An Overview of the First Use of the Terms Cognition and Behavior

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Abstract: Use of the terms cognition and behavior and their variants can be traced back to the middle-ages. What is not widely known is how the terms were first used in the literature. This article identifies variations of terms for cognition and behavior and traces the first use of the terms using the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). A systematic search of the OED was conducted, identifying terms in the cognition and behavior families. Terms are defined and the year the term first appeared in the literature is identified. Terms are sorted and grouped chronologically by first appearance to determine their first use in the literature as noted in the OED. Results indicated more words are related to cognition than behavior. The first term related to cognition to appear was cogitation in circa 1225; while the first term related to behavior was port, which appeared circa 1330. Each family of terms experienced tremendous growth during the first appearance of terms. The cognition family saw 60% of its terms appear in the 17th and 19th centuries. The behavior family saw nearly 75% of its terms make their first appearance during the 15th through the 17th centuries.

Keywords: cognition; behavior; history; origin; appearance; literature; analysis

1. Introduction

Psychology as a disciplinary study has seen many approaches. Two of the most dominant approaches are cognitivism and behaviorism.
Behaviorism, championed by Watson and Skinner, focuses on observable physical and social environment and concentrates on observable and measurable behavioral-environment relationships [1]. Behaviorism advocates psychology should concern itself with observable behavior and not unobservable events occurring in the mind.

Cognitivism, or cognitive psychology, championed by Neisser, emerged as a reaction to behaviorism. Cognitive psychology studies human mental activities, particularly information acquisition, storage, and retrieval. Cognitive psychologists study such areas as thinking, memory, perception, problem solving, intelligence, reasoning, language, and creativity [2].

Much debate and research has occurred concerning how the term cognitive became associated with experimental psychology [3]. Green argued “cognition was a growing concern in philosophy, artificial intelligence, and linguistics long before it caught on in experimental psychology” [3]. Cognitivism influenced nearly all areas of psychology today, and merged with many other disciplines to form the larger discipline (or “interdiscipline”) of cognitive science, which includes elements of artificial intelligence, neuroscience, philosophy and others [3].

What of the words, themselves; when did the terms cognition and behavior first appear in the literature? Today, as cognitivist and behaviorist approaches dominate the study of psychology, there is a significant “sibling rivalry” between the two schools of thought. The importance of the words “cognitive” and “behavior” as both strong signifiers and polarizing factors suggests an exploration of the first use of these key terms might yield interesting results and provide a starting point for a better understanding of their possible evolution. It is possible to identify variant terms that share a common stem word with cognition and behavior and look at the date those terms first appeared in the literature to see what might be revealed about those word families. This research is not concerned with tracing the changes in meaning of terms over time. It is a conversation starter and a product of intellectual curiosity regarding the first appearances of words and determining if there are patterns in those first appearances. Others may wish to pursue how the meanings of these terms changed over time.

This research might be of interest to undergraduate psychology students, researchers of the history of psychology, and others interested in the first appearances of terms, such as etymologists, geographers, etc.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the author is an academic librarian, serving as psychology subject specialist with more than 20 years of experience in social sciences librarianship, and comes at this research from a different perspective than would a psychologist.

2. Method

2.1. Materials

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) traces a word’s history from written literature and is an accepted authority on the English language [4]. The OED has existed for more than 150 years, with work beginning on what would become the OED in 1857. The OED’s value is that it lists obsolete words, or words no longer used. Further, it provides dates words first appeared in written form and how they were originally used in the literature. The OED is an excellent resource for identifying words like cognition, behavior, and similar terms in written history.
While the OED tracks the earliest appearances of words, it does not and cannot tell the oral history of those words; that is, when those words were first coined or spoken. However, it does provide a starting point to investigate the history of the word’s early use.

There are different ways to search the OED. Oklahoma State University’s Library reference collection contains the second edition of the OED—which was published in 1989—and provides access to the OED Online.

As the OED is a British resource, all spellings and definitions for the terms are British.

2.2. Inclusion Criteria

To compare the cognition and behavior families of terms throughout history, a starting point for an analysis must be determined. It makes sense to look to the earliest root words for cognition and behavior and use those root words as a springboard to identify and list members of the family of terms.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) notes cognition traces its roots to the Latin cognit-, (“a getting to know, acquaintance, notion, knowledge, etc.”). Eric Partridge’s Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English notes cognition originates from the Latin cognōscere (“to know, to learn about”). Cognōscere is a compound of co- (“together”) and gnōscere, an early form of nōscere (“to know”) [5].

More etymology comes from the Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages, which notes the verb cogito/cogitare (“I know/to know”) is made from the prefix co- (“with” or “together”). Add to that the verb agitare (“to stir, drive, disturb, be occupied, aspire to”), which comes from ago/agree (“to drive” or “to move”) [6]. Basically, it means to shake things or put things together.

The root word for behavior is behave. The OED etymology notes that behave formed in the 15th century from the prefix be-; plus have, which means “in order to express a qualified sense of have, particularly in the reflexive ‘to have or bear oneself (in a specified way)’.”

As terms related to cognition trace back to the Latin cognōscere/cogitare, so does the word behave. The Latin counterpart to behave is com+portare, which can loosely translate to mean how you carry yourself. Com-, which means “ready, completely; with”, and portare, which means “to transport, carry” [7].

When considering terms based on cognition, behavior, and their variants, terms such as incognito, recognize, and misbehavior come to mind. Any search to identify terms in the cognition and behavior families should include variations that start with different Greek and Latin prefixes. The common Greek and Latin prefixes to be used to identify term variants includes the following: a-, an-, anti-, de-, dis-, em-, en-, fore-, i-, im-, in-, inter-, intra-, ir-, mid-, mis-, non-, over-, pre-, re-, semi-, sub-, super-, trans-, un-, and under-.

To be included in the cognition or behavior families of terms a systematic search of the OED will be employed to identify terms which contain cognition and behavior root words: cogit or cognit (cognition) and behave or comport (behavior). Further, term variants of the root words were identified by expanding the OED search to include common Greek and Latin prefixes that might precede either cogni, cogit, behave and comport.
2.3. Procedure

A systematic search of the OED was employed to identify cognition (cognōscere/cogito/cogitare), behavior (behave/comportare), and related terms (words spelled similarly or that sound the same). To identify term variants that start with different prefixes, a list of common Greek and Latin prefixes was searched in the OED.

To identify variants of the root words in the OED, a search strategy was employed to pair the prefix with the root word. For example, the OED was searched for acognit, ancognit, anticognit, and so on, working through the list of common Greek and Latin prefixes to identify variants.

After generating a list of terms in the “cognition family” and the “behavior family,” the OED Online was searched to provide definitions for each term and the year the term first appeared in the literature.

Definitions for the terms are provided to understand the context for the term’s first use. The OED lists terms that could be obsolete, old, or no longer being used, or used in the way they are today. Definitions are listed purely for context.

The year the word was first used in the literature is relevant to term-use history investigation. The behavior and cognition family word lists were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to facilitate organization and sorting. The terms identified for the cognition and behavior families were sorted by the year the term first appeared and categorized by century to track when the terms appeared. Calculations were performed on the groups to determine percent of terms appearing by century.

3. Results and Discussion

The research on the word cognition began by consulting the third volume of the OED, which contains cognition. After listing each term containing the stem words cognōscere and cogito/cogitare, further searching was conducted for variations with different Greek and Latin prefixes, resulting in an alphabetical listing. This listing is the cognition family of terms and it appears below.

| Cognitability | Incogitable | Precognizance |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Cogitable     | Incogitability | Precognizant |
| Cogitabund    | Incogitance  | Recogitate    |
| Cogitancy     | Incogitancy  | Recogitation  |
| Cogitandum    | Incogitant   | Recognition   |
| Cogitant      | Incogitantly | Recognitive   |
| Cogitate      | Incogitate   | Recognitor    |
| Cogitation    | Incogitative | Recognitory   |
| Cogitative    | Incognitive  | Recognizability |
| Cogitativity  | Incognita    | Recognizable  |
| Cogitatum     | Incognite    | Recognizably  |
| Cogito        | Incognito    | Recognizance  |
| Cognition     | Incognizability | Recognize  |
| Cognitional   | Incognizable | Recognized    |
| Cognitive     | Incognizance | Regognizee    |
There are 79 terms identified as the cognition family. After the list of cognition family terms was compiled, definitions from the *OED* and the date the term first appeared in the literature were added. The list of cognition family terms was sorted chronologically by the year the term first appeared to create a new list. This appears in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Cognition words defined and listed by date.

| Date of First Appearance | Term | Definition |
|--------------------------|------|------------|
| *Circa* 1225             | Cogitation | The action of thinking or reflecting; attentive consideration, reflection, meditation |
| 1325                     | Recognizance | A bond or obligation by which a person undertakes before a court or magistrate to perform some act or observe some condition |
| 1388–89                  | Recognize | Of a feudal superior: to resume possession of land |
| 1394                     | Cognizant (-isant) | To know, recognize |
| 1400                     | Cognizance (-sance) | Knowledge, understanding; also acquaintance |
| 1400–1                   | Recognosce | Of a feudal superior; to resume possession of (land) |
| 1436                     | Recognizer | One who enters into a recognizance |
| 1447                     | Cognition | The action or faculty of knowing; knowledge, consciousness; acquaintance with a subject |
| 1450                     | Recognition | Knowledge or consciousness; understanding |
| 1460                     | Recognitor | A member of a jury impanelled on an assize or inquest |
| 1477                     | Discognisance | Non-recognition |
| 1490                     | Cogitative | Having the power or faculty of thought; thinking (as a permanent attribute) |
| About 1500               | Precognition | Antecedent cognition or knowledge; (supposed) foreknowledge, esp. as a form of extrasensory perception |
| 1522                     | Incogitable | Unthinkable, inconceivable |
| 1529                     | Uncogitable | Obsolete word |
| 1531–32                  | Cognizee (-isee) | The party in whose favour a fine of land was levied; he to whom cognizance was made |
| Date of First Appearance | Term          | Definition                                                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1540                     | Miscognizant | Not cognizant, knowledgeable, or aware; ignorant of something; spec. ignorant of the law, or some aspect of it |
| 1569                     | Precogitate  | To cogitate, think, or think over beforehand; to consider beforehand, premeditate |
| 1586                     | Cognitive    | Of or pertaining to cognition, or the action or process of knowing; having the attribute of cognizing |
| 1591                     | Recogitation | The action or result of thinking over something again; an instance of this |
| 1592                     | Recognizee   | The person to whom another is bound in a recognizance                        |
| 1596                     | Precogitation| Previous consideration or meditation; thinking over beforehand; a prior reflection or idea |
| 1602                     | Recogitate   | To think over (something) again                                              |
| 1603                     | Miscognize   | To fail to appreciate or acknowledge                                         |
| 1608                     | Recognizer   | A person who (or occasionally a thing which) recognizes someone or something |
| 1609                     | Incognite    | Unknown                                                                     |
| 1611                     | Recognizion  | Acknowledgement                                                              |
| 1612                     | Incogitancy  | Want of thought or reflection; thoughtlessness, heedlessness, negligence; inadvertence |
| 1624                     | Praecognitum | A thing already known, especially a thing needed or assumed to be known in order to infer or ascertain something else |
| 1628                     | Incogitant   | Thoughtless, unthinking; characterized by want of thought; inconsiderate     |
| 1633                     | Cogitate     | To think, reflect, ponder, meditate; to exercise the thinking faculties       |
| 1637                     | Incogitance  | Want of thought                                                              |
| 1638                     | Incognito    | An unknown man; one who conceals his identity; an anonymous person           |
| About 1645               | Precogitancy | Prior consideration or thought                                               |
| 1648                     | Incogitantly | Unthinkingly, thoughtlessly, without consideration or reflection             |
| 1649                     | Cogitabund   | Musing, meditating, thoughtful, deep in thought                              |
| 1652                     | Incogitate   | Not thought of; unexpected; unpremeditated                                   |
| 1654                     | Precognit    | A preliminary discussion                                                    |
| 1659                     | Cognize (-ise) | To take cognizance               |
| 1659                     | Decognize    | To cease or fail to recognize                                                |
| 1671                     | Incognita    | A feminine version of incognito                                              |
| Date of First Appearance | Term              | Definition                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1678                    | Cognizable (-sable) | Capable of being known, perceived, or apprehended by the senses or intellect; perceptible                                                  |
| 1680                    | Cogitant          | Thinking, that thinks                                                                                                                     |
| 1682                    | Recognizable      | Able to be recognized or identified; that permits recognition                                                                           |
| 1688                    | Cogitability      | Capability of being thought or conceived                                                                                                 |
| 1688                    | Cogitable         | That can be thought or conceived; thinkable, conceivable                                                                                  |
| 1690                    | Incogitative      | Unthinking; destitute of the thinking faculty                                                                                              |
| 1691                    | Incognoscible     | Unknowable, beyond cognizance                                                                                                               |
| 1722                    | Cogitativity      | Capacity or power of thinking                                                                                                              |
| 1726                    | Precognizance     | Prior knowledge or understanding                                                                                                            |
| 1759                    |Cogitancy          | Cogitant or thinking quality                                                                                                                |
| 1790                    | Recognized        | Acknowledged, accepted; known, identified                                                                                                  |
| 1802                    | Recognitive       | Of, relating to, or involving recognition or acknowledgment; that recognizes                                                              |
| 1813                    | Recognitory       | Of, or relating to, recognition or acknowledgement                                                                                         |
| 1817                    | Cognizably        | In a cognizable manner; recognizably; perceptibly                                                                                           |
| 1821                    | Uncognoscible     |                                                                                                                                           |
| 1824                    | Incognoscibility  | The quality or condition of being incognoscible; unknowableness                                                                         |
| 1827                    | Cognitional       | Of or pertaining to cognition                                                                                                              |
| 1827                    | Uncognoscibility  |                                                                                                                                           |
| 1831                    | Recognizably      | To a recognizable degree, perceptibly; in a recognizable manner                                                                         |
| 1836                    | Recognizability   | The fact or quality of being recognizable                                                                                                 |
| 1837                    | Incognizant       | Not cognizant; without cognizance, knowledge, or apprehension of; unaware, unconscious of                                                  |
| 1840                    | Precognizant      | Having previous cognizance; having prior knowledge or understanding (of something)                                                        |
| 1852                    | Incognizable      | Not cognizable; incapable of being known, perceived, or apprehended by the senses or intellect; incapable of recognition                   |
| 1853                    | Incogitability    | The quality of being unthinkable; incapability of being thought                                                                          |
| 1854                    | Cogito            | The principle ‘cogito, ergo sum’, or any equivalent formula, by which Descartes claimed to establish his own existence as a thinking being from the fact of his thinking or awareness; loosely, conscious awareness or subjectivity |
| 1856                    | Incognizance      | Want of knowledge or recognition                                                                                                           |
| 1860                    | Incognizability   | The quality of being incognizable                                                                                                          |
| 1860                    | Uncognisant       |                                                                                                                                           |
Table 1. Cont.

| Date of First Appearance | Term       | Definition                                                                 |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1862                     | Incognitive| Destitute of the faculty for cognition; unable to take cognizance            |
| 1866                     | Cogitandum | That which should be thought; the ideal or correct processes of thought, as opposed to the actual processes |
| 1875                     | Cognitum   | An object of cognition                                                      |
| 1877                     | Uncognized | That which is thought; the actual processes of thought, as opposed to the ideal thought-processes |
| 1878                     | Cogitatum  | That which is thought; the actual processes of thought, as opposed to the ideal thought-processes |
| 1880                     | Cognitively| In a cognitive manner; with regard to, or from the point of view of, cognition |
| 1880                     | Cognitor   | An attorney or procurator                                                  |
| 1952                     | Cognitivist| One who holds that moral judgments are true or false statements about moral facts |
| 1954                     | Precog     | A person who predicts something; a person with precognition                |

The earliest appearance of a term from the cognition family is *circa* 1225 with the word *cogitation*. The next two terms on the list, *recognizance* and *recognize* have more to do with feudal society than thinking. The *OED* defines terms as they were originally used in the literature. Having identified, defined, and sorted a list of terms in the cognition family, attention was turned to the behavior family. For purposes of accurate comparison to cognition, this search looked at terms like *behave* and *comport*. The terms identified as a part of the behavior family are listed below.

| Behave         | Comportance | Deportee          |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Behaved        | Comportation| Deportment        |
| Behaving       | Comportioneer| Deporture        |
| Behaviour      | Comportment | Incomportable    |
| Behavioural    | Deport      | Interbehaviour   |
| Behavioured    | Deportable  | Misbehave        |
| Behaviourism   | Deportate   | Misbehaved       |
| Comport        | Deportation | Misbehaviour     |
| Comportable    | Deportator  | Port             |

The behavior family contains 27 terms, far fewer than terms in the cognition family. Again, the *OED* was consulted for definitions and the year the terms first appeared in the literature. This listing appears in Table 2.

The first term in the behavior family to appear in the literature chronologically was *port*, which appeared *circa* 1330, not long after the first term in the cognition family first appeared.

Both chronological lists of terms were sorted by date and grouped into categories by century. Calculations were performed to determine by century the percent of terms appearing for the first time. This is featured in Table 3.
**Table 2.** Behavior words, defined and listed chronologically.

| Date of First Appearance | Word          | Definition                                                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Circa 1330               | Port          | Bearing, deportment, or carriage, esp. dignified or stately bearing; demeanour or manner |
| Circa 1440               | Behave        | To bear, comport, or conduct oneself; to act                                |
| 1474                     | Deport        | Behavior, bearing, deportment                                              |
| 1475                     | Misbehave     | To behave badly or wrongly; to conduct oneself improperly                    |
| 1482                     | Behaving      | Conduct, behaviour                                                          |
| 1486                     | Misbehaviour  | Bad behavior, improper conduct                                              |
| 1490                     | Behaviour     | Manner of conducting oneself in the external relations of life; demeanor, deportment, bearing, manners |
| 1588                     | Comport       | To bear, endure; to tolerate                                                |
| 1589                     | Behavioured   | Conducted, mannered, behaved                                               |
| 1590                     | Comportance   | Carriage, bearing, behaviour, manner of conducting oneself                 |
| 1595                     | Deportation   | The action of carrying over; forcible removable, especially into exile     |
| 1597                     | Misbehaved    | Badly behaved                                                              |
| 1599                     | Comportable   | Capable of being borne or endured; tolerable, bearable                     |
| 1599                     | Deportate     | To carry or convey away                                                     |
| 1601                     | Department    | Manner of conducting oneself; conduct (of life); behavior                 |
| 1604                     | Behaved       | Conducted, mannered                                                        |
| 1605                     | Comportment   | Personal bearing, carriage, demeanor, deportment; behaviour, outward conduct, course of action |
| 1609                     | Comportioner  | One of a number who share together                                          |
| 1611                     | Departure     | Carriage, bearing, deportation                                              |
| 1616                     | Deportator    | One who deports or transports                                               |
| 1633                     | Comportation  | The action of bringing together or collecting                               |
| About 1734               | Incomportable | Not to be borne, intolerable, insupportable                               |
| 1891                     | Deportable    | Liable to, or punishable by, deportation                                  |
| 1895                     | Deportee      | One who is or has been deported                                             |
| 1913                     | Behaviourism  | A theory and method of psychological investigation based on the study and analysis of behaviour |
| About 1927               | Behavioural   | Concerned with, or forming part of, behaviour                              |
| 1939                     | Interbehaviour|                                                                              |

**Table 3.** Cognition and Behavior terms categorized by century of first literary appearance.

| Century | Cognition Words that Make Their First Appearance | Behavior Words that Make Their First Appearance |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|         | n       | %       | n       | %       |
| 13th    | 1       | 1.26    | 0       | 0       |
| 14th    | 3       | 3.79    | 1       | 3.70    |
| 15th    | 8       | 10.12   | 6       | 22.22   |
| 16th    | 10      | 12.65   | 7       | 25.92   |
| 17th    | 26      | 32.91   | 7       | 25.92   |
| 18th    | 5       | 6.32    | 1       | 3.70    |
| 19th    | 24      | 30.37   | 2       | 7.40    |
| 20th    | 2       | 2.53    | 3       | 11.11   |
The research results found in Table 3 are interesting on a couple of levels.

First, it revealed some centuries are characterized by tremendous numbers in terms of the initial appearances of terms, starting in the 15th century. Seventy-nine terms are part of the cognition family, versus 27 terms in the behavior family. In terms of a breakdown within each family of terms, the Latin stem word cognōscere spawned 53 terms, while the stem word cogito/cogitare spawned 26 terms. In the behavior family, the stem word behave spawned 11 terms, while the stem word comportare spawned 16 terms. Why there are so many words in the cognition family as opposed to the behavior family is an area for other researchers to investigate.

Second, the cognition family saw 62.91% of the terms make their initial appearance in the literature in just two centuries—the 17th and the 19th centuries. On the other hand, during three consecutive centuries, the 15th through the 17th centuries, the behavior family saw nearly 75% of its terms appear in the literature.

Why do these centuries account for such a large percentage of these term’s first appearances? An initial explanation is that there were more texts available for inclusion in the OED. The OED can only include existing texts available for analysis. Johannes Gutenberg invented the first moveable type printing press in the 1440s, during the fifteenth century [8]. Prior to Gutenberg’s printing press, books were copied by hand, a far more laborious and expensive process, which made texts less likely to survive and consequently harder to find. Gutenberg’s invention enabled mass, quick, and cheap book production, which meant more books available for analysis in the OED. Thus it is no surprise that more words appear for the first time in the literature starting in the 15th century.

The 17th century was the advent of the Age of Enlightenment or simply the Enlightenment, also the Age of Reason. The Enlightenment started in Europe and eventually spread to the United States. It started generally in the last decade of the seventeenth century and lasted as late as the French Revolution, circa 1800. The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement which sparked a curiosity about mankind and the world and more attention to learning and knowing [9]. During the 19th century, psychology became a unique scientific discipline separate from its philosophical roots. John G. Benjafield, in his book Psychology: A Concise History traces the history and development of psychology and notes that in the nineteenth century, through the work of influential scholars Fechner, Galton, and others, psychology developed into a truly scientific discipline [10]. It is possible terms for cognition occurred during this century to support establishing psychology as a discipline. It is into this environment the cognition and behavior families of terms perhaps appeared.

4. Conclusions

From the data compiled, more terms pertain to cognition than to behavior. Cognition terms trace their first appearance back to as early as circa 1225, when cogitation appeared for the first time in the literature. Meanwhile, the behavior family saw its first term, port, appear about a century after cogitation. Further, each family of terms experienced tremendous growth in the initial appearances of terms. The cognition family saw more than 60% of its words appear in two centuries—the 17th and the 19th centuries. The behavior family saw nearly 75% of its words appear in the literature for the first time in the 15th through the 17th centuries.
Because this research is intended as an opening for a dialog, it does not include answers to why these terms appeared when they did, or why the terms evolved over time, although that is something other researchers may wish to investigate. The next phase in this investigation might be to trace how the meanings of these terms have changed over time in the field of psychology.

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