Psychology’s Perspective

Psychology uses biology to describe how a human acts, and why they act that way. Neurons in the brain, emotions, and other internal processes are what psychologists use to determine behavior in people. To completely understand human behavior, psychologists use five different perspectives. These perspectives are the behavioral, psychodynamic, cognitive, humanistic, and biological (McGraw-Hill Higher Education 2004). The behavioral perspective says that the environment we are in and the world around us determine our behavior, whereas the psychodynamic perspective states that unconscious and past events decide our behavior (McGraw-Hill High Education 2004). The cognitive perspective is commonly studied in psychology, and it deals with problem solving and internal mental processes (Garvey, Spoor 1999). The humanistic perspective focuses on self-actualization and the importance of choosing for oneself, and the biological perspective states that genes are very influential in behavior (McGraw-Hill Higher Education 2004). No one of these perspectives can individually be used to determine how people behave. Instead, all are used to get a complete grasp of behavior (McGraw-Hill Higher Education 2004).

The father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, is a huge contributor to modern day psychology. He is considered one of the most influential theorists of the Twentieth Century (Liukkonen 2008). Some of his biggest contributions to psychology are his structural model of the id, ego, and superego, and his topographical model of the conscious and unconscious. Both of these models play a big role in his personality theory (Heffner Media Group, Inc 2004). The id
gets human’s basic (and selfish) needs met, the ego meets the basic needs of the id, but also recognizes others needs as well, and the superego is having morals and being able to tell the difference between right and wrong (Heffner Media Group, Inc 2004). Freud believed that most feelings and impulses are on an unconscious level, and we can’t access them purposefully, but the things we are aware of are stored in our conscious (Heffner Media Group, Inc 2004).

Psychology believes that it’s not people that play a role in behavior, it’s the mind and internal processes. This is the complete opposite from the sociological perspective.

SOCIOLOGY’S PERSPECTIVE

Unlike psychology, sociology focuses on the external processes, and not the mind. It is society that shapes a human being, and determines their behavior. August Comte is credited as one of the main founders of sociology, and is said to have invented the word ‘sociology’ (Smith 2001). Comte believed that social and behavioral problems were directly related to social standings within a society. He taught that society and nature should be studied the same way, because they both develop in the same way (Bolender Initiatives LLC 2008-2011). The way social laws develop can best be explained the same way as natural sciences; using observation, experimentation, and comparison. Another method of science used in sociology is the historical method. The historical method focuses on how societies have evolved, and how behavior has changed because of it (Bolender Initiatives LLC 2008-2011). Sociology has developed further over time, but Comte set the basis.

The two main branches of sociology are Microsociology and Macrosociology. Microsociology is based on small-scale interactions of people. It is very detailed and is broken down moment by moment in the life of an individual (McGraw-Hill Higher Education 2002).
Macrosociology is the opposite of microsociology, and is based on large-scale interactions of people, and focuses more on groups than individuals (McGraw-Hill Higher Education 2002). Both are commonly used separately in sociology to study social processes.

The book, The Sociological Imagination was written by C. Wright Mills in 1959. It deals a lot with society’s issues and personal difficulties and how they have developed throughout history (ODonnell 2010). It intertwines microsociology and macrosociology, because it’s about a relationship between large societies and individuals, and recognizing that relationship. (McGraw-Hill Higher Education 2002). In the book, Mills states,

“Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his or her immediate relations with others; they have to do with one's self and with those limited areas of social life of which one is directly and personally aware. Accordingly, the statement and the resolution of troubles properly lie within the individual as a biographical entity and within the scope of one's immediate milieu - the social setting that is directly open to her personal experience and to some extent her willful activity. A trouble is a private matter: values cherished by an individual are felt by her to be threatened” (Mills 1959).

The sociological imagination is still currently used today to study the relationship between micro and macro sociology.

APPLICATION OF SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Poverty is common in almost every society around the world. No one knows every single cause, but there are many contributing factors to why people are in poverty. These factors differ depending on the country or society. Some people believe that poverty is caused only by the structure of society, and others believe that it is caused by the actions of individuals and only the actions of individuals (MMBrico.com 2006). The sociological imagination can be used in determining the causes for poverty because both macrosociology and microsociology affect it.
Poverty is often blamed on overpopulation, lack of raw materials, and high living costs (MMBrico.com 2006). A lot of countries are underdeveloped because of their lack of technology and poor economies. Because of this, many people in poor countries are undereducated and illiterate. In many parts of the world, the environment is causing water and food shortages (MMBrico.com 2006). Society is often blamed for these problems, which causes many people to believe that it is only society that causes poverty.

Poverty may also be caused by the nature of individuals and how they choose to behave. Sometimes, society isn’t to blame. For example, if someone got fired from their job and became homeless, but only relied on welfare for income and didn’t try to seek another job, that would be considered the individual’s fault they are in poverty, not the society’s (MMBrico.com 2006). This seems to be the case in countries such as the United States, but not as much in poorer countries.

The sociological imagination is very much a part of what causes poverty. It’s not just macrosociology or microsociology; it is a combination of the two. Both coexist together, and both society and individuals cause poverty.
REFERENCES


Mills, C. Wright.1959. The Sociological Imagination. Publisher unknown.

