

CHIP-1

Concepts and history in psychology

Steve Draper, Glasgow University

<http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/courses/chip.html>

CHIP-1 22 Sept 2014

1

The CHIP course

This course is given by Lorna Morrow, and Steve Draper. Because Lorna is ill, Steve will deliver his 7 lectures first; and Lorna's material will follow that.

Steve's material: *Handbook lectures 7-13*; actual lectures 1-7
Lorna's material: *Handbook lectures 1-6*; actual lectures 8-13

The course covers both the history of psychology (in Lorna's section), and conceptual issues (both Lorna's and Steve's material).

The key textbook for this course is: Brysbaert, M., & Rastle, K. (2013). *Historical and Conceptual Issues in Psychology*. Pearson

Another excellent book is: Schultz, D. P., & Schultz, S. E. (2012). *Modern Psychology - A History*. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning

2

My angle on, contribution to, CHIP

What do I know? That the philosophy of science course I did as an undergraduate has stayed with me more than any other module.

My own overall learning aim for this segment is to expand your wider critical thinking skills, by raising issues about the worth of psychology overall (not just the worth of individual studies). This is positive as well as negative senses of "critical".

If you want to expand your mind with issues you'll still be thinking about years from now, read round these lectures, do the homework, argue with each other at length.

3

My overall learning aims for CHIP

Lorna's material talks about the history of people and concepts in psychology: about what has actually happened.

My aim is to ask whether it should be like that, did it have to be like that, how can we understand psychology from outside it.

This is trying to equip you with some notion of philosophy of science; and some idea about critically evaluating psychology: what are its strengths and weaknesses?

How certain, how trustworthy are its foundations?

4

(Why discussion matters)

Why does critical thinking matter? because it can be argued that evaluative judgement is the underpinning for all graduate attributes.

Why does discussion matter?: because it may be the chief way of improving EJ and CT.

Anecdote: "came back arguing in a completely different way"

RDW: discussion as the hidden leg of learning in higher education

Luke Timmons: How well students did on a test of critical thinking depended on who they lived with.

5

My overall learning aims for CHIP (2)

Another way of seeing this is that it is an attempt to equip you for a higher level of critical thinking.

Types of critical thinking

1. Critiquing the design of a study (e.g. its methodology, its stats)
2. Critiquing whether the right question / hypothesis is being tested to get at the issue; the right issue within the topic.
3. Critiquing psychology from the outside: what should psychology be like? e.g.
 - a) Critiquing against what outsiders would like psychology to tell them.
 - b) Is it the right topic at all?
 - c) How do its methods compare to other sciences?
 - d)

6

My overall learning aims for CHIP (3)

In any specialist degree you mainly get taught everything regardless of its relative importance. Here: I hope you begin to think about the relative importance of different topics within psychology.

In developing an outside view there are various approaches. One is to look at philosophy of science, which is largely based on physics.

However each discipline is different because different subject matter usually requires different methods based on different types of evidence. I'll begin with this.

7

1) What types of explanation and data does psychology use?

8

A. Intrinsic mental schemas

Intuitive everyday ways of understanding other people

One type of basic approach could be derived from the different ways a typical person has of viewing other humans:

- As an intentional being (how we also view animals, ...) [Freud?]
- As an object (cf. surgeons cutting someone up) [Behaviourism]
- As an individual with a limited viewpoint, limited information: theory of mind. [Information / computational view]
- As an individual with a history of interacting with us: Advanced theory of mind.
[Cognitive, cultural, history-dependent.]

9

B. Neighbouring disciplines

Another angle is that it can be useful to look at neighbouring disciplines and review whether we should use them or some of their work. E.g.

- Sociology
- Anthropology
- Evolution theory (biology)
- Economics
- Physiology
- Neurology

10

C. What kinds of data must psychology explain? (1)

A third angle is to ask what kinds of data should be explained? I.e. before psychology began, what areas (and questions) would we expect it to explain?

(Just as for physics, we'd expect it to predict the weather, predict the properties of wood and stone, ...)

In particular, what types of data or observation?

From a prior, outside, view we might expect:

- A. Behaviour: What people do.
- B. Introspection: What people think, feel, are aware of.
- C. Physiology: What their bodies do, related to those.
- D. Functional: what any organism must do
- E. Social: requires analysing a group, not an individual

11

What kinds of data (2)

What types of data or observation?

- A. Behaviour (non-verbal).
What the person does as a whole.
External observation of the whole person.
- B. "Verbal reports":
What people think, feel, are aware of.
Conscious thoughts, as observed through language
 - What people say
 - Introspection
 - Attitudes
- C. Physiological (and neurophysiological) observations.
Observing internal bodily events.

12

What kinds of data must psychology explain? (3)

Just because we want an explanation, doesn't mean one will ever exist. That's true of any topic: no guarantees in advance. ("Randomness" is a technical term for circumscribing things we think we can never predict.)

Perhaps humans can never understand humans (though a more intelligent species could): how could a mind use only part of its complexity to describe all of its complexity? Wouldn't that be a mental version of the Tardis?

There is no prior guarantee that one science must be able to unify the 3 kinds of data. One possibility is that there will end up being 3 sciences, each addressing only one kind. Behaviourism.

13

What kinds of data (4)

But nevertheless:

- Like Isaac Newton, we much prefer unified grand theories that link disparate things, and disparate types of data
- Pre-psychology commonsense expects us to link these things.
- Theories which don't, lack something we feel we want

If it's just behaviour then it's not psychology but ethology (animal behaviour)

If it's just feeling then it's literature, not science.

If it's just physiology then it's medicine, not psychology.

14

Critical thinking tip:

A lot of psychology can be criticised for ignoring or covering up shortfalls of this kind i.e. dealing only with one or two of these types of data, rather than scrupulously reporting and discussing all 3 types including which are lacking (so far) in "theories" of a given area. [*e.g. emotion*]

15