

## HPW5Essay

What contribution has Titchener's structuralism made to psychology and what criticisms have been made of his work?

Titchener showed that psychology can be a valid experimental science. He clearly defined conscious experience using the methods of observation, experimentation, and measurement. He introduced introspection as a way to study consciousness. This method of self-observation and introspective reports involving cognitive processes continues to be used in many areas of psychology.

After Titchener's death his method of introspection was subjected to criticism by many scholars. James Gibson agreed that Titchener's research inspired many psychologists, but the original theory and the method of studying outlived itself. Immanuel Kant stated that introspection altered the conscious experience, because the settings of the experiment gave the subjects particular demand characteristics of the studied matter. Auguste Comte questioned the ability of a human mind to observe its' own activities. English physician Henry Maudsley brought the matter of the pathology of mind that could make self-reports unreliable, thus the introspection method could not be used in the research. Another attack point on Titchener's methodology involved the question of what the scientists had to be trained to do. To avoid stimulus error Titchener's followers were to avoid "meaning words", that would give the collection of sensations other than specific elementary forms of the subjects' experiences. The need of the special vocabulary for experience description could be theoretically closed by developing a specific introspective language but that never happened. Titchener's idea that in precisely similar and controlled experimental conditions, observers should receive the same descriptions of the experience was confronted by multiple cases of differences in the results even in the most rigidly controlled lab settings. The timeframe between the experience and the reporting it raised the concern about whether the introspection was really a form of retrospection. Sigmund Freud's idea of the unconscious mind excluded introspective method from the studies since if the part of individual's mental functioning is unconscious it's impossible to properly describe it.

Titchener's view of psychology was also subjected to criticism since he didn't include animal and child psychology into the definition. Thus Titchener's conception of the field was limited and restrictive to the new directions of studies that were being explored.