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EDITOR'S PREFACE

What is there to say about a book of more than half a million words, containing 60-something separate contributions by 70-something authors from more than half a dozen different countries? Those who have qualms about all multi-authored books because of their inevitable non-uniformity of style and lack of narrative unity should note that I have just described the best-selling and arguably the most deeply respected book ever published — a book that has already been translated into over 300 languages. I was referring, of course, to the Bible, which the *Companion Encyclopedia of Psychology* resembles in at least one other respect: the arrangement of its contents is to a large extent arbitrary, which means that no one (apart from the editor) is expected to read it from beginning to end; any section or chapter may safely be browsed. In the case of the *Companion Encyclopedia of Psychology*, however, I recommend readers who are new to the subject to read my introductory chapter 1.1 before tackling any of the others.

Psychology is a uniquely diverse discipline, ranging from biological aspects of behaviour on the one hand to social psychology on the other, and from basic research to the applied professions of clinical, counselling, educational (school), industrial (occupational), organizational, and forensic (criminological) psychology. The sheer quantity of information in psychological journals has been increasing exponentially since the 1960s and far exceeds any individual's capacity to absorb it. But over the same period, a number of fundamental problems have been solved, and theoretical consolidation is evident in several branches of the discipline. The time could hardly be more propitious for an introductory survey of psychology and its associated professions, broader in scope and deeper in penetration than any previous survey, written by leading authorities in plain language but without condescension or over-simplification.

The *Companion Encyclopedia of Psychology* seeks to provide just such an authoritative, in-depth reference work covering all major branches of psychological research and professional practice. It is aimed at a thoughtful but not necessarily specialist readership, including seriously interested members of the general reading public as well as students and teachers of psychology.
and a wide range of other subjects with psychology components, including medicine, nursing, sociology, social work, and education.

The contents of the encyclopedia are arranged thematically (rather than alphabetically) into thirteen sections, corresponding to the topics that appear most often as discrete modules in contemporary psychology courses. The section headings and the topics within them were not chosen arbitrarily but were distilled from a preliminary survey of undergraduate course outlines obtained from a number of departments of psychology in the United States and Britain and the contents pages of the leading introductory texts.

Every section (apart from the first) begins with a brief introduction designed to orient the reader, to outline the contents of the section, to point out useful cross-references to other chapters and sections of the encyclopedia, and occasionally to explain important technical terms and concepts that crop up in the chapters that follow. The introduction to each section is followed by five or six self-contained chapters, and there are suggestions for further reading and up to fifty references at the end of each chapter. Every topic is covered by a full-length chapter written by an acknowledged authority who is an active researcher or practitioner in the relevant field; the list of contributors includes a remarkable number of the world's most eminent psychologists. The book contains numerous illustrations, a full and detailed index, and a glossary of technical terms.

I am grateful to Jonathan Price, formerly of Routledge, for his support and sensible advice on numerous points, to Kathleen Harman, for several helpful suggestions, to Kathy Smith, for practical assistance, to Briony Pulford, for help with the glossary, to Christine Firth, for her remarkably thoughtful copy-editing, and above all to my seventy-five contributors, scattered across three continents, for the spectacular quality of their contributions.

ANDREW M. COLMAN
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN ANNETT is Professor of Psychology at Warwick University. He took his doctorate at Oxford in 1959, has taught at the Universities of Sheffield, Aberdeen and Hull and was Professor of Psychology at the Open University. His current research interest is in motor imagery and other 'cognitive' aspects of motor skills. He is chairman of the Motor Skills Research Exchange and Psychology Editor of the Journal of Sport Sciences. Among his publications are *Feedback and Human Behaviour* (1969) and *Training in Transferable Skills* (1989).


ALAN BADDELEY is Director of the Medical Research Council Applied Psychology Unit in Cambridge, and Professor of Cognitive Psychology at Cambridge University. He previously taught at the universities of Sussex and Stirling, and has been president of the Experimental Psychology Society and the European Society for Cognitive Psychology. His books include *The Psychology of Memory* (1976), *Your Memory: A User's Guide* (1982), *Working Memory* (1986), and *Human Memory: Theory and Practice* (1990).

DONALD M. BAER is the Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of Human Development and Family Life, and of Psychology, at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. He took his doctorate at the University of Chicago in 1957, and taught at the University of Washington in Seattle before beginning his current employment with the University of Kansas in 1965. He has also taught briefly at universities in Canada, Australia, Japan, and Brazil. He has published many articles on behaviour analysis and its application, especially
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

to problems of children, and on its use as a theoretical framework for the study of child development. He has served as president of the international Association for Behavior Analysis. His most persistent research and conceptual target has been the problem of securing appropriately generalized results from clinical interventions into behaviour problems.

JOHN BANCROFT qualified in medicine from Cambridge University and St George's Hospital, London, and completed psychiatric training at the Maudsley Hospital, London. He was Clinical Reader in Psychiatry at Oxford University before joining the Medical Research Council Reproductive Biology Unit in Edinburgh in 1976. He has been involved in research into human sexuality and the clinical management of its problems for most of his career. His current research interest is the relationship between reproductive hormones and the well-being and sexuality of women. He is the author of *Human Sexuality and its Problems* (2nd edn, 1989).

SIMON BARON-COHEN studied human sciences at New College, Oxford, followed by a doctorate in experimental psychology at University College London. He has taught at University College London and the Institute of Psychiatry, London, where he is currently Senior Lecturer in Developmental Psychology. He is co-editor (with H. Tager-Flusberg and D. J. Cohen) of *Understanding Other Minds: Perspectives from Autism* (1993), and co-author (with P. Bolton) of *Autism: the facts* (1993).

SUSAN BLACKMORE studied psychology and physiology at St Hilda's College, Oxford, took her doctorate in parapsychology at the University of Surrey and then worked at Bristol and Bath Universities and as a writer and broadcaster. She is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of the West of England at Bristol. Her current research interests are the origins of belief in the paranormal and near-death experiences. She is the author of *Beyond the Body: An Investigation of Out-of-the-Body Experiences* (1982), *The Adventures of a Parapsychologist* (1986), and *Dying to Live: Science and the Near-Death Experience* (1993).

JOHN E. BLUNDELL studied for his doctorate at the Institute of Neurology, University of London. He is the director of a research group at Leeds University specializing in the control of human appetite with particular reference to the relationships among nutrition, physiology, and behaviour. He is the author of a science citation classic on the role of the neurotransmitter serotonin in appetite control entitled “Is there a role for Serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine) in feeding?” (*International Journal of Obesity*, 1977, *1*, 15–42) and has been awarded the 25th International Prize in Modern Nutrition (1992).

RUPERT BROWN is Reader in Social Psychology at the University of Kent, Canterbury. He is editor of the European Monograph series in social
psychology and the author of *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters* (1986) and *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups* (1988).

PETER BULL is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of York, with special responsibility for teaching social psychology. He is a graduate both of Trinity College, Oxford, and of the University of Exeter, where he also obtained his PhD in psychology. He was elected a Fellow of the British Psychological Society in 1989. He is the author of *Body Movement and Interpersonal Communication* (1983), *Posture and Gesture* (1987) and (with Derek Roger) *Conversation: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (1989).

GEORGE BUTTERWORTH took his doctorate in psychology at the University of Oxford. He is Professor of Psychology at the University of Sussex. He has published many articles on development in infancy and is currently researching the origins of referential communication in babies. He has been editor of the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* (1989–93) and chairman of the Scientific Affairs Board of the British Psychological Society (1992–95). He edited *Infancy and Epistemology* (1982).

CONNIE CAHILL studied psychology and philosophy at University College, Dublin. She is now a member of the Cognitive Neuropsychiatry Project at the Medical Research Council Cyclotron Unit and University College London. Her clinical experience and research interests lie chiefly within the domains of mental illness, in particular schizophrenia, and neuropsychology.

JOHN C. CAVANAUGH is Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Individual and Family Studies at the University of Delaware. His research interests include cognitive ageing, self-evaluation of memory, and cognitive impairment. He is co-editor (with Jan Sinnott) of *Bridging Paradigms: Positive Development in Adulthood and Cognitive Aging* (1991) and author of *Adult Development and Aging* (2nd edn, 1993).

JOHN C. COLEMAN obtained his PhD from the University of London. He is also trained as a clinical psychologist. He is currently the Director of the Trust for the Study of Adolescence, an independent charity and research organization based in Brighton, England. He is the editor of the *Journal of Adolescence*. His most recent books are *The Nature of Adolescence* (2nd edn, 1990) and *Youth Policy in the 1990s* (1992).

ANDREW M. COLMAN is Reader in Psychology at the University of Leicester, having previously taught at Cape Town and Rhodes Universities, South Africa. He is the founder and former editor of the journal *Current Psychology*; he is currently Chief Examiner for the British Psychological Society's Qualifying Examination. His books include *Game Theory and Experimental Games: The Study of Strategic Interaction* (1982), *Facts,*
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


PETER J. COOPER is the Lecturer in Psychopathology in the Departments of Psychiatry and Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge. He conducted his doctoral research and received clinical training in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oxford. His research has principally concerned psychiatric aspects of obstetrics and gynaecology, and eating disorders. He has published in psychiatry and psychology journals on the nature, epidemiology, assessment, and treatment of eating disorders. His books include Bulimia Nervosa: A Guide to Recovery (1993) and (co-edited with A. Stein) Feeding Problems and Eating Disorders in Children and Adolescents (1992).

MARY CRAWFORD is Professor of Psychology and Graduate Director of Women’s Studies at the University of South Carolina. She received her PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Delaware. She is active in the Division on the Psychology of Women of the American Psychological Association and in many organizations concerned with gender equity and feminist scholarship. She is Book Review Editor for Psychology of Women Quarterly, a member of the international editorial advisory board of Feminism and Psychology, and Research Director for the Women’s College Coalition. She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Psychological Society. Her publications include the book (co-edited with M. Gentry) Gender and Thought: Psychological Perspectives (1989).

ROBERT T. CROYLE is Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. He took his doctorate in psychology from Princeton University, New Jersey, and has taught at Williams College and the University of Washington. He has published articles on attitude change, judgement biases, and health-related memory, and is co-editor (with J. A. Skelton) of Mental Representation in Health and Illness (1991).

FRANCIS C. DANE is Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. He currently serves as secretary/treasurer of the Society for the Advancement of Social Psychology; his research concerns jury decision-making. He is the author of Common and Uncommon Sense of Social Psychology (1988) and Research Methods (1990) and co-author (with K. Deaux and L. S. Wrightsman) of Social Psychology in the 90s (6th edn, 1993).

PETER C. DODWELL is Professor of Psychology at Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario. He was educated at Oxford University, receiving his doctorate in 1958. He has spent most of his professional career at Queen’s, but has also taught at the University of London and at Harvard; he has held
ALICE H. EAGLY obtained a doctorate in social psychology from the University of Michigan. She is Professor of Psychological Sciences at Purdue University, Indiana, USA. A past president of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, she is a member of the editorial boards of several social psychology journals. She is the author of numerous articles and book chapters on attitudes as well as gender and sex differences. She is co-author (with Shelly Chaiken) of The Psychology of Attitudes (1993).

K. ANDERS ERICSSON is the Dr Edward Conradi Eminent Scholar Chair in Psychology at the Florida State University, Tallahassee. He is the co-author (with Herbert A. Simon) of Protocol Analysis: Verbal Reports as Data (1984), which appeared in a second revised edition in 1993. He is the co-editor (with Jacqui Smith) of Toward a General Theory of Expertise: Prospects and Limits (1991).

JONATHAN St B. T. EVANS is Professor of Cognitive Psychology at the University of the South West in Plymouth. Since completing his doctorate at University College London in 1972, he has researched and published extensively in the psychology of human reasoning and judgement with particular emphasis on the study of biases. He is author of three books on human reasoning, including Bias in Human Reasoning: Causes and Consequences (1989); and (with others) Human Reasoning: The Psychology of Deduction (1989).


H. J. EYSENCK Professor Emeritus Hans Eysenck was born in Berlin in 1916. He left Germany in 1934 and took his PhD in psychology at University College London in 1942. He founded the Department of Psychology in the newly created Institute of Psychiatry in 1955, being appointed Professor of Psychology in the University of London in the same year. He received the Distinguished Scientist Award of the American Psychological Society in 1988. His work has been concerned mainly with individual differences of personality and intelligence, behavioural genetics, psychophysiology, behaviour
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

therapy, and clinical psychology generally. He has written nearly 1,000 articles; he founded and edited two journals, Behaviour Research and Therapy and Personality and Individual Differences. Among his 70 books is Personality and Individual Differences: A Natural Science Approach (co-authored with Michael W. Eysenck, 1985).

MICHAEL W. EYSENCK is Professor of Psychology and Head of Department at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, at Egham, Surrey. He has been Visiting Professor at the University of South Florida. He was the founding editor of the European Journal of Cognitive Psychology. He has published approximately 80 articles and book chapters, mainly in the area of anxiety and cognition. He is the author of 18 books, including Attention and Arousal: Cognition and Performance (1982) and Anxiety: The Cognitive Perspective (1992); he is co-author (with M. T. Keane) of Cognitive Psychology: A Student's Handbook (1990).

RAYMOND E. FANCHER is Professor of Psychology at York University, Ontario, Canada and Executive Officer of CHEIRON (The International Society for History of the Behavioral and Social Sciences). His writing on the history of psychology includes Psychoanalytic Psychology: The Development of Freud's Thought (1973), The Intelligence Men: Makers of the IQ Controversy (1985), and Pioneers of Psychology (2nd edn, 1990). He is currently writing a biography of Francis Galton.

PETER FONAGY took his doctorate in psychology at University College London and has been on the staff of its Department of Psychology since 1976. He is currently Freud Memorial Professor of Psychoanalysis at University College London. He is a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst and member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society. He is coordinator of research at the Anna Freud Centre (Hampstead Child Therapy Clinic) and is a member of the Executive Council of the International Psychoanalytic Association. He has published articles in both psychoanalytic and psychological journals on numerous clinical and theoretical topics. He is co-author (with A. Higgitt) of Personality Theory and Clinical Practice (1984) and co-editor (with J. Sandler and E. S. Pearson) of Freud's "On Narcissism": An Introduction (1991).

DAVID FONTANA is Reader in Educational Psychology in the School of Education, University of Wales at Cardiff, and Professor Catedratico in the Department of Child Education, University of Minho, Portugal. A Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Chartered Psychologist, he is the author of over 100 scientific papers and articles, and serves on the editorial boards of a number of psychological journals. He has written 15 books, including The Education of the Young Child (1984), Behaviourism and Learning Theory in Education (1984), Classroom Control (1985), Teaching and Personality (1986), Psychology for Teachers (1988), Managing Stress
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

(1989), and Your Growing Child: From Birth to Adolescence (1990). His books have been translated over 30 times into all major European languages.

LESLEY FREDERIKSON has a BSc with a psychology major from Massey University, New Zealand, and a DPhil from the University of York, England. She was a Research Fellow for the New Zealand Federation of University Women from 1990 to 1992, studying the communication of information within doctor–patient interaction. She is currently a Research Fellow in the Psychology Department of Massey University studying the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

CHRIS FRITH studied psychology at Cambridge and the Institute of Psychiatry in London. From 1975 to 1990 he worked on the neuropsychology of schizophrenia with Tim Crow’s group at the Clinical Research Centre, Northwick Park Hospital, London. Currently he is working on functional brain imaging at the Medical Research Council Cyclotron Unit and holds an MRC grant at the Psychology Department of University College London, where he is Visiting Professor. He is author of The Cognitive Neuro-psychology of Schizophrenia (1992).

ANTHONY GALE is Professor of Psychology at Southampton University, and was president of the British Psychological Society. His research includes physiological studies of information processing and personality, participant observation of family life, and conceptual issues in applied psychology. He has also published critical papers on the teaching of psychology and the failure of psychologists to deploy psychological principles and ethics in the education and treatment of students. He is co-editor (with A. J. Chapman) of Psychology and Social Problems (1984) and (with A. Vetere) of Ecological Studies of Family Life (1987).

ALAN GARNHAM read Psychology, Philosophy, and Physiology at Oxford University before obtaining a DPhil in Experimental Psychology from Sussex University. He has since worked as a Research Fellow at Sussex University and as a Lecturer at Reading and Sussex Universities. His principal research interests are in psycholinguistics; he is currently engaged in research on the interpretation of anaphoric expressions and on syntactic analysis and ambiguity. In addition to publishing numerous journal articles and book chapters, he is the author of Psycholinguistics: Central Topics (1985), Mental Models as Representations of Discourse and Text (1987), Artificial Intelligence: An Introduction (1988), The Mind in Action (1991), and co-author (with Jane Oakhill) of Becoming a Skilled Reader (1988).

ROBERT J. GATCHEL is Professor of Psychiatry and Rehabilitation Science at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. He received his BA from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and his PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Wisconsin. He has
conduct extensive research on psychophysiological concomitants of stress and emotion, clinical applications of biofeedback and self-regulation techniques, and the assessment and treatment of chronic low back pain disability. He is on the editorial board of numerous journals, and is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research, as well as various other professional societies. He is the author of over 100 scientific publications and chapters, and has authored or edited 10 books, including (as co-author with A. Baum and D. S. Krantz) An Introduction to Health Psychology (1989).

RUSSELL G. GEEN is Curators’ Professor of Psychology at the University of Missouri, Columbia. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin (PhD, 1967), he was editor of the Journal of Research in Personality from 1977 to 1988 and became editor of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Personality Processes and Individual Differences in 1991. He has published five books, including (as co-author with W. Beatty and R. M. Arkin) Human Motivation (1984) and is the author of Human Aggression (1990).

ANTHONY M. GRAZIANO received his PhD in clinical psychology from Purdue University, Indiana, in 1961. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship in child psychology at the Devereux Foundation before joining the faculty at the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he directed several clinical research programmes with severely disturbed children. He has been on the faculty at the State University of New York at Buffalo since 1969, where he has served as the Director of Clinical Training and is the Co-Director of the Research Center for Children and Youth. He has published extensively on psychological treatment of disturbed children and their families and has written seven books, including (as co-author with Michael Raulin) Research Methods: A Process of Inquiry (2nd edn, 1993).

LEONARD W. HAMILTON received his doctorate in biopsychology from the University of Chicago and is now Professor of Psychology at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He has published articles on the limbic system and behavioural inhibition and is co-author (with C. R. Timmons) of a textbook entitled Principles of Behavioral Pharmacology: A Biopsychological Approach (1990).

SARAH E. HAMPSON is Research Scientist at Oregon Research Institute, Eugene, Oregon. Prior to moving to the United States, she was a Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London. The second edition of her book, The Construction of Personality: An Introduction, was published in 1988.

ISABEL R. HARGREAVES received her PhD at the Department of Psychology, University College of North Wales, Bangor. She has been working as a Clinical Psychologist in Adult Mental Health in Gwynedd since 1984 and is also the Deputy Director of the North Wales Clinical Psychology
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Course. Her main clinical interests are cognitions and how they affect emotional states.

MIKE G. HARRIS obtained his PhD in psychology from the University of Bristol in 1980, after undergraduate courses in medical physiology and neurobiology, and several years as a professional musician. Since 1980 he has taught perception at the University of Birmingham, where he is currently Head of the Cognitive Science MSc course and a Director of the Cognitive Science Research Centre. His research interests centre on the psychophysical and computational study of early visual processes, with a particular interest in the analysis and usage of retinal motion, and cricket.

ANDREW J. HILL is Senior Lecturer in Behavioural Sciences at Leeds University Medical School. His doctorate was on hunger motivation and he has published extensively on this issue. Other research interests include the psychology of food cravings, and the emergence of dieting and weight control during childhood and adolescence.

J. ALLAN HOBSON is a Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Director of the Laboratory of Neurophysiology, Massachusetts Mental Health Center. A prominent figure in modern brain science, his major research has been on the neurobiology of the sleeping brain. He has won the prestigious von Humboldt award of the Max Planck Society. He is the author of *The Dreaming Brain* (1988) and *Sleep* (1989).

CLIVE R. HOLLIN took his doctorate in psychology at the University of East London in 1980, after which he worked as a prison psychologist, then as a university lecturer. He currently holds the joint post of Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Birmingham and Research Psychologist in the Youth Treatment Service. He is a fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Chartered Psychologist. He is co-editor of the journal *Psychology, Crime, and Law*. The author or editor of 11 books, including *Psychology and Crime* (1989), he has published numerous research articles, particularly on delinquency. His next book will be an ambitious attempt to blend core concepts from psychology and criminology in the search for a grand theory of criminal behaviour.

WENDY HOLLWAY taught in the Department of Occupational Psychology, Birkbeck College, University of London, for nine years and is now a Senior Lecturer at the University of Bradford. She is an associate fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Chartered Psychologist. She has published articles on the history of work psychology as it relates to current practices, books and articles on psychological theory and method concerning the understanding of subjectivity and gender, and articles concerning gender relations and discrimination in organizations. She is the author of
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS


GLYN W. HUMPHREYS obtained a BSc and PhD from the University of Bristol. From 1979 to 1989 he was a Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer and Professor, in the Department of Psychology at Birkbeck College, London. Since 1989 he has been Professor of Cognitive Psychology at the University of Birmingham, where he is currently Head of the School of Psychology. He was the editor of the Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology from 1989 to 1993, and is a board member of Cognitive Neuropsychology, Mind and Language, and the Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance. He initiated a new journal of Visual Cognition, beginning in 1994. His research interests are in the interlocking of cognitive science, cognitive neuropsychology and experimental psychology, particularly in the field of visual cognition.

KLAUS JONAS took his doctorate in social psychology at the University of Tübingen, Germany. His current research concerns the prediction of health-related behaviours from social attitudes. He has published articles on health-related topics and on social stereotypes in the European Journal of Social Psychology and other journals.

DANIEL KIMBLE is Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of Oregon. He took his doctorate in psychology at the University of Michigan in 1961 and after a postdoctoral stay at Stanford University, California, joined the faculty at the University of Oregon in 1963. He was named a fellow in the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1988. He has published numerous articles on the role of the hippocampus in behaviour and on the functional effects of brain grafts in mammals. He is the author of several texts in biological psychology, his most recent book being Biological Psychology (2nd edn, 1992).

PAUL KLINE is Professor of Psychometrics in the University of Exeter. He is the author of numerous books and papers in the fields of psychometrics, psychoanalysis, human intelligence, and the philosophy of psychology. Among his most recent works is the Handbook of Psychological Testing (1992).

C. P. KYRIACOU Charalambos Kyriacou is Reader in the Department of Genetics, University of Leicester. He began his career as a psychologist and obtained his doctorate in behaviour genetics at Sheffield University. After periods at Brandeis University, Massachusetts, and in the Psychology Department at Edinburgh University, he moved to Leicester in 1984. His current research interests are in the molecular genetic analysis of behaviour. He is the co-editor (with B. Holland) of Genetics and Society (1993).
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DONALD LAMING is Lecturer in Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Information Theory of Choice-Reaction Times* (1968), *Mathematical Psychology* (1973), and *Sensory Analysis* (1986). He is currently engaged on a book which applies the principles of sensory judgement to social issues.

JOHN LAZARUS took his PhD at the University of Wales and is currently at the Department of Psychology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. His research interests are vigilance, anti-predator behaviour, sampling, sexual strategies, and parental care. In addition to his theoretical and experimental work, he has conducted fieldwork in Britain, Iceland, Australia, and Tanzania.

WILLEM J. M. LEVELT is Director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, and Professor of Psycholinguistics at Nijmegen University. He is author of *On Binocular Rivalry* (1968), *Formal Grammars in Linguistics and Psycholinguistics* (three volumes, 1974), and *Speaking: From Intention to Articulation* (1989).

ELIZABETH F. LOFTUS is Professor of Psychology and Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Washington, Seattle. She took her doctorate in psychology at Stanford University, California. She is the author of 16 books, including *Eyewitness Testimony* (1979) and co-author (with K. Ketchman) of *Witness for the Defense* (1991).

GEOFFREY LOWE is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Hull. He was previously at the University of Nottingham and Visiting Professor at the University of Tennessee. He is an assistant editor of *The Psychologist*. He has published articles on alcohol and related drugs in *Psychopharmacology, British Journal of Addiction*, and *Addiction Research*, and has recently completed a book on *Adolescent Drinking and Family Life*.

NICHOLAS J. MACKINTOSH is Professor of Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He has previously taught at the University of Oxford, Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, and the University of Sussex, and, more briefly, at the University of Hawaii, the University of Pennsylvania, and at Bryn Mawr College. He has written several books on animal learning, including *The Psychology of Animal Learning* (1974) and *Conditioning and Associative Learning* (1983), and is currently writing one on human intelligence.

A. W. MACRAE Sandy MacRae is Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Birmingham, where he studies human performance, and sensory psychophysics. He has taught measurement theory, statistics, and research methods to undergraduate and graduate psychologists and to scientists in
various industries since 1965. He is a member of UK, US and international (ISO) technical committees concerned with sensory evaluation methods for food and drink.

SARA MEADOWS is Senior Lecturer in Education in the School of Education at the University of Bristol. She is the editor of Developing Thinking (1983) and the author of Understanding Child Development (1986) and The Child as Thinker (1993), which is a 200,000 word version of her contribution to this volume. She is co-author (with Asher Cashdan) of Helping Children Think and Learn (1988).

BRIAN C. J. MOORE is Reader in Auditory Perception in the Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Cambridge. He is a fellow of the Acoustical Society of America and a Visiting Consulting Professor in the Department of Bioengineering, University of Ulster. He is the author of An Introduction to the Psychology of Hearing (3rd edn, 1989).

WILLIAM L. OLIVER received his doctorate at the University of Colorado and has done postgraduate research at the Learning, Research, and Development Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is currently Assistant Professor of Psychology at Florida State University. He is pursuing research on skill acquisition and computer models of learning and memory.

BRIAN PARKINSON studied psychology as an undergraduate and postgraduate at Manchester University, where he received his PhD in 1983. He is currently Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Leicester. His interests concern the interrelations between the everyday use of emotional concepts and more formal psychological theories of emotion. His most recent research concerns role-prescribed emotion in the workplace and strategies of expressive management among high-contact service employees.

GRAHAM E. POWELL is Director of Clinical Psychology Training at the University of Surrey. He qualified as a clinical psychologist at the Institute of Psychiatry, Maudsley Hospital, London, and is Director of Counselling Services to a British Police Force. He co-edited (with S. J. E. Lindsay) the first British textbook on clinical psychology, A Handbook of Clinical Adult Psychology (2nd edn, 1993). He is currently working on an analysis of the psychological factors underlying rate of progress in neurological rehabilitation.

MICHAEL L. RAULIN received his PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1977. He joined the faculty of the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1978, where he is currently the Director of Clinical Training and the Administrative Director of the Psychological Services Center. He has published articles on schizophrenia and risk factors for schizophrenia, neurological impact of drug abuse, illusory correlations,

HARVEY RICHARD SCHIFFMAN is Professor of Psychology at Rutgers, The State University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. He received his PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has published articles on space perception, visual illusions, and the perception of time. He is the author of Sensation and Perception: An Integrated Approach (3rd edn, 1990).

DAVID J. SCHNEIDER is Professor of Psychology and Department Chair at Rice University, Houston, Texas. He obtained his PhD from Stanford University, California (1966) and has also taught at Amherst College, Brandeis University, Stanford University, Indiana University, and University of Texas at San Antonio. He is editor of the journal Social Cognition. He is the author of Person Perception (1979) and Introduction to Social Psychology (1988).

PETER B. SMITH is Reader in Social Psychology at the University of Sussex. His current interests are in cross-cultural studies in the fields of social and organizational psychology; he is associate editor of the Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology. He is the author of Groups Within Organisations (1973) and Group Processes and Personal Change (1980), and co-author (with M. F. Peterson) of Leadership, Organisations and Culture (1988) and (with M. H. Bond) of Social Psychology Across Cultures (1993).

PETER K. SMITH is Professor of Psychology at the University of Sheffield. He has researched extensively on the topic of children’s play, and is currently working on ways of dealing with bullying in schools. He is the co-author (with Kevin Connolly) of The Ecology of Preschool Behaviour (1980), and (with Helen Cowie) of Understanding Children’s Development (2nd edn, 1991). He is co-editor (with D. A. Thompson) of Practical Approaches to Bullying (1991).

ROBERT J. STERNBERG is IBM Professor of Psychology and Education at Yale University. He won the American Psychological Association’s Distinguished Scientific Award for an Early Career Contribution to Psychology in 1981 and also its Boyd R. McCandless Young Scientist Award of the Division of Developmental Psychology in 1982. He is the editor of the journal Psychological Bulletin. He is the author of Beyond IQ: A Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence (1985) and Metaphors of Mind: Conceptions of the Nature of Intelligence (1990).

RICHARD STEVENS is Senior Lecturer and currently Head of the Department of Psychology at the Open University in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. Previously he taught at Trinity College, Dublin, and the University of California. For several years he was chairperson of the Association for
Humanistic Psychology and is at present developing an integrated theory of human action (trimodal theory). He is the author of *Freud and Psychoanalysis* (1983), *Erik Erikson* (1983), and *Personal Worlds* (1986), and the co-editor (with Hedy Brown) of *Social Behaviour and Experience* (1976).

**DAVID D. STRETCH** After a first degree in psychology from the University College of North Wales (at Bangor), David Stretch completed an MSc in mathematical psychology at Stirling, and a PhD at Birmingham, where he studied the mathematical modelling of memory. He then held a variety of positions at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and also worked for Newcastle Area Health Authority. In 1986 he joined the Psychiatry Department at Leicester University as a Lecturer in Psychology, specializing in statistical modelling and research design. Because of this expertise, he has been associated with publications in a wide area of psychology; he still manages to continue research into psychometrics, axiomatic measurement theory, and other areas of mathematical psychology.

**WOLFGANG STROEBE** received a doctorate in experimental psychology from the University of Münster, Germany, and in social psychology from the London School of Economics. He has held academic positions in Britain, the United States, and Germany, and is now Professor at the University of Utrecht in The Netherlands. A past president of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology and a member of the editorial boards of social psychology journals in the United States, Britain, and Germany, he has written numerous books and chapters on attitude change, group productivity, and health psychology. He is co-editor (with W. Meyer) of *Social Psychology and Economics* (1982); he is co-author (with M. S. Stroebe) of *Bereavement and Health: The Psychological and Physical Consequences of Partner Loss* (1987) and (with M. Hewson) of the *European Review of Social Psychology* (1992).

**C. ROBIN TIMMONS** received her masters degree in biopsychology and her doctorate in developmental psychology from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. She is now Associate Professor of Psychology at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. She has published articles on the development of behavioural inhibition and memory in infants, and is co-author (with L. W. Hamilton) of a textbook entitled *Principles of Behavioral Pharmacology: A Biopsychological Approach* (1990).

**RHODA K. UNGER** is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Honors Program at Montclair State College in New Jersey. She received her PhD in experimental psychology from Harvard University, and was the first recipient of the Carolyn Wood Sherif Award from the Division on the Psychology of Women of the American Psychological Association. She is also the recipient of two Distinguished Publication Awards from the Association for Women in Psychology. She is active in various feminist organizations within
psychology and has lectured extensively in the United States and abroad. She has published six books; she is the author of *Female and Male* (1979), co-editor (with V. E. O'Leary and B. S. Wallston) of *Women, Gender, and Social Psychology* (1985), and editor of *Representations: Social Constructions of Gender* (1989).

JAMES VIVIAN received his doctorate in social psychology at Boston College, Massachusetts, and is currently a research fellow in social psychology at the University of Kent, Canterbury. His current research is concerned with intergroup contact.

GRAHAM F. WAGSTAFF is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Liverpool. His main research and teaching interests are in social psychology and he has a particular interest in social psychological and forensic aspects of hypnosis. He is one of the founder members of the British Society of Experimental and Clinical Hypnosis. He has published widely in the area of hypnosis and is author of *Hypnosis, Compliance and Belief* (1981). He is currently writing a book on the psychology and philosophy of justice.

JOHN WEINMAN is Professor of Psychology as Applied to Medicine at the United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St Thomas’ Hospital in the University of London. He first trained in clinical psychology at the Royal Free Hospital, London, and then obtained his doctorate at the Institute of Neurology after four years’ full-time research with the Medical Research Council. He is the editor-in-chief of *Psychology and Health: An International Journal*. He is the author of *An Outline of Psychology as Applied to Medicine* (1987) and the editor of several other books on aspects of health psychology.

J. MARK G. WILLIAMS is Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, having been Research Scientist at the Medical Research Council’s Applied Psychology Unit in Cambridge. He is also an Anglican priest, and interested in the interface of psychology with religion. He is co-author (with F. N. Watts, C. MacLeod, and A. Mathews) of *Cognitive Psychology and Emotional Disorders* (1988) and author of *The Psychological Treatment of Depression: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy* (2nd edn, 1992).
The authoritative *Oxford English Dictionary* defines psychology as "the science of the nature, functions, and phenomena of the human soul or mind". Nowadays, most psychologists would object to the last part of that definition, because the human soul is no longer regarded as the concern of psychology, and also because human and animal behaviour (which are ignored by the above definition) have come to be regarded as essential components of the discipline. Although any definition of psychology is bound to be controversial, even among psychologists, the following renovated version of the *OED* definition comes as close to encapsulating the essence of psychology as is possible in a few words: psychology is the science of the nature, functions, and phenomena of behaviour and mental experience. Underlying this definition is the fundamental assumption, which is supported by evidence.
throughout this encyclopedia, that behaviour and mental experience are
governed by rational laws that we can discover and understand.

Associated with the scientific discipline of psychology are a number of
professions of applied psychology, including clinical, counselling, educational (school), industrial (occupational), organizational, and forensic (criminological) psychology - see chapters 13.1 (Graham E. Powell), 13.2 (David Fontana), 13.3 (Wendy Hollway), and 13.4 (Clive R. Hollin). Whereas academic psychologists work mainly in universities, colleges, and other teaching and research establishments, professional psychologists work in a wider variety of settings, including hospitals and clinics, counselling agencies, commercial and industrial companies, prisons and correctional institutions, government departments, and in private practice.

In both its academic and professional forms, psychology has been
increasing in popularity since the Second World War. The number of stu­
dents choosing to study psychology has been rising steadily for several
decades in industrialized and developing countries, and whenever surveys are
conducted to try to find out why students choose psychology, the most
common reason by far turns out to be interest in its subject matter, rather
than career prospects or any other considerations (Radford, 1991). In just
one decade between 1980 and the early 1990s the total number of practising
psychologists in the world rose from about a quarter of a million to well over
half a million (Rosenzweig, 1992). Although these figures are impressive, it
is worth pointing out that there are still about twelve times as many medical
practitioners in the world as there are psychologists.

ORIGIN OF THE WORD “PSYCHOLOGY”
The word “psychology” was formed from two Greek words. The first,
psyche, originally meant “breath” but later acquired the additional meaning
“soul”, because breathing was thought to indicate that the soul had not yet
left the body, and later still (during the seventeenth century) broadened fur­
ther in meaning to include “mind”. The equivalent Latin word anima, from
which the English words “animal” and “animate” are derived, also started
life meaning “breath” and later evolved the additional meaning “mind”. The
second Greek word, logos, originally meant “word” and later expanded in
meaning to include “discourse” and eventually “science”. According to its
Greek roots, therefore, psychology is literally the science of the mind.

In later Greek mythology, the soul is personified by Psyche (with a capital
P), a young woman loved by Eros, the god of love. Eros marries her on con­
dition that they spend time together only at night and that she never sees his
face. Goaded by her jealous sisters to steal a glance, Psyche lights an oil lamp
one night while Eros is asleep and falls in love with him at first sight, but she
is so startled by his beauty that she accidentally spills a drop of oil on his
shoulder and awakens him, whereupon he immediately abandons her. To win
him back, Psyche is forced to endure many trials and dangers, but eventually she is transformed into a goddess and joins Eros in heavenly bliss. In this myth, Psyche symbolizes the human soul, suffering hardship and struggle in life but re-awakening after death in a new, better existence, like a caterpillar transformed into a butterfly. This explains why Psyche is generally depicted in works of art with butterfly wings or sometimes simply as a butterfly (see Figure 1).

The Latin word *psychologia* emerged from obscure origins in Germany in the sixteenth century; it was used by Philip Melanchthon, Otto Casmann, and Rudolf Goeckel, but no one is certain who coined it or exactly when it was first used. The English word "psychology" made its first appearance near the end of the seventeenth century in *The Physical Dictionary: Wherein the terms of Anatomy, the names and causes of Diseases, chyrugical Instruments and their Use; are accurately Describ'd* (Blankaart, 1693), which was the second edition of the English translation of Steven Blankaart's *Lexicon Medicum, Graeco-Latinum*, originally published in 1679. Blankaart refers to "Anthropologia, the Description of Man, or the Doctrin concerning him [which is divided] into Two Parts; viz. Anatomy, which treats of the Body, and Psychology, which treats of the Soul" (p. 13, italics and capitals in original). The word "psychology" was used sporadically throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries — the English philosopher and physician David Hartley (1749), for example, wrote of "Psychology, or the Theory of the human Mind, with that of the intellectual Principles of Brute Animals" (p. 354, capitals in original) — but it was not until the 1830s that it began to be used frequently and came to be widely understood.

*Figure 1*  The Chartered Psychologists' logo of the British Psychological Society, showing Psyche, the personification of the human soul, with butterfly wings for reasons explained in the text.
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although psychology has been recognized as an independent discipline for little more than a century (see chapter 1.2, Raymond E. Fancher), psychological speculations and practices can be found in the records of the most ancient civilizations. The Ebers papyrus, an ancient Egyptian document devoted to medical matters dating from before 1500 BC, for example, describes practices strikingly similar to modern hypnosis (see chapter 11.2, Graham F. Wagstaff), and a later Egyptian scroll records in detail the speech and behaviour of a young boy who was hypnotized while he fixed his gaze on a luminous object (Ellenberger, 1970).

There are even occasional records in ancient documents of scientific experiments designed to settle psychological questions. The earliest is contained in The Histories of Herodotus, the world’s first history book, which was completed in about 429 BC (Herodotus, 1972). According to Herodotus (part 1, book 2, para. 2), the experiment was performed by the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Psammetichus I in the seventh century BC to determine whether human beings have an inborn capacity for speech, and if so, which particular language is innate. He ordered two infants to be brought up in a remote place by a shepherd who was forbidden to speak in their presence. After two years the children began to speak, and the word that they repeated most often was becos, which turned out to be the Phrygian word for “bread”. Psammetichus concluded that the capacity for speech is inborn and that the innate, natural language of human beings is Phrygian.

The questions that Psammetichus’s experiment was intended to answer seem quaint and foolish in the present day, and his experiment was certainly poorly designed and methodologically unsound – even in his own time critics pointed out that the children may merely have been imitating the bleating of goats. But what is striking is that it was a psychological experiment none the less; in its conceptual structure and methodology it is strikingly similar to the highly regarded experiments of William H. Thorpe (1958), who reared birds in isolation from members of their own species in order to discover the innate features of their songs.

Before psychology emerged as an independent discipline in Germany in the late nineteenth century, it existed for a long time as a branch of philosophy that was called “mental philosophy” to distinguish it from “natural philosophy” (which is now called physics). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, developments in the biological sciences began to suggest empirical approaches (approaches involving observation and experiment) to some of the problems of mental philosophy, and towards the end of that period psychology finally reached maturity and gained its independence as a separate discipline in its own right. Although psychology is barely a century old as a discipline, psychological speculation, practice, and even research clearly have much older pedigrees. That is what the German psychologist Hermann...
Ebbinghaus (1908) meant by his frequently quoted remark that "psychology has a long past but a short history" (p. 1).

The first systematic investigations of psychological problems were carried out in ancient Greece by the pre-Socratic philosophers of the sixth and fifth centuries BC. They did not have any concept of an individual soul or mind — that arose in later Greek philosophy, especially under the influence of Aristotle — but they were the first to understand that the brain plays an important role in mental experience. In particular, they understood that our eyes cannot see and our ears cannot hear without the help of our brains, and by contributing this crucial insight the pre-Socratics paved the way for the scientific study of sensation and perception (see section 3).

The pre-Socratics were also the first to develop a theory to explain the fact that people differ from one another not only physically but also psychologically, that is, not only in appearance but also in temperament, or what psychologists now call personality (see section 7). According to their doctrine of the four temperaments, people were thought to be more or less sanguine (optimistic), melancholic (depressive), choleric (short-tempered), or phlegmatic (apathetic) according to the mixture in their bodies of four humours or fluids, called blood (sanguis), black bile (melaina chole), yellow bile (chole), and phlegm (phlegma). The doctrine of the four temperaments held sway for centuries, but the biochemical basis of the theory finally collapsed during the Renaissance when researchers began to discover the rudimentary facts of human physiology. The underlying typology, though not the theory of humours that sought to explain it, survives in some modern theories of personality (see chapters 7.2, Sarah E. Hampson, and 7.3, H. J. Eysenck). The contribution of the pre-Socratics, which can hardly be overestimated, was historically important not so much because of the answers that they gave, but because they thought to ask the questions at all.

Physiology became established as a field of research during the second half of the eighteenth century, after the introduction of the microscope and post-mortem examinations, which had formerly been banned by the Church. During the following decades, enormous advances were made in understanding the brain and nervous system (see chapter 2.3, Daniel Kimble) and evolutionary aspects of behaviour (see chapter 2.2, John Lazarus). The prevailing currents of philosophical and biological research gradually converged towards the emergence of psychology as an independent discipline, and that event finally occurred in Germany in the 1880s. The year in which the independent discipline of psychology is usually said to have been born is 1879, when Wilhelm Wundt opened the first psychological laboratory in Leipzig. The history of psychology is discussed in greater detail in chapter 1.2 (Raymond E. Fancher).
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RELATED DISCIPLINES AND PRACTICES

In order to present a clear picture of the nature and scope of psychology, it is useful to distinguish it from a few related practices and professions with which it is often confused. The following brief comments should help to map out the intellectual terrain and eliminate certain common fallacies. (For more detail and further distinctions, see Colman, 1988, chap. 1.)

Psychiatry

As its name suggests, psychiatry (from the Greek psyche, meaning mind, and iatros, meaning doctor) is a branch of medicine concerned with mental disorders — their classification, aetiology (causes), diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. Anyone intending to qualify as a psychiatrist must first undergo a full medical training and then specialize in psychiatry, which is simply a medical specialism among many others, including cardiology, dermatology, and gynaecology.

Psychology, in contrast, is not a medical specialism, and psychologists are not medically trained. Furthermore, most of psychology is concerned with normal behaviour and mental life rather than with mental disorders. A small part of academic psychology is, however, concerned with mental disorders (section 10), and one of the professions of psychology, clinical psychology (chapter 13.1, Graham E. Powell) involves the treatment of mentally disordered patients. In Britain, the United States, and elsewhere, the work of clinical psychologists has tended over the years to resemble that of psychiatrists more and more closely. Because of their different backgrounds and training, however, psychiatrists tend to favour more medically oriented interpretations of mental disorders and more physical forms of treatment than do most clinical psychologists.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a theory of mental structure and function and a method of psychotherapy based on the writings of Sigmund Freud and his followers (see chapters 7.4, Richard Stevens, and 13.5, Peter Fonagy). As a theory, psychoanalysis focuses primarily on unconscious mental processes and the various defence mechanisms that people use to repress them. As a therapeutic method, psychoanalysis involves the client in three or more 50-minute sessions per week for several years. During the analytic sessions a number of specialized techniques are used to help the client uncover repressed thoughts and feelings, understand why they were repressed, and accept them consciously.

Psychoanalysts are not necessarily trained in psychology or psychiatry; their training involves undergoing psychoanalysis themselves. Conversely, it
is also true to say that most psychologists and psychiatrists have no formal qualifications in psychoanalysis; but many of them, especially in parts of continental Europe and the Third World, are influenced to varying degrees by psychoanalytic ideas and approaches. Most — though by no means all — British and American psychologists, on the other hand, hold attitudes towards psychoanalysis ranging from indifference to open hostility.

Philosophy

Many of the problems that non-psychologists assume to fall within the scope of psychology are really philosophical problems. These are questions that must be tackled by rational argument rather than by experiments or observations of behaviour. Although psychology was once a branch of philosophy called “mental philosophy”, the psychological offspring has grown up to be quite distinct in its subject matter from its distinguished philosophical parent. Psychology, in contrast to philosophy, is devoted to empirical questions, that is, questions that can, in principle at least, be decided by observations of real-world facts and events.

Some of the traditional problems of philosophy are confusingly tied up with what might at first appear to be psychological issues. The most obvious example is the mind–body problem, which has exercised philosophers throughout the modern period and is still unresolved. This problem relates to the puzzling relationship and apparent interaction between mental experiences and the physical world. How can mental experiences such as desires, which are entirely immaterial, produce physical effects like bodily movements — in other words, how can a thought move a muscle? And how can physical injuries to our bodies produce the non-physical mental experiences we call pains? These are irreducibly philosophical questions, in spite of their superficial resemblance to psychological problems, because they could not be solved, even in principle, by empirical investigations of any kind, or at least that is what most philosophers and psychologists believe.

A second obvious group of questions, which are even more unambiguously philosophical rather than psychological, are moral or ethical problems. A branch of philosophy called ethics is devoted to questions of morality and general issues of right and wrong. Is it always wrong to tell lies? Is euthanasia immoral? Questions of this type, once again, are impossible in principle to answer through empirical observations of behaviour, and they therefore fall beyond the scope of psychology. Factual questions about moral attitudes and behaviour, and how they develop in children, are legitimate topics for psychological research, but questions about how people ought to behave belong to the field of ethics within the discipline of philosophy. It goes almost without saying that psychologists ought to be, and generally are, concerned about moral issues that arise in psychological research and practice (see chapter 12.6, Anthony Gale).
One trivial source of confusion is worth commenting on at this point. In Britain, the United States, and many other countries, universities traditionally confer the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD or DPhil) rather than "Doctor of Psychology" for advanced studies in psychology. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the standard doctoral degree, not only in psychology and philosophy, but also in physics, chemistry, biology, history, archaeology, and most other arts, science, and social science subjects. A person with a doctorate in any subject can legitimately use the title of doctor, but for obscure historical reasons medical practitioners in the United Kingdom and many other countries are allowed to call themselves doctors even if they do not hold doctoral degrees in any subject.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESEARCH AND FIELDS OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

The fundamental aim of research in psychology can be stated quite simply: it is to discover and understand the nature, functions, and phenomena of behaviour and mental experience. It is like any other branch of scientific research inasmuch as it aims to enlarge our knowledge and understanding of the world; what distinguishes it from other areas of scientific research is the subject matter with which it deals, namely behaviour and mental experience. Psychologists who are engaged in basic research, like basic researchers in other disciplines, pursue knowledge and understanding as ends in themselves. The value of a basic research contribution is judged (or ought to be judged) according to the amount of light that it casts on an aspect of behaviour or mental experience that was previously unknown or imperfectly understood, rather than according to its assumed practical usefulness.

In contrast to this, the various fields of applied psychology and their associated professions (see section 13) are driven by quite different and much more practical aims. They are concerned with applications of psychology to practical problems of everyday life rather than theoretical problems of understanding and explanation. Applied psychology relies partly on basic research findings, which sometimes turn out to be useful in practice, and partly on the results of applied research specifically designed to answer practical questions.

In clinical psychology (see chapter 13.1, Graham E. Powell), the findings of basic and applied research into the classification, aetiology, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental disorders are put to use in an effort to deal with these problems more effectively. In educational (school) psychology (see chapter 13.2, David Fontana), research into problems of learning, adjustment, and behaviour among schoolchildren is applied in an effort to provide practical help to teachers, parents, and children with learning or behaviour problems. In industrial (occupational) and organizational psychology (see chapter 13.3, Wendy Hollway), research into the well-being and efficiency of people at work and into organizational behaviour is applied to
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problems arising in those settings. In forensic (criminological) psychology (see chapter 13.4, Clive R. Hollin), research into all aspects of criminal behaviour is applied in an effort to solve practical problems of crime and punishment.

Psychological research can be classified in many different ways, but all classifications are arbitrary and conjectural. The system of classification that has been adopted in this encyclopedia is not necessarily more rational than any other, but it corresponds as closely as possible, according to a preliminary survey that was carried out, to the way the discipline is divided up for teaching purposes in degree courses in the United States and Britain (Boneau, 1990; Watts, 1990). The section headings reflect a hybrid classification, based partly on the types of psychological processes under investigation (sensation and perception, cognition, learning and skills, emotion and motivation, individual differences and personality, social psychology), partly on levels of analysis (biological aspects of behaviour, developmental psychology), and partly on characteristics of the individuals under investigation (abnormal psychology).

Psychology repudiates all attempts to divide its subject matter into watertight compartments, so some seepage between chapters and even between sections has been condoned in this encyclopedia, and unsurprisingly a section devoted to “special topics” turned out to be necessary because certain obviously important topics refused to fit into any of the other sections. Furthermore, research methods and statistics transcend the classification outlined in the previous paragraph, and it would be inappropriate to classify them as “special topics” because they could hardly be more general, but they are integral to the discipline and are taught in all reputable degree courses, so a further section in this encyclopedia is devoted to them. And for the sake of completeness, a final section deals with the professions of psychology.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research in psychology, as in any other science, always begins with a question that needs answering. The question may arise from the natural curiosity of the researcher, from a formal theory that generates a testable prediction, or from something puzzling thrown up by the findings of previous research. Provided that it relates to behaviour or mental experience and is an empirical question that can be tackled by collecting objective evidence, it is a legitimate problem for psychological research. What follows is a brief outline of the main research methods used in psychology (for a more extended discussion along the same lines, see Colman, 1988, chap. 4).

Case studies

A case study is a relatively primitive research method. In psychology, it
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involves a detailed investigation of a single individual, or occasionally a single social organization. Research of this kind is common in abnormal psychology (see section 10) and comparatively rare in other branches of the discipline. The data reported in case studies may be derived from interviews, diaries, case histories, medical records, questionnaires and other psychometric tests, or direct observations of behaviour. The findings of case studies can be interesting and valuable, but they often suffer from problems of generalizability, because one individual's response to a particular treatment (for example) is not necessarily the same as another's. The accumulation of evidence from a number of case studies, especially if they are reported by independent investigators, can sometimes mitigate this problem. (For more detail on case studies, see chapter 12.5, Francis C. Dane.)

Naturalistic observations

Naturalistic observations, which are discussed in more detail in chapter 12.5, are widely used in ethological research (see chapter 2.2, John Lazarus) and, less commonly, in certain areas of developmental and social psychology (sections 8 and 9). They involve careful observations and recordings of the behaviour of animals or people in their natural habitats. Unlike case studies, which typically include data from interviews and psychometric tests, naturalistic observations are generally non-interactive inasmuch as the investigator tries to avoid influencing the behaviour that is being observed.

Naturalistic observations are often open-ended and exploratory in spirit, but they are sometimes useful for answering specifically focused questions. The range of psychological phenomena for which this method of research is suitable is rather limited, although where it is applicable it often yields important findings about everyday behaviour in natural environments, and it can sometimes serve as a useful corrective to the findings of artificial laboratory studies. The methods of recording observations are, however, often relatively crude and subjective, and this sometimes calls into question the validity of the findings.

Survey research

Survey research (see chapter 12.5, Francis C. Dane) is useful for investigating psychological phenomena in specific sections of a population or in different populations. When it is confined to single populations it usually involves comparisons between groups defined by demographic variables such as age, sex, social class, education, marital status, ethnic identity, and geographical location. It is used, in particular, to answer questions about the incidence, prevalence, and distribution of mental disorders, behaviour patterns, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and personality characteristics. The most common sources of data in survey research are interviews and questionnaires.
To ensure that the individuals studied are truly representative of the population groups to which they belong, survey researchers use sophisticated methods of sampling. The ideal method of sampling, from a theoretical point of view, is simple random sampling, in which every member of the population has an equal chance of inclusion. In practice, simple random sampling is seldom used because of the difficulty of compiling a sampling frame (a list of all members of the population from which to make the random selection) and the further problem of persuading all of the selected subjects to participate in the survey. As a consequence, the most common sampling technique in psychological survey research, and also in market research and opinion polling, is quota sampling. This involves selecting individuals more or less arbitrarily to fill predetermined quotas, matching the proportions in the population at large according to age, sex, social class, or whatever criteria are thought to be important for the research.

**Quasi-experiments and correlational studies**

Quasi-experiments resemble controlled experiments (see below) in so far as they are designed to answer questions about cause and effect, but they lack the full control of conjectured causes and extraneous variables that is characteristic of controlled experiments. Correlational research focuses on non-causal questions about the relationship between variables – intelligence and creativity, introversion and self-esteem, gender and verbal ability, and so on. Both of these research methods, which are discussed in more depth in chapter 12.4 (Michael L. Raulin and Anthony M. Graziano), focus on the relationship between two or more factors over which the investigator has imperfect or non-existent control.

Neither of these research methods can conclusively settle questions about cause and effect, but valuable information about the relationship between variables can often be obtained, and it is sometimes reasonable to draw tentative inferences about probable causal effects from quasi-experiments.

**Controlled experiments**

Controlled experimentation (see chapters 12.1, David D. Stretch, and 12.2, Brian S. Everitt) is the most important research method in psychology, not because experiments are necessarily more objective or precise than other methods, but because they alone allow firm conclusions to be drawn about cause and effect. The defining properties of an experiment are the manipulation of the conjectured cause, called the *independent variable* because it is varied independently by the experimenter, and control of extraneous variables that might also influence the behaviour under investigation, which is called the *dependent variable*. Most experiments take place in laboratory environments, where manipulation and control can be implemented most
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efficiently, but field experiments conducted in naturalistic settings are sometimes carried out when laboratory experiments are infeasible or undesirable for special reasons.

In a well-controlled experiment, all extraneous variables are controlled while the independent variable is manipulated; in factorial designs, more than one independent variable is manipulated simultaneously (chapter 12.2, Brian S. Everitt). In psychology, experimental control is usually achieved through randomization: subjects are randomly assigned to treatment conditions, so that any pre-existing differences between subjects are distributed according to the laws of chance, and subjects in all treatment conditions are then treated identically apart from the deliberate manipulation of the independent variable. This allows statistical methods to be used to evaluate the significance, in relation to chance, of any resulting difference that might be observed in the dependent variable (see chapters 12.1, David D. Stretch, and 12.3, A. W. MacRae).

The purpose of inferential statistics is usually to calculate the probability of obtaining, by chance alone, a difference as large as the one observed, and thereby to provide a rational basis for deciding whether or not the difference is statistically significant. The logical connection between experimental control through randomization and statistical inference is explained in detail in Colman (1988, chap. 4).

SOME KEY CONCEPTS

The chapters that follow this introductory section deal with all major areas of psychological research and practice, from biological aspects of behaviour, through sensation and perception, to cognition, learning and skills, emotion and motivation, individual differences and personality, developmental, social, and abnormal psychology, special topics, research methods and statistics, and the professions of psychology. The chapters in each of these sections can be read without any background knowledge beyond a handful of key concepts that crop up again and again and are of sufficient importance to merit brief explanation in this chapter. Several have already been dealt with, but there are a few more that deserve mention.

Experimental and control groups

All experimental research, and most non-experimental research as well, involves comparisons (see chapter 12.1, David D. Stretch). To test the hypothesis that a particular drug produces improvement in patients with a certain mental disorder, for example, it is not sufficient to measure the improvement in patients who have been administered the drug, because any observed improvement might be due to something quite different, for example spontaneous remission (natural improvement due merely to the
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A well-designed experiment would involve not only an experimental group, containing patients who would receive the drug, but also a comparison group of patients, as closely comparable to the experimental group as possible, treated identically to the experimental subjects except that they would not receive the drug.

The comparison group, which is usually made comparable to the experimental group by randomly assigning subjects to the two groups by tossing a coin or using some other randomizing device, is called a control group. Most psychological experiments involve comparisons between experimental and control groups, though other designs are possible (see chapters 12.1, David D. Stretch, and 12.2, Brian S. Everitt). In the example of the previous paragraph, the ideal experiment would be double-blind, with neither the experimenter nor the patients knowing which of the pills contained the drug and which were merely placebos (inactive dummy pills) until after the results had been recorded. This would ensure that any statistically significant difference that was observed between the experimental and control groups could not be due to biased expectations of the experimenters or subjects.

**Statistical significance**

This concept has been touched on above. A research finding is said to be statistically significant if the probability of obtaining such an extreme finding by chance alone is sufficiently small, by convention usually less than 1 in 20 (the 5 per cent significance level, sometimes written $p < .05$). If a research finding is statistically significant, then the researcher is justified in concluding that the observed effect is "real" and not due merely to chance. If, on the other hand, it is not statistically significant, then chance cannot be ruled out as an explanation and it is impossible to draw any firm conclusion from the result. For a full explanation of this concept, see chapter 12.3 (A. W. MacRae).

**Correlation**

Two variables are said to be positively correlated if high scores on one of them tend to go with high scores on the other, and low scores on one with low scores on the other, like people's heights and weights. The usual statistical index of correlation, which is symbolized by $r$, ranges from 1.00 for perfect positive correlation, through zero for no correlation between unrelated variables, to $-1.00$ for perfect negative correlation. The heights and weights of adults in Britain are positively correlated. According to a survey of a representative sample of 10,000 men and women, which yielded results very similar to findings reported in the United States, the correlations are in fact .47 for men and .35 for women (Knight, 1984), and both of these
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correlations are of course statistically significant. For more on correlation, see chapter 12.3 (A. W. MacRae).

Cognition

Cognition (from the Latin cognoscere, to apprehend) is a rather elastic term used in psychology to refer to attention, thinking, problem-solving, remembering, and other mental processes that can be broadly described as information processing. When psychologists refer to the cognitive aspects of a psychological process, they are often implicitly stressing the mental activity involved in the phenomenon rather than its purely outward, behavioural manifestations. Cognitive psychology (see section 4) is an area of psychological research in its own right, or more precisely a loosely connected set of research areas, but almost every other area of psychological research has cognitive approaches, theories, or aspects, which are frequently referred to in every section of this encyclopedia.

Cognitive science, which should not be confused with cognition or cognitive psychology, is a relatively recent umbrella term for an interdisciplinary endeavour, involving cognitive psychology, the brain sciences, computer science, artificial intelligence, linguistics, and philosophy, to construct theoretical models of information processing (see chapter 4.5, Alan Garnham). Although the activities of cognitive psychologists and cognitive scientists overlap and intersect, their aims and methodologies, and the general flavour of their approaches, are quite distinct.

A NOTE TO READERS

Contributors to this encyclopedia were selected on the basis of their acknowledged expertise in their own fields and their proven ability to communicate their ideas in lively and readable prose. Their expertise is beyond question: they are all leading researchers or practitioners in the areas about which they have written, and never before have so many academic and applied psychologists of such eminence contributed in depth to a single reference work. The contributors were asked to deal with their topics as thoroughly as possible in the space available (about 7,500 words) and to write informatively and entertainingly, at a level accessible to attentive but not necessarily specialist readers. They were requested to assume no prior knowledge on the part of their readers and to explain all technical terminology that they found it necessary to introduce. They were asked to aim for as encyclopedic a presentation of their topics as the constraints of space and level of difficulty permitted, and above all to write with clarity and vigour. Readers will form their own opinions as to how successfully the contributors have achieved these multiple goals.
WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY?

The totality of the chapters that follow provide a better answer to the question “What is Psychology?” than has been provided by this chapter. There is a limit to how much can usefully be said about psychology without getting down to specific examples of what psychologists do. The only way of gaining a proper insight into psychology, or any other discipline for that matter, is by examining its actual content. This encyclopedia provides an overview of the subject matter of psychology written by active researchers and practitioners in every major area of the discipline and its associated practices and professions.

FURTHER READING


For a detailed account of the psychophysical methods developed by Fechner and others, see


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