness, fear or anger.
Altruism	Behavior that is unselfish and may even be detrimental but which benefits others.
At risk	A term reserved for persons who by virtue of their circumstances are statistically more likely to fail academically and to be challenged in finding and maintaining sustainable relationships and employment than those persons who have the requisite psycho-social support for success.
Behaviour (n.)	The physical activity of an organism, including overt bodily movement and other physiological processes. The term also denotes the specific physical responses of an organism to particular stimuli or classes of stimuli.
Causal (n.)	Of, relating to, or acting as something that brings about a particular result.
Causal effect (n.)	A change in a dependent variable brought about directly by an independent variable.
Cognition (n.)	The mental activities involved in acquiring and processing information. A cognition is also an item of knowledge or belief. The term describes the process people use for remembering, reasoning, understanding, and using judgment; the ability to think and make sense out of what is seen, heard, felt, and experienced, in order to solve problems.
Cognitive Theory (n.)	Also called Social Cognitive Theory - An approach to social learning, incorporating findings from research into learning, memory, and social cognition, and focusing on people's thoughts and how they affect social behaviour.
Concept (n.)	A mental representation, idea, or thought corresponding to a specific entity or class of entities, or the defining or prototypical features (1) of the entity or class, which may be either concrete or abstract.
Control Variable	In experimental design, any variable apart from the independent variable that is controlled by the experimenter by being randomized, held constant, statistically controlled, or suppressed in some other way (also called a controlled variable).

Culture	The culture of a society is the way of life if its members: the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation.
Defence Mechanism (n.)	A term used originally in psychoanalysis and later more widely in psychology and psychiatry to refer to a process whereby the ego protects itself against demands of the id.
External validity (n.)	The extent to which the conclusions of an empirical investigation remain true when different research methods and research participants or subjects are used.
Gestalt (n.)	A perceptual configuration or structure that possesses qualities transcending the sum of its constituent elements or parts and that cannot be described simply in terms of its parts.
Hypothesis (n.)	A tentative explanation for a phenomenon, subject to criticism by rational argument and refutation by empirical evidence.
Internal validity (n.)	The extent to which the conclusions of an empirical investigation are true within the limits of the research methods and subjects or participants used.
Pedagogy (n.)	The principles, practice or profession of teaching.
Prosocial behaviour	Helping behaviour, altruism, or more generally any behaviour that is positive and calculated to promote the interests of society.
Perception (n.)	The act, process, or product of perceiving; the ability or capacity to perceive. In psychology a distinction is made between sensation (the subjective experience or feeling that results from excitation of sensory receptors) and perception (sensory experience that has been interpreted with reference to its presumed external stimulus objective or event).
Psyche (n.)	The human mind or soul. In Greek mythology, the soul was personified by Psyche, a young woman who was loved by Eros, the god of love who married Psyche but visited her only at night and insisted that she should never see his face.
Qualitative	Concerned with meaning, rather than with measurement. The emphasis is on subjective understanding, communication, and empathy, rather than on prediction and control, and it is a tenet that there is no separate, unique, 'real' world.
Race	In the biological sense refers to a group of people who possess certain distinctive and conspicuous physical characteristics.
Reinforcement (n.)	In operant conditioning, any stimulus (1) that, if it is presented soon after a response, increases the relative frequency with which that response is emitted in the future; also the process whereby a response is strengthened in this way.

Social structure	Defined as two or more people interacting and interrelating in certain expected ways, regardless of the unique personalities involved.
Stimulus (n.)	Any event, agent or influence internal or external, that excites or is capable of causing a response in any organism. Behavioural psychologists such as Frederick Skinner (1904-1990) noted that a stimulus is an event, whether physical or mental, that evokes a response. Plural stimuli.
Theory (n.)	A proposition or set of propositions offered as a conjectured explanation for an observed phenomenon, state of affairs or event.
Trait –(n.)	A characteristic or quality distinguishing a person or (less commonly) a thing, especially a more or less consistent pattern of behaviour that a person possessing the characteristic would be likely to display in relevant circumstances.
Variable (n.)	Anything that is subject to variation; in psychological research, any stimulus, response, or extraneous factor that is changeable and that may influence the results of the research.

