



STUDIA DOCTORALIA

PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE



UNIVERSITY OF
BUCHAREST
— VIRTUTE ET SAPIENTIA

EDITORIAL

A Bridge Across Time: 150 Years Since the Birth of Psychology as a Science

Dorina Nijloveanu

University of Bucharest

<https://doi.org/10.47040/sdpsych.v15i2.173>

The year 2024 marked the 150th anniversary of the founding of the first experimental psychology laboratory in Leipzig in 1879 by Wilhelm Wundt, widely recognized as the moment psychology emerged as a science. While 150 years ago, the names of the first "psychologists" were known among the elite scholars of the time, today the field of psychology boasts the highest employment growth rate compared to other occupations in the United States (Clay, 2014). In Romania, the number of certified practicing psychologists now exceeds 33,000. Despite the crisis Romanian psychology faced during the final decade of the communist regime, nearly 100 years after its inception in the country (Gruber, 1893), we now see unprecedented competition for admissions to psychology faculties. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, approximately 6–6.5% of students choose psychology as their major, making it the most popular discipline within the fields of science and engineering.

From the early years of empirical psychological research, numerous schools of thought have emerged, some of which continue to evolve, aimed at further expanding the dense core of this science. Zagaria and Lombardi (2024) argued that scientific psychology is a non-paradigmatic or pre-paradigmatic discipline, given the insularity of its subfields and the lack of collaboration between them. They also highlighted the independent model presented by non-English papers, which differs from other sources and may provide insights into what happens on the "periphery" of psychology. For instance, these papers indicate that psychoanalysis still makes a vibrant contribution.

In the early years of our activity, we were trying to agree on the object of study in psychology, which was described by different authors as: behavior (Watson), internal psychic life (Wundt), consciousness (Angell and Mead), the unconscious (Freud), instinctive animal behaviors (Lorenz), the evolution of the child's intelligent conduct (Piaget), the role of reactions and conditioned reflexes (Pavlov), operant behaviors (Skinner). In our attempt to locate the psyche at the level of the human brain, the branches and sub-branches of psychology have now become so diverse that they can no longer claim convergence in their approach.

A quarter of a century ago, analyzing the trend of psychology in those decades Robins et al., (1999) concluded that: a) research in psychoanalysis has been largely overlooked by mainstream scientific psychology in recent decades; b) behavioral psychology has diminished in prominence, making way for the rise of cognitive psychology in the 1970s; c) cognitive psychology has maintained a consistent upward trend and remains the most influential school of thought; d) neuroscience has experienced only a modest increase in visibility within mainstream psychology, even though its growth in broader contexts has been substantial. Neuroscience could be the most influential trend in psychology, in a context where trends exhibit less linearity than previously assumed, while cognitivism remains a prominent trend (Zagaria, & Lombardi, 2024).

This year, alarming public policies are impacting people's mental health, yet psychologists are responding by combating misinformation (Lin, & Chen, 2024; Roozenbeek &

Van der Linden, 2024) and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, despite growing backlash against racial equity efforts (APA, 2024; Forestieri et al., 2024). Emerging trends in research priorities include the high turnover rate among personnel (Zambrano-Chumo & Guevara, 2024), political attacks on academic freedom, and teachers burnout (An & Tao, 2024). At the same time, psychologists are focusing on digitalizing psychotherapy services (Wu et al., 2024) to play a significant role in supporting underserved communities and addressing employees' real needs by measuring meaning, sensitivity, security, purpose, and well-being in the workplace. Psychologists are also seeking solutions to combat substance use and addiction (Krentzman et al., 2024). A current direction in applied psychology is in the field of school psychology, driven by the increasing stress factors in schools, with a significant effort to train and employ more mental health professionals in educational settings. Furthermore, psychology is advancing brain health and the aging process by developing new interventions to help prevent, identify, and manage cognitive decline (APA, 2024; Furnham, 2024).

Psychologists collaborate with other professions to address major social issues. In recent years, research has increasingly focused on the mental health of children and adolescents, exploring the root causes of their difficulties and potential solutions. As a result, new investments are directed toward mental health applications for youth and platforms that integrate coaching with artificial intelligence. Psychologists remain at the forefront of suicide prevention (Bryan, 2021).

More psychologists are integrating big data techniques into their research and leveraging recent discoveries about the biological foundations of human behavior (Chen & Wojcik, 2016). These advancements help uncover new ways to improve people's lives in response to the growing demand for

psychological expertise. Psychologists are also extending their influence through social platforms, working to reduce social polarization, combating mental health stigma, and speaking out against gun violence to enhance public safety. Both companies and policymakers increasingly seek psychologists' expertise in finding solutions to mitigate climate change and adapt to a warming world (Jost et al., 2022). Psychologists also play crucial roles in areas such as nutritional health, sports psychology, non-pharmacological treatments for chronic pain, and defending vulnerable populations. Applied psychology is on the rise, contributing to a healthier society. The growing interest in addressing social factors undermining health has led to psychological interventions improving various aspects of life, from educational performance and traffic safety to designing user-friendly products. Businesses are particularly interested in psychologists' ability to transform workplaces and address the costs of unhealthy work environments (Shields, 2020).

Psychology is more popular than ever, partly due to its commitment to open science and the increasing representation of women in the psychological workforce. However, women, despite outnumbering men, remain underrepresented in top positions and face wage disparities (APA, 2017). Efforts are ongoing to encourage their representation in key leadership roles.

From a visionary perspective, psychologists are exploring how new technologies can streamline or amplify their efforts, leading initiatives to integrate behavioral insights into the creation and use of generative artificial intelligence tools. This demonstrates the diversity and complexity of contemporary psychology while underscoring the challenges of integrating the varied theories and methodologies developed over the years within the field.

REFERENCES

[12 emerging trends for 2023](#)

An, S., & Tao, S. (2024). English as a foreign language teachers' burnout: the predictor powers of self-efficacy and well being. *Acta Psychologica*, 245, 104226.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104226>

Bryan, C. J. (2021). *Rethinking suicide: Why prevention fails, and how we can do better*. Oxford University Press.

Chen, E. E., & Wojcik, S. P. (2016). A practical guide to big data research in psychology. *Psychological Methods*, 21(4), 458–474. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000111>

Forestieri, K. J., Barnett, J. E., Mantella, N. M., & Ellis, A. E. (2024). Psychology trainees' and professionals' perceived importance of and engagement in advocacy for marginalized groups. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 55(3), 197–208. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000543>

Furnham, A. (2024). *The New Psychology: The 50 newest concepts that are shaping how we live and work*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Jost, J. T., Baldassarri, D. S., & Druckman, J. N. (2022).

Cognitive–motivational mechanisms of political polarization in social-communicative contexts. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 1(10), 560–576.

Krentzman, A. R., Hoepfner, S. S., Hoepfner, B. B., & Barnett, N. P. (2024). A randomized feasibility study of a positive psychology journaling intervention to support recovery from substance-use disorders. *Journal of Substance Use and Addiction Treatment*, 209410.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.josat.2024.209410>

Lin, Y. S., & Chen, H. Y. (2024). Fighting Misinformation with Social Media Reporting: A Psychological Perspective. *Sensors & Materials*, 36. [10.18494/SAM4821](https://doi.org/10.18494/SAM4821)

Robins, R. W., Gosling, S. D., & Craik, K. H. (1999). An empirical analysis of trends in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 54(2), 117–128. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.2.117>

Roozenbeek, J., & Van der Linden, S. (2024). *The psychology of misinformation*. Cambridge University Press.

Shields, C. M. (2020). Leading to transform our

world. *Transformative leadership in action: Allyship, advocacy & activism*, 3-21.

Wu, J. Y., Tsai, Y. Y., Chen, Y. J., Hsiao, F. C., Hsu, C. H., Lin, Y. F., & Liao, L. D. (2024). Digital transformation of mental health therapy by integrating digitalized cognitive behavioral therapy and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. *Medical & Biological Engineering & Computing*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11517-024-03209-6>

Zagaria, A., & Lombardi, L. (2024). A new perspective on trends in Psychology. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 74, 101078.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2024.101078>

Zambrano-Chumo, L., & Guevara, R. (2024). Psychological capital and turnover intention: the mediating role of burnout among healthcare professionals. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21(2), 185.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph21020185>