INTRODUCTION HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

SUMAIRA ASLAM

Introducing Psychology

- Psychology is the scientific study of mind and behavior. The word “psychology” comes from the Greek words “psyche,” meaning life, and “logos,” meaning explanation. Psychology is a popular major for students, a popular topic in the public media, and a part of our everyday lives.

CONT…

- Because we are frequently exposed to the work of psychologists in our everyday lives, we all have an idea about what psychology is and what psychologists do. In many ways I am sure that your conceptions are correct.

CONT…

- Psychologists do work in forensic fields, and they do provide counseling and therapy for people in distress. But there are hundreds of thousands of psychologists in the world, and most of them work in other places, doing work that you are probably not aware of.

CONT…

- In a sense all humans are scientists. We all have an interest in asking and answering questions about our world. We want to know why things happen, when and if they are likely to happen again, and how to reproduce or change them. Such knowledge enables us to predict our own behavior and that of others. We may even collect data (i.e., any information collected through formal observation or measurement) to aid us in this undertaking. It has been argued that people are “everyday scientists” who conduct research projects to answer questions about behavior.

Why Psychologists Rely on Empirical Methods

- All scientists, whether they are physicists, chemists, biologists, sociologists, or psychologists, use empirical methods to study the topics that interest them. Empirical methods include the processes of collecting and organizing data and drawing conclusions about those data. The empirical methods used by scientists have developed over many years and provide a basis for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data within a common framework in which information can be shared. We can label the scientific method as the set of assumptions, rules, and procedures that scientists use to conduct empirical research.

Levels of Explanation in Psychology

- The study of psychology spans many different topics at many different levels of explanation, which are the perspectives that are used to understand behavior. Lower levels of explanation are more closely tied to biological influences, such as genes, neurons, neurotransmitters, and hormones, whereas the middle levels of explanation refer to the abilities and characteristics of individual people, and the highest levels of explanation relate to social groups, organizations, and cultures.

CONT…

- **Nature versus nurture.** Are genes or environment most influential in determining the behavior of individuals and in accounting for differences among people? Most scientists now agree that both genes and environment play crucial roles in most human behaviors, and yet we still have much to learn about how nature (our biological makeup) and nurture (the experiences that we have during our lives) work together.

CONT…

- **Free will versus determinism**. This question concerns the extent to which people have control over their own actions. Are we the products of our environment, guided by force out of our control, or are we able to choose the behaviors we engage in? Most of us like to believe in free will, that we are able to do what we want—for instance, that we could get up right now and go fishing.

CONT…

- **Accuracy versus inaccuracy**. To what extent are humans good information processors? Although it appears that people are “good enough” to make sense of the world around them and to make decent decisions (Fiske, 2003),[4] they are far from perfect. Human judgment is sometimes compromised by inaccuracies in our thinking styles and by our motivations and emotions.