

The Navigational Mind Framework and the Fundamentals of Psychology

A Structural Comparison

Prepared for Dr. Olutoyese Oyelese

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What this document is

This is a comparison of two vocabularies, not a verdict on either.

It sets the Navigational Mind Framework beside what academic psychology currently states its own fundamentals to be, and reports where they converge, where they diverge, what each can and cannot say about the other, and what would have to happen for the question between them to move.

It is not an evaluation of NMF. No test has been run. It is not a survey of psychology, which is far larger than the portion touched here. It does not conclude that either is right.

Two constraints were held throughout. First, NMF is treated as a discipline with its own object, method and standard of success, rather than as a candidate for admission to psychology's. Second, coherence is not evidence — a rule taken from NMF itself and applied to NMF hardest of all, since a complete and internally consistent system generates wrong results with great fluency if a premise is wrong.

Sources are the thirteen framework documents in full, and the peer-reviewed and institutional literature listed at the end.

1. What psychology says its fundamentals are

Psychology answers the question "what are your fundamentals" in three different registers, and the three do not fully agree with each other.

The official content answer

The American Psychological Association's Common Core Working Group produced a five-pillar model now governing both the introductory course and the national high-school standards. The pillars are **Biological, Cognitive, Development, Social and Personality, and Mental and Physical Health**.

Methods are deliberately not a pillar. They sit underneath all five: each pillar rests on the same foundation of research methods and scientific principles, and the high-school standards instruct that scientific inquiry be taught throughout the course rather than as a single unit.

Above the pillars sit seven integrative themes, adopted by the APA Council of Representatives in October 2021:

1. Psychological science relies on empirical evidence and adapts as new data develop
2. Psychology explains general principles governing behaviour while recognising individual differences
3. Psychological, biological, social and cultural factors influence behaviour and mental processes
4. Our perceptions and biases filter our experience of the world through an imperfect personal lens
5. Applying psychological principles can change lives, organisations and communities in positive ways
6. Psychology values diversity, promotes equity and fosters inclusion
7. Ethical principles guide psychology research and practice

The methodological answer

Empirical study of mind and behaviour, with claims warranted by correspondence to data. This is the load-bearing commitment and the one that distinguishes psychology from its philosophical antecedents.

The contested answer

The third register is the field's account of its own foundations, and it is not settled.

Replication. The Reproducibility Project attempted 100 studies from three psychology journals with high-powered designs. Ninety-seven percent of originals reported statistically significant results; 36 percent of replications did. Replication effects were half the magnitude of originals. Depending on the criterion used, overall replication rates ranged between 36 and 68 percent.

Theory. Eronen and Bringmann argue the deeper problem is not statistical. Meehl's 1978 claim that psychological theories come and go without cumulative progress, they hold, still stands. They give three reasons good theory is so hard to build: a relative lack of robust phenomena constraining possible theories, problems of construct validity, and obstacles to establishing causal relations between psychological variables.

Form. Most psychological theories are verbal — expressed in natural language with its imprecision — which makes precise, falsifiable prediction difficult. A related critique holds that the term "model" has caused considerable obfuscation through the conflation of statistical models with theoretical ones.

Foundations. A 2025 paper pushes further: the root causes are not questionable research *practices* but questionable research *fundamentals* — theories, concepts and methods including psychometrics, resting on insufficiently elaborated philosophies of science.

Sample base. Broad claims about human psychology are routinely published from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic samples, on the usually implicit assumption that population variation is small. Review of the comparative database found substantial variability across populations and that WEIRD subjects are frequent outliers.

Taken together: a discipline with five well-defined content areas, a strong methodological foundation, and no unifying theory — a state its own literature describes and is actively working on.

2. What NMF is

Three integrated layers, resting on one axiom.

The axiom (the Null Hypothesis). What one does not know will always exceed what one knows. Uncertainty is infinite; certainty is finite and earned. Certainty is therefore not the starting point of thought but the byproduct of navigating uncertainty. The mind is not a calculator seeking a guaranteed answer but a compass supplying orientation.

Layer one: the Sphere of Ordered Experience. The phenomenological account. Consciousness cannot be treated as an empirical hypothesis because falsification is itself carried out within consciousness — the Toye Clarification, explicitly framed as a sharpening of Descartes, Kant and Husserl rather than a discovery. The object of theory therefore shifts from whether experience exists to how it is assembled.

Revision 1 (2026) substantially reworks this layer. Its commitments: the structure is movement, not architecture — what appears solid is a rate of change slow enough to be read as a thing. Retention is a graded rate, rapid at the periphery and slow at the centre. Separation between subjects *is* retention, not enclosure. Signals are genuinely transmitted; meaning is not, because it was never in the signal. What subjects do with one another is comparative reality analysis — running returning signals against one's own construction, terminating in *nothing so far is incompatible*, never in confirmation.

Layer two: the Inner House and the Residents. The psychological architecture. The mind as a multi-layered dwelling — Basement, Ground Floor, Upper Floor, Back Room, Attic, Hallway — inhabited by seven Residents: Trust, Autonomy, Initiative, Industry, Identity, Intimacy, Generativity. Each carries a core question and, critically, a named failure mode if absent. Without Trust, navigation collapses into chronic defence. Without Autonomy, direction exists but is not owned. Without Initiative, navigation freezes at intention. And so on. The taxonomy is constrained by functional necessity, not assembled by observation.

Leadership among Residents is rotational, situational and unstable. Identity is an outcome of which Resident leads, not a fixed core self. The narrating "I" is the Archivist, assembling a post-hoc story explaining what the plural mind already did. Friction between Residents is the operating system, not a flaw.

Above this sit Direction (Orientation, Vector, Slope), Articulation (Emotional, Structural, Directional), Anchors and Rules; and operationally the Process Method (Next True Step, Containment Window, Review Moment), the Navigation Loop (Sense → Interpret → Act → Reflect → Update → Orient), and Collapse & Rebuild (Stabilisation, Soft Articulation, Direction Recovery, Process Resumption).

Layer three: the Binary Outcome Framework. The arbitration discipline. Formally $A^* = \arg \max_A [P(D|A) - (P(U_r|A) + w \cdot P(U_{ir}|A))]$, $w > 1$.

BOF is explicitly **not** a theory of optimal choice. It is a discipline against confabulation under uncertainty. Its functions are forcing explicit valuation, preventing narrative substitution, constraining indecision, and reducing paralysis. The irreversibility weight exists because permanent harm terminates navigability — structural survival precedes directional aspiration. This is ethics as architecture rather than as sentiment.

3. Convergence

Perception and awareness

The cleanest point of contact, and the one place NMF rests directly on psychology's evidence. Revision 1 separates perception from awareness and grounds the separation in blindsight, subliminal priming and inattentional blindness — all standard findings in the cognitive pillar. Perception runs whether or not meaning is constructed. This is not a philosophical posit here; it is the ordinary reading of that literature.

Ordering and bias

APA's fourth integrative theme holds that perceptions and biases filter experience through an imperfect personal lens. NMF states this more strongly: value is not a feature of signals but an operation applied during ordering — nothing has value, valuing happens. Psychology treats bias as distortion of an accessible world; NMF treats ordering as constitutive. Same territory, greater depth of claim.

Universality with variation

APA's second theme pairs general principles with individual differences, and discharges the pairing largely through variance decomposition. NMF's answer is structurally different and unusually clean: the Residents are universal *as functional necessities*, while their expression, valuation and sequencing vary by culture. Universality at the level of function; variability at the level of content. This is a response to the nomothetic/idiographic problem rather than a restatement of it.

Personality and the person–situation debate

"Identity is an outcome, not a core self," with leadership rotating by activation, reads as opposed to trait psychology. It is not. It converges with the person–situation literature and with density-distribution accounts in which traits are distributions of momentary states rather than fixed points. NMF has not claimed this convergence; it is available.

Psychopathology and network models

Collapse as a protective structural event, and Residents-in-friction with specified failure modes, has family resemblance to network models of mental disorder. Notably, the authors advancing those models are among those diagnosing the theory crisis. NMF sits unambiguously on the theoretical-model side of the statistical/theoretical distinction, and says so.

Trauma treatment sequencing

The standard phase-based sequence in trauma treatment — stabilisation and safety, then processing, then reconnection — closely parallels NMF's Rebuild: Stabilisation, Soft Articulation, Direction Recovery, Process Resumption. Arrived at independently, from clinical observation on one side and clinical trial on the other.

4. Divergence

The criterion of success

This is the load-bearing divergence; the others follow from it.

Psychology's pillars rest on a foundation of methods for drawing conclusions about behaviour — that is, on correspondence to data. Revision 1 explicitly declines to compete on correspondence, on the ground that no description of this kind can, since description is itself an ordering operation and what is described is prior to ordering. It substitutes usability: whether thinking in these terms works better than thinking in others.

Two things follow. Psychology cannot adopt that criterion without dissolving itself. And NMF's founding move is unavailable for empirical assessment by construction — though this restriction is narrower than it appears, applying to the enabling condition rather than to the framework's structural content, which Revision 1 states is investigable.

Mind, not brain

The biological pillar is first in the model and first in funding. Revision 1 states that the model describes the mind, not the brain, makes no claim about neural implementation, and concedes honestly that this sits uneasily with the first version's claimed neutrality. The narrower claim made is that the vocabulary is not translatable into neural terms without remainder.

This is the largest practical obstacle to adoption, and it is one NMF has chosen rather than failed to clear.

The unit of analysis

Psychology's working unit is the measured construct. NMF's is the functional role defined by what breaks in its absence. Since construct validity is one of the three named reasons psychological theory is hard to build, this could count as an answer — but NMF's response is to deny that its terms are constructs at all. They are aspects, not parts; no property of a diagram is a property of the model. Whether this dissolves the validity problem or exits the arena is the contested question, and it resolves in NMF's favour only if the usability criterion is granted.

Form of theory

NMF is a verbal theory almost in its entirety. BOF is the only formalised component, and BOF's own documentation states it does not claim probabilistic precision. NMF therefore sits squarely inside the condition psychology has identified as its central theoretical problem. It does not pretend otherwise, which is more than can be said for much of the field.

Sampling

NMF's claim that the Residents reflect capacities observed across cultures is an assertion without cross-cultural data. Its observational base is one clinician's: narrower in N than any psychology study, wider in cultural range than most. Neither of those cancels the other.

5. A Roof and No Building: NMF and Psychology's Integration Problem

The comparison is asymmetric in a way that resists clean resolution, and the asymmetry is the most interesting thing in this report.

Psychology has five pillars, a methodological foundation, seven integrative themes — and no integrating theory. The pillar model is explicitly a parsimony device for organising content across contexts, not a theory. The themes are described as unifying concepts, but they are commitments and values rather than an architecture. The absence at the top is what the theory-crisis literature is about.

NMF offers precisely what is missing: one architecture spanning cognitive, developmental and social/personality, with the phenomenological layer beneath and the decision layer above. It supplies the thing psychology says it lacks.

And it is denominated in a currency psychology cannot spend.

That is the whole difficulty in one sentence. Neither side's standards can adjudicate the other's. Psychology cannot assess NMF's founding move without abandoning correspondence; NMF cannot be assessed on usability by a field that has no established measure of it. This is not a stalemate that argument breaks. It is two ordering systems producing incompatible constructions from the same signals — which is, with some irony, exactly what NMF predicts of any such encounter.

The temptation on the NMF side is to read psychology's crisis as a licence: an incoherent field, therefore a coherent framework wins. This should be resisted, on NMF's own rules and on the facts.

On the facts: psychology's indictments are self-generated. Meehl, the Open Science Collaboration, Eronen and Bringmann, Fried, Henrich — all psychologists, publishing in psychology journals, about psychology. A field that funds and publishes a study showing most of its findings do not replicate, and then reforms in response, is demonstrating the demarcation working rather than failing. Further, NMF is not independent of that base: its cleanest empirical footing, the perception/awareness separation, rests entirely on findings produced by the methods in question.

On the rules: psychology's incoherence is largely residue from contact with data — theories fragmented because findings kept breaking them. NMF's coherence is currently the property of a system that has not been broken by anything, because it has not been tested. Comparing them on coherence compares a design to a building site. The design is always tidier. That is not evidence of superiority; it is evidence that it has not been built yet.

The roof exists. The building it would sit on is a different building. That is the honest statement of the position.

6. What NMF derives that is not re-description

An organising scheme reorganises existing content. A system derives results its author did not put in. NMF does the latter, and the distinction matters because it determines what could be tested.

Candidate phenomena, none currently indexed in the psychological literature:

Repetition over insight. Nothing can be installed at the centre. Change is only ever constructed at the periphery, where retention is rapid, and reaches depth only through repetition over time. Prediction: interventions producing rapid apparent change without repetition will not hold. This cuts against a substantial amount of clinical practice and is testable with existing designs. It also formalises the ordinary clinical observation that patients told to think about it differently find the instruction useless.

Being steadied is not being understood. Ordering stability varies with who one is with — structurally, not as a function of how agreeable the company is. And the subject who steadies one's ordering and the subject whose signals one orders compatibly need not be the same person, with no way from within to distinguish them; both are reported from the interior as feeling met. The therapeutic alliance is the most robust common factor in psychotherapy outcome research and has never had a satisfying mechanism. This proposes one — and immediately complicates outcome measurement by self-report, which is the framework raising a problem against itself.

Alignment is the improbable event. Because meaning is never transmitted, alignment requires two independent orderings to construct compatible meanings from signals carrying none. Misunderstanding is therefore the baseline and alignment the exception, inverting the ordinary assumption. Comparative reality analysis never terminates in confirmation, only in *nothing so far is incompatible*.

One cannot want what lies in antevalence. Wanting requires structure; antevalence is by definition unstructured. Every genuinely new direction therefore arrives from a region the subject was not facing and could not have faced — not for want of insight, but because the thing was not yet a thing. Deliberate self-transformation is thus partly impossible in principle. This is derived, not imported, and it has consequences for any intervention premised on goal-setting.

Collapse reveals three specific things, in order: actual capacity, the broken rule, the ignored resident. This is a diagnostic procedure rather than a label, and it is transdiagnostic in a way congenial to where hierarchical-taxonomy and network work is already heading.

An offshoot worth noting as a worked example. The *Mindlessness* method specifies future-tense articulation ("I will...") on the reasoning that the mind fact-checks present-tense claims and rejects them. The best-known evidence against affirmations — Wood, Perunovic and Lee — used a present-tense factual statement ("I'm a lovable person") and found it made low-self-esteem participants feel worse, concluding that positive self-statements may backfire for the very people who most need them. The evidence against affirmations is evidence against precisely the form NMF's offshoot rules out. This is the clearest instance in the corpus of a derived NMF claim meeting existing data on psychology's terms.

7. What adoption would change, and what it would cost

The explanandum inverts. Psychology overwhelmingly studies change. NMF holds that change is free and persistence is the puzzle. Adopted, this reverses the burden across large literatures: trait stability stops being the neutral backdrop against which effects are measured and becomes the thing requiring explanation, as a rate of retention.

Methods move toward the intensive and idiographic. If leadership is rotational and situational and retention is a rate, between-subjects cross-sectional designs average across the phenomenon. NMF pushes toward experience sampling, single-case time series and dynamic modelling. Psychology is already drifting this way, so NMF would accelerate a live movement rather than start one — which improves its adoption odds materially.

Measurement takes a foundational hit. If meaning is never transmitted and comparative reality analysis never terminates in confirmation, every self-report instrument is signals compared against the researcher's ordering. This lands directly on the questionable-research-fundamentals critique and would give it a positive account rather than only a negative one. It would not say what to do instead.

Teaching gains a roof. The pillar model organises; NMF would integrate.

The costs:

The biological pillar is left unconnected, by choice.

Operationalisation may be self-defeating. To generate data, psychology must measure retention rate, ordering stability, Resident activation. The moment it does, it makes constructs of them — and NMF holds they are aspects, not parts. The act of adapting NMF into psychology's apparatus may destroy the specific thing NMF is careful about. This, rather than falsifiability, is the real crux, and no resolution is available from inside either framework.

No new robust phenomena in the technical sense. NMF proposes candidate regularities, listed above, but none is yet established. Lack of robust phenomena constraining theory is one of the three named difficulties, and NMF does not relieve it.

8. Likely reception, stated as inference

Psychology has absorbed integrating frameworks before without letting them integrate. Psychodynamic, behaviourist, humanistic, cognitive, evolutionary, sociocultural — all are taught as *perspectives*, lenses that coexist, precisely because none displaced the others. The pillar model is itself designed to hold plural perspectives rather than adjudicate between them.

The base rate therefore suggests NMF would be received as an additional perspective rather than as a roof: cited where useful, taught alongside the others, its clinical and retention claims tested piecemeal and detached from the architecture that generated them. That is a real form of impact, and not a dismissive one. It is also not what an integrating framework is for.

What would move it beyond that, on psychology's terms rather than NMF's, are the repetition-versus-insight prediction and the alliance-as-stability claim. Both are non-obvious, both cut against current practice, and both are stated in testable form. If either survived a well-designed test, the architecture behind it would be considerably harder to file under "perspectives."

Two presentational risks are worth naming, because they are the failure modes most likely to cost the framework a hearing:

Declaring psychology a masquerade converts a testable proposal into a territorial claim, and gives the field grounds for dismissal that have nothing to do with whether NMF is right. The framework does not need the comparison.

And the corpus should be read for how it will be constructed by a reader who is not in the room. Registers differ sharply across the thirteen documents — the general-reader book, the philosophical papers, the teaching modules — and terms including *articulation* carry different emphases across them. Since meaning is not in the signal, the burden of alignment falls on repetition and on framing, not on the terms being correct.

9. Open items

1. **Usability is the stated criterion and is unspecified.** What would count as thinking in these terms working better, and who would establish it. This is the single largest gap, because the framework's declared test currently has no procedure.
2. **The operationalisation paradox.** Whether NMF's terms can be measured without becoming the kind of thing NMF says they are not.
3. **Cross-cultural status of the Residents.** Asserted, not demonstrated.
4. **BOF's weight, w .** Whether it is fixed or context-sensitive — identity-level versus financial versus relational irreversibility — is raised in the source documents and left open.
5. **Which derived claim to test first.** On grounds of feasibility, non-obviousness and cost of being wrong, repetition-versus-insight is the candidate.

10. Method note and limitations

This document was produced by reading the thirteen framework documents in full (169 pages, approximately 312,000 characters) and by retrieving the psychology literature cited below rather than working from recall.

Limitations that bear on how much weight it can carry:

No test was run and no data were analysed. All comparative claims are structural.

The psychology retrieved is partial: APA institutional sources, the replication and theory-crisis literatures, the WEIRD critique, and trauma-treatment guidelines. Not retrieved: the primary literature on theoretical perspectives, the history of the discipline, non-APA institutional definitions, and most of clinical practice.

The comparison is between one framework and one discipline, which are not the same kind of object. Coherence is a property a single framework can have; disciplines do not have it and largely should not. Where the report compares NMF to psychology's *ambition* to integrate, the comparison is fair. Where it approaches comparing NMF to psychology as a whole, it is not, and readers should discount accordingly.

Finally, and in the framework's own terms: this report is one ordering of the material, produced by a reader who cannot inspect his own ordering, and it is wrong in the specific way all such descriptions are wrong.

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Framework sources

Oyelese, O. *Navigational Mind* (56 pp.); *The Navigational Mind Framework: A Unified Model of Consciousness, Mind, and Decision* (Dec 2025); *The Sphere of Ordered Experience* (v1) and *Revision 1*; *Binary Outcome Framework*; and the modules on Direction, Articulation, Anchors, Rules, The Mind Enclosure & Seven Residents, The Engine–Process Method, The Navigation Loop, and Collapse & Rebuild. Plus *Mindlessness: The Power of Articulations*.