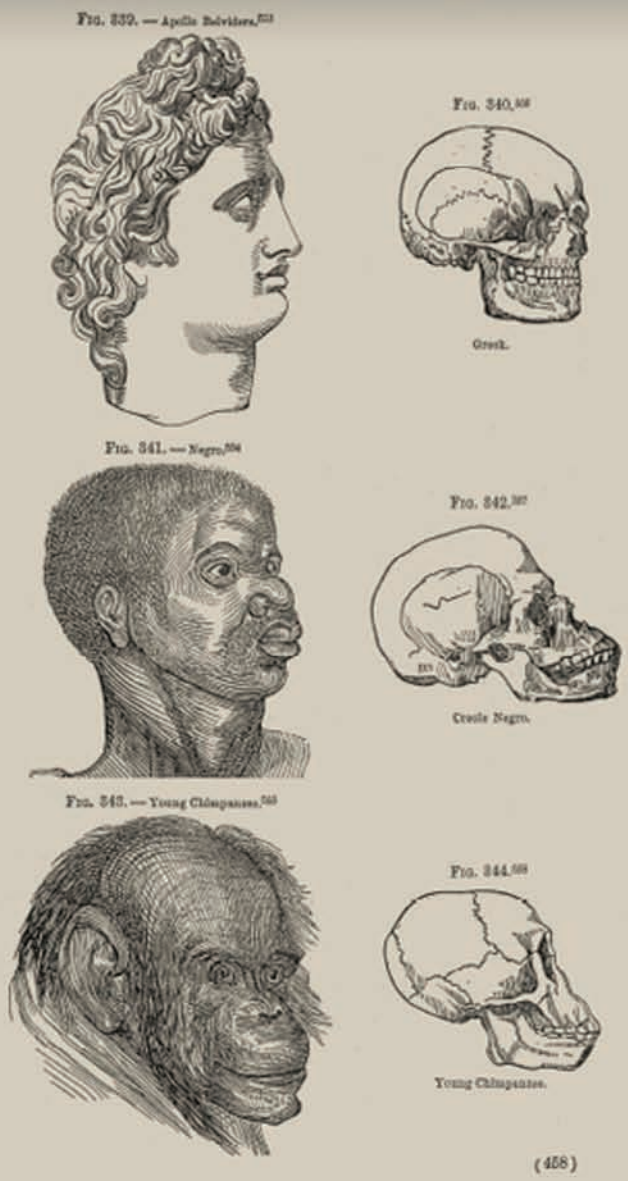
PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

ISSUES AND DEBATES



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BPS BLACKWELL

Psychology in Social Context

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Issues and Debates

Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones,
and Jonathan Elcock

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1 2011

To Jacob, Christiana, Mona, Ken, and all the other Tysons
who've taken an interest in this project
Phil Tyson

To my mother with love
Dai Jones

To Kathleen May Elcock
Jonathan Elcock

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About the Authors

Dr. Philip Tyson is an academic psychologist with a special interest in mental health, neuropsychology, and critical psychology. He did his undergraduate psychology degree at Middlesex University, then completed an MSc in cognitive neuropsychology at the University of Essex. He then moved to the University of Hull to study for his PhD. His thesis here investigated the cognitive effects of medication used to treat schizophrenia. He has worked at the University of Gloucestershire since 2003, where he pursues his joint passions of research and lecturing.

Dai Jones has been a lecturer in psychology at the University of Gloucestershire for 15 years, teaching in the areas of conceptual and historical psychology, cognitive psychology, and research methods. He is co-author (with Jonathan Elcock) of *History and Theories of Psychology*, and contributed four chapters on historical and conceptual issues to *Davey's Complete Psychology*. He has been consulting editor for books on historical and conceptual issues in psychology for BPS Blackwell. His scholarly interests include history of psychology, psychology and social issues, psychological language, and e-pedagogy.

Jonathan Elcock is a senior lecturer at the University of Gloucestershire, where he has worked for 18 years. He has co-authored with Dai Jones *Histories and Theories of Psychology*, and has publications in human–computer interaction, research into cognitive problems in older adults diagnosed with dementia, and discourse analysis of rave culture. His current scholarly interests include historical and conceptual issues in psychology, and how psychology interacts with social class, gender, and sexuality.

Preface

Recent years have seen an increasing recognition of issues with psychology, and a growth in critical approaches to the discipline. However, existing texts in critical psychology are rather advanced for most readers. This book provides an accessible introduction to ideas in critical psychology, highlighting key debates about the assumptions, practices, and claims of the discipline. It takes a distinctive approach of considering historical controversies in psychology to show the ways in which psychology is embedded within particular sociohistorical contexts. Using a range of examples – including IQ measurement, gender, ethics in psychology, parapsychology, and the nature–nurture debate – we show that the discipline is shaped by the ways in which it interrelates with society, and that positions taken towards fundamental issues in psychology are reflections of that social context. The approach we take has a number of advantages over more conventional treatments of issues and debates in psychology, which discuss them in isolation and in quite abstract terms. Our approach allows us to provide concrete examples of the impact of these debates on psychological thought and practice. Our emphasis is on understanding issues in psychology in the context of wider psychological thought, and in the context of society. Thus, for example, bias is considered in talking about psychology's dealings with gender and with race, and also in considering methodology; while the discussion of ethics considers how ethical standards are constructed by society, but are challenged by the demands of governments and other organizations. In addressing these debates, we develop a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of psychology as a reflexive human science.

The material covered in the book is intended to address the topic area of conceptual and historical issues in psychology, as outlined in the British Psychological Society's syllabus requirements for accredited undergraduate courses in psychology, and in the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's subject benchmarks for psychology degrees. It shows how the lessons of history can inform understanding of contemporary psychology, and applies that understanding to issues such as the status of scientific psychology, reductionism, the nature–nurture debate, and ethics in psychology research and practice. A particular emphasis is

placed on understanding the extent to which psychology is constructed within particular social and cultural contexts, and the ways in which psychological concerns are intertwined with political and moral concerns. The book presents an image of psychology as a distinctively human science that is shaped by, and in turn reflexively shapes, the sociohistorical contexts in which it develops.

The book will be useful for specific courses in conceptual and historical issues in psychology, and courses covering controversies in psychology. In addition, specific chapters of the book will be valuable for courses in other areas of psychology; for example, the chapter on intelligence will give useful background for courses on individual differences. The book is organized in such a way as to establish a broad framework for understanding issues in psychology, and to apply this framework to a range of controversies and debates. The framework is established in chapters 1 and 2, which introduce the notion of psychology as a reflexive discipline shaped by society; and chapters 14 and 15, which consider some fundamental issues before drawing conclusions about the nature of psychology. Other chapters consider specific issues, and are designed to be self-contained to a large extent. The intention is for the reader to be able to select from these chapters according to their own interests and needs. Because of this, there is sometimes a small degree of overlap between chapters, which provides multiple perspectives on particular topics.

Each chapter incorporates a number of pedagogical features to aid the reader. Chapters open with a brief introduction, which gives an overview of what the chapter will cover. Each chapter has a consistent structure with sections and subsections, and concludes with a summary. Box-outs are used to focus on specific examples or to suggest activities to advance learning. Chapters conclude with a set of self-test questions to test your understanding, and a set of thinking points to encourage the application of the ideas in the chapter to wider issues. Suggestions for further reading help you to pursue the topic in more depth. These features are intended in part to support the SQ3R reading method, a study skill strategy for improved comprehension and retention. The method has five steps, from which its acronym derives: survey, question, read, recite, and review. The survey stage involves forming an overview of the text: the chapter introductions and summaries, and the consistent structure of each chapter, are intended to facilitate this. The question stage involves developing a set of questions about the material, as a set of study goals, based on the initial survey. The self-test questions included with each chapter can be used directly for this purpose, and can inspire your own further questions. The read stage, as the name suggests, involves reading the target material and making notes as required. The recite stage involves recalling the material: after reading a section, try to remember the material, and to answer your set questions from memory. The review stage is an ongoing process where you look back over your notes on a regular basis, and check that you can still answer your questions.

A consistent theme throughout the book is that the work done by psychologists – the research they choose to conduct, and the interpretations they make – is informed by the pre-existing views of the psychologist. We shall see this, for example, in the work of the "scientific racists" in the early twentieth century, whose search

for differences between racial groups was inspired and shaped by their pre-existing belief that those differences existed. This observation is, of course, as true for the authors of this book as for those the book discusses. It is reflected in the choice of material to include in the book, the ways in which we discuss the material, and the claims we make about the nature of psychology. It's important, therefore, to know and consider our views when reading the text. We all describe ourselves as left of centre politically, and socially liberal, with a particular concern with equality and ethics. We openly acknowledge the influence of these views on the material we present, believing this to be a more honest approach than striving for unattainable objectivity. We attempt to be fair in our coverage of the material throughout the book, but it is impossible to adopt a truly objective stance. Indeed, we argue in the text that claims of objectivity are often used to obscure the subjectivity of those making the claim. Objectivity is often confused with neutrality – the attempt to give equal coverage to different sides in a debate. However, neutrality comes with its own problems. In particular, giving equal weight to competing views may have the effect of validating claims that are rightly seen as marginal; or, conversely, may lead to claims being seen as true solely because they're believed by the majority of people, rather than because they provide the best explanation of a phenomenon. In this book, we give our own evaluation and interpretation of the material we present, because it's impossible to do otherwise. However, we encourage you to consider this as one possible reading amongst many, and to perform your own interpretation in coming to your own position. We want to encourage you to think critically about the issues we address, and part of this entails evaluating the effect of our subjectivity on what we write, and the effect of your own subjectivity on what you believe.

We'd like to acknowledge a number of individuals without whom the book would never have been completed. Our thanks go to Andrew McAleer and Karen Shield from our publishers, for believing in the project and guiding it to fruition. We'd also like to thank our students for acting as guinea pigs for the ideas contained herein. Particular thanks go to Graham Richards for introducing us to a new way of thinking about the nature of psychology. The authors have been greatly influenced by Graham's ideas, as may be reflected in the material that follows. The book is co-authored, and the named writers share responsibility for the content, including any errors and omissions. However, individual chapters have an identified lead author, reflecting his particular interests and expertise. Any queries about the content should be directed to the relevant named author in the first instance.

1 The Nature of Psychology

Dai Jones

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand views of psychology as the systematic study of mind and behaviour.
- Identify the range of approaches adopted in finding explanations in psychology.
- Recognize the ways in which psychology can be approached scientifically.
- Evaluate arguments about the appropriateness of scientific psychology.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

This book introduces a range of issues and debates in psychology by looking at how psychology is actually done. We'll look at several examples of how psychology has engaged with controversial social issues, and use these examples to highlight debates about the way in which psychology is conducted, presented, and understood. Along the way, we'll see that the discipline of psychology is a socially embedded activity that uses a number of methods to produce knowledge about human nature and human behaviour. This activity is conducted by psychologists with multiple purposes behind what they do. This range of methods and purposes leads to psychology being a very diverse discipline, investigating every aspect of human life from a variety of perspectives (Richards, 2010). The result is that different kinds of psychology produce different kinds of knowledge about mental life and behaviour.

Although there is great diversity in the discipline, there is a standard view of psychology that is most commonly presented in popular writing, most often taught in institutions, and most frequently practised by researchers and practitioners. This view sees psychology as an objective science that uncovers the truth about human behaviour (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997). Most kinds of psychology conform to this view to varying degrees, but there are some psychologists who have fundamental disagreements with it. Such psychologists describe themselves as *critical psychologists*, and emphasise the ways in which the discipline has particular relationships with its members, its host society, and its subject matter (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

In this book, we'll consider some of the claims of critical psychologists by looking at examples of what psychology has done, and what it has claimed, from the past and present. In looking at these examples, we'll consider why psychology has produced the knowledge that it has, and evaluate the extent to which the standard view of psychology is accurate, or the claims of critical psychologists are valid. Before we can do this, we need to describe the standard view of psychology more fully. We do that in this chapter. We start by considering what the discipline of psychology claims to be, and where it comes from, before looking at the range of theoretical approaches that psychologists adopt in trying to explain human behaviour. We'll then look particularly at how scientific method can be applied to psychology, before considering some debates about whether such a scientific approach is appropriate.

1.1 What Is Psychology?

The term *psychology* is much used, but also much mis-used. Throughout this book, we will use the term to refer to the academic and professional discipline that investigates mental events and behaviour, and dysfunctions of these. There is a problem here, though, because those things the discipline investigates – mental health, behaviour, and so on – are also called *psychology*. So, psychology is the discipline that has as

Focus Box 1.1 Psychology and psychology

The term *psychology* can refer to a particular subject matter – mental states, behaviour, disorders, and the like – and to the academic and professional discipline that investigates that subject matter. This distinction between the discipline and its subject matter is important. The standard view of the discipline is that it is separate from its subject matter, and is able to objectively observe and theorise about it. So, just as a physicist can investigate gravity objectively, without affecting it, so can the psychologist investigate attitudes without affecting them. This view supports the use of the scientific method to investigate topics in psychology, just as it is used in natural sciences like physics.

An alternative view is that there isn't a clear separation between the discipline of psychology and its subject matter. Rather, psychologists are influenced by their own psychological states in doing their work; and the work of psychologists influences people's psychology, the subject matter of the discipline. We can say that there is a "reflexive" relationship between the discipline and its subject matter (Jones & Elcock, 2001), such that they affect each other interactively (see Figure 1.1). As an example, we'll see in chapter 4 that psychologists have long investigated the question of whether different ethnic groups differ in ability, particularly regarding intelligence. Typically, those psychologists who believe beforehand in the existence of such differences find evidence to support those beliefs, whereas those psychologists who don't believe in such differences find evidence to support their views. The contrast between the two sets of claims is largely due to differences between the views of the psychologists concerned. In addition, the effect of the work is to persuade people of the existence or not of such differences, which then changes their behaviour, which in turn changes the experiences of different ethnic groups and hence the results of future studies in the same area. As Valentine (1992, p.4) states, "[A]ctually doing psychology constitutes part of its subject matter."

The idea that there is a reflexive relationship between the discipline and its subject matter is at the heart of this book. When we look at controversial social issues, such as race and IQ, we'll see that the views of psychologists can influence the results they report, lending support to the idea that the discipline does not stand apart from its subject matter in the way that the natural sciences do. If this is the case, then we need to think differently about many of the claims that psychology makes.

its subject matter psychology! Focus Box 1.1 discusses the relationship between the discipline and its subject matter in more depth.

The term *psychology* is also used more widely. When we think about the performance of sportspeople, we may attribute success or failure to "their psychology". When we think about our own or others' behaviour, we may say that we're psychologising. We're surrounded by claims about psychology in the media, and there's a large market for "popular" psychology. All these uses of the term are reasonable, but by and large they are beyond the scope of this book. Our focus will be on the discipline, and so we'll start by setting out what we think the discipline of psychology consists of.

1.1.1 Popular views of psychology

Given how frequently the term *psychology* is used, it should come as no surprise to learn that there are a range of different views of what psychology is. Unfortunately, popular views of psychology are usually at odds with the reality of the discipline.

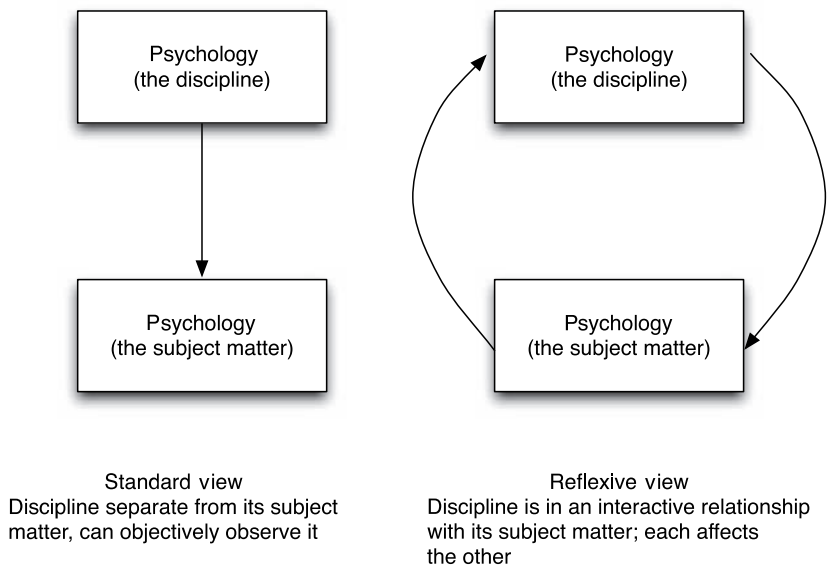

Figure 1.1 The relationship between the discipline of psychology and its subject matter. This book takes the view that there is a reflexive relationship between the discipline of psychology and its subject matter. Each influences the other.

Before giving our definition of psychology, we'll look at some of these popular views. Popular, or "everyday," views of psychology fall into two broad groups. On the one hand, people sometimes think of psychology in terms of self-help or self-improvement, and relate it to the general category of "mind, body, and spirit" so popular with booksellers. On the other hand, there are a set of views of psychology as an academic and professional discipline. We'll look at both of these.

For many people, the idea of psychology is synonymous with self-help. In part this is due to the way psychology is presented in the media (Howard & Bauer, 2001), and in part it is due to the extraordinary growth of the self-help industry (Justman, 2005). Psychology in the media often consists of untested claims and advice, myths, and pseudo-psychological concepts of limited validity (Furnham, 2001). This collection of topics is sometimes termed *popular* or *pop psychology*, and constitutes many people's idea of psychology. There is concern within the discipline of psychology about the influence of pop psychology. Stanovich (2009) suggests that it gives the illusion of expert knowledge that allows any individual to take control of their life. This is a worthy goal, but many of these "experts" lack expertise, and pop psychology often obscures the findings of the psychology conducted by academics and professional practitioners. Such are the concerns about pop psychology that we examine it in more depth in Chapter 13. It suffices for now to say that pop psychology is an inaccurate representation of what the discipline is like (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Despite the prevalence of popular psychology, people recognise a separate discipline of psychology that consists of academics and professionals doing research and conducting interventions. However, here too there is a misunderstanding of what psychology is like. For many, disciplinary psychology is synonymous with the work of Freud; for example, Furnham (2001) suggests that 90% of people in the street identify Freud as a psychologist, but only around 5% can identify a living psychologist. Freud's psychodynamic approach was successful with the public, with people finding it easy to imagine that subconscious motivations and drives may influence our behaviour (Richards, 2010). However, we shall see that it had a limited influence on the discipline of psychology. The other (less) common view of disciplinary psychology is of a person in a white coat shaping people's behaviour through a system of rewards and punishments. This reflects the behaviourist approach that was widespread from around the 1930s to the late 1950s, but this view has little relevance to contemporary academic psychology.

One reason why these popular views persist is that the discipline has done quite a poor job of presenting itself to the public. Despite a long tradition of psychologists urging each other to be accessible and relevant, much disciplinary psychology remains obscure and arcane to the layperson. Most publications in psychology are dry and academic, and require education in the field to be understandable. There have been some notable recent attempts to give more accessible introductions to the discipline, including Stanovich (2009) and Jarrett and Ginsburg (2008). However, we shall see that although psychologists have their own views of what their discipline is, these views may themselves be mistaken. In this book, we hope to give an alternative understanding of the nature of psychology.

1.1.2 Defining psychology

Psychology has been defined in many different ways, but the usual definition is as "the science of mind and behaviour" (e.g. Gross, 2005). This tells us both the subject matter of psychology and the methods that most psychologists prefer to use, those of science. Actually, this definition both reveals and obscures the diversity of modern psychology: reveals, because its subject matter is extensive, and any discipline attempting to investigate such a large subject must be diverse; and obscures, because it suggests that psychology is a single entity, with a unified purpose and approach. As we shall see, there is considerable debate within psychology about the methods that should be used, and the purposes of psychological investigation.

Given the diversity of modern psychology, a safer definition might be "the systematic study of mental life and behaviour". This suggests that psychology investigates a range of phenomena using a range of techniques, with an emphasis on the use of empirical evidence to support theory (Stratton & Hayes, 1999). This emphasis on systematically gathered evidence is what unites psychology, and differentiates it from other approaches to explaining mind and behaviour. For most psychologists, this means using the scientific method, and such is the importance of the scientific method that we devote a large part of this chapter

to discussing its use. Broadly speaking, scientific approaches to psychology aim to ascertain truths about human psychology through objective observation. However, some reject this view and claim that human psychology cannot be investigated objectively. There is debate in some parts of psychology about the nature of the discipline, and particularly about the validity of the scientific method (e.g. Bell, 2002; Gross, 2009). Over the course of this book, we use evidence of how psychology has been conducted to tell us more about these debates. For example, if a psychologist produces theories about racial differences in IQ that seem to be influenced by their political views, then we might doubt their objectivity (see chapter 4). We hope that by the end of the book, the reader will be better able to interpret psychological claims.

1.1.3 The emergence of psychology

The idea of investigating "mind and behaviour" isn't a novel one. As a social species, it is difficult to see how people could not think about such things. We need to understand how the world around us works. We develop some understanding of how the physical world works; for example, we expect most objects to stay where we put them and not to fly away, unless the object in question is a bird. This physical understanding is sometimes called *naïve physics*. Similarly we have a naïve, or "everyday", psychology that is the sum of our understanding of the social and psychological world (Furnham, Callahan, & Rawles, 2003). However, this everyday psychology is flawed in a number of different ways: it is subjective, idiosyncratic, and often inaccurate (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Because of this, from the earliest times scholars have attempted to find better ways of explaining mind and behaviour, developing disciplines such as philosophy and theology. We use the term *reflexive discourse* to refer to such approaches to explaining human nature. Reflexive discourse is an important part of any field that deals with people, including for example education, medicine, and literature. Educators, clinicians, and writers all deal with aspects of human nature, and characterise people in particular ways. In this sense, we can see the discipline of psychology as a distinct form of reflexive discourse, as is everyday psychology. Psychology emerges to provide better explanations of human thought and behaviour than other forms of reflexive discourse, by using systematically gathered evidence.

We can learn a lot from studying the development of different forms of reflexive discourse, and of psychology in particular. Ebbinghaus (1908, p.3) famously stated, "Psychology has a long past, but its real history is short." This is presented in introductory textbooks as meaning that psychology can trace its roots to ancient Greek philosophy, and that psychology answers the same kinds of questions as philosophy but uses the "superior" scientific method to do so. As such, psychologists claim the kudos of the ancient Greeks, together with the kudos of the scientific method. This is an appealing justification for the existence of psychology, but is also a self-serving misrepresentation (Jones & Elcock, 2001). It is true that Greek philosophy represents one of the earliest formal approaches to reflexive discourse. It is also

true that all forms of reflexive discourse ask similar questions to each other about aspects of mind and behaviour. However, Danziger (1997) shows that ancient philosophy and modern psychology have very different understandings of human nature. As such, they represent different strands of reflexive discourse.

Arguably, psychology doesn't have the long past alluded to in Ebbinghaus' quote. It is truer to say that its history is short – psychology as a scientific discipline is often claimed to begin in 1879, when Wilhelm Wundt opened an experimental psychology laboratory in Leipzig. However, this too is something of a misrepresentation. It is more reasonable to suggest that psychology emerged gradually over the course of the nineteenth century, as one of several attempts at a scientific form of reflexive discourse (Jones, 2008a). Why psychology emerges during this period is a demonstration of the extent to which psychology relies on the sociocultural context it finds itself in. Modern Western science is usually seen as beginning during the sixteenth-century Renaissance, although scientific thought can be seen in Hellenic, Indian, Chinese, and, particularly, Arabic civilisations (Munday, 2005). If reflexive discourses have been pursued for millennia, and modern scientific methods have been available for 400 years, why did it take so long for psychology to develop? Richards (2010) claims that the means for scientific psychology were available in 1700, but the demand was absent. It required significant social changes for the idea of psychology to take hold. These included an emphasis on individualism following economic change, and the widespread acceptance of evolutionary thought. Before this, humankind was seen as separate from the animal kingdom and only explicable through theology. With the acceptance of evolutionary thought, humankind came within the scope of natural science (Jones, 2008a). Helped by advances in understanding of physiology and psychophysics, by the second half of the nineteenth century a science of psychology became both possible and, more importantly, acceptable.

When psychology emerged, the form it took was strongly influenced by the social context it emerged within. Initially, the new scientific psychology developed in Germany, whose university system was more amenable to generating new knowledge than more traditional English-speaking universities (Goodwin, 2004). Many of the students at these universities were visiting scholars from the United States, who took the new ideas back to North America. However, the form of psychology that developed in the United States was a hybridisation of German experimentalism and British evolutionary biology, further adapted to local circumstances (Jones & Elcock, 2001). We shall see in chapter 2 that different social contexts in the United States and in Germany led to different forms of psychology. German psychology began as a *science of mind*, but in the United States quickly became a *science of behaviour* – what Leahey (2003) terms a shift from mentalism to behaviouralism. As psychology expanded in the United States, the new knowledge began to be applied in a range of areas, including mental health and business (Benjamin, 2007). By the late 1930s, behaviourism was the most common academic approach, with a separate strand of applied work and with psychoanalytic approaches marginalised (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

1.1.4 Contemporary approaches to psychology

A major change occurred within psychology in the middle of the twentieth century. Although before that most experimental psychology adopted a behaviourist view, it became clear that there were aspects of psychology that behaviourism couldn't explain, notably language. These included additional areas of human experience, for example social interaction, where psychology looked beyond the individual; and neuropsychology, where psychologists investigated the importance of brain operation to human behaviour (Goodwin, 2004). This has led to two separate ways of characterizing the work of academic psychologists: through the theoretical approaches adopted, and through the topics investigated.

In the second half of the twentieth century, a range of approaches developed to investigate psychology. This range is one reason for the diversity of psychology. We'll briefly list them here. For fuller coverage, see Jarvis (2000) or, more briefly, Jones (2008a).

- *Behaviourist.* The behaviourist approach rejects the investigation of internal mental processes, and instead emphasises the investigation of observable behaviour, and the importance of the environment in shaping behaviour. Behaviour is seen as the result of learned associations between stimuli and an individual's responses to them. The main theories are of classical (Pavlovian) and operant (Skinnerian) conditioning.
- *Psychodynamic.* There are a range of psychodynamic forms of psychology, including those of Jung and Adler, but the approach is most commonly associated with Freud's psychoanalytic approach. There's an emphasis on a dynamic inner conflict and the use of a range of defence mechanisms to resolve that conflict; there is also the view that children develop through a number of psychosexual stages.
- *Humanistic.* This approach is mainly applied to counselling. It rejects determinism and emphasises free will. As part of this, it rejects the positive truth seeking of science and instead investigates phenomena from the subjective experience of individuals. The emphasis is on the need to study the whole person.
- *Cognitive.* This is the main contemporary approach to experimental psychology, investigating topics in cognitive psychology and also in social and developmental psychology, amongst others. The approach emphasises active mental processing, seeing the brain as an information processor like a computer. The cognitive approach uses experimental methods, but also uses computer modelling and findings from neuropsychology.
- *Physiological.* The physiological approach investigates brain function in both healthy and impaired brains, brain chemistry and its influence on psychological function, and the role of genetics in influencing behaviour. The focus may be on either brain factors or genetics, or may be a combination of both. The common assumption that unites forms of the physiological approach is that biology underlies behaviour.

- *Social constructionist.* The social constructionist approach is relatively recent. It challenges mainstream psychology methodologically and, for some, politically. Social constructionists believe that we construct our view of the world through social interaction, and that the ways in which we construct the world affect our actions. The approach investigates our constructions of the world through the analysis of the language we use to describe it.

This range of approaches exists because of the complexity of human behaviour. For any particular phenomenon in psychology, it may be explained at one of several levels of explanation, from basic physiology to the influence of others on our behaviour (Jones, 2008d). There's no one right level of explanation: which is appropriate depends on the kind of question one wants to ask. For example, we might want to know why a particular behaviour is performed, or how it is performed. These are two different questions, and may require different approaches to answer them. This presents a potential problem. Given that psychologists are able to choose different approaches for a particular question, then it may be that psychologists will choose approaches that will give them the kinds of answer they want. As an example, when we consider psychology and gender in chapter 5, we'll see that some psychologists investigate gender differences using a physiological or cognitive approach, while others reject the notion of fixed gender differences and adopt a social constructionist approach. This is one way in which the views of the psychologist may influence the theories they produce.

In addition to the theoretical approaches listed above, there is a standard set of topic areas within contemporary psychology which capture most aspects of human nature, behaviour, and experience. Psychologists may identify themselves through the topic area they investigate; for example, someone may describe themselves as a social psychologist. This set of topic areas is reflected in the curricula of taught psychology programmes. In the United Kingdom, for example, the British Psychological Society has a standard syllabus for accredited psychology degrees. This syllabus identifies five main topic areas:

- *Cognitive psychology*. This considers the mental processes underpinning cognition, including perception, memory, thinking and reasoning, and language.
- *Psychobiology.* This looks at both brain function and architecture, and genetic inheritance, and how they influence mind and behaviour.
- *Social psychology.* This area covers people's interpersonal and group behaviours.
- *Developmental psychology.* This investigates various aspects of development, including cognitive and social development, throughout the life span.
- *Individual differences.* This looks at topics in personality and intelligence, including their measurement and the existence of individual differences.

The set of approaches that may be adopted and the set of topics that may be studied intersect with each other. Different psychologists may use the same approach to investigate different phenomena, or different approaches to investigate the

same phenomenon. For example, the cognitive approach may be applied to cognitive psychology or to social psychology, while social psychological phenomena may be investigated using a cognitive approach or a social constructionist approach (Jarvis, 2000). This combination of topics and approaches leads to the diversity of contemporary psychology. Indeed, some would claim that various areas of psychology differ so much from each other that they constitute different kinds of psychology. That is, they are separate forms of reflexive discourse that all happen to share the label *psychology* (Richards, 2010).

1.2 Psychology as Science

We have already seen that there is a considerable degree of diversity in psychology. However, we have also heard that for most people, a defining characteristic of psychology is that it uses the scientific method to investigate phenomena. Of the six approaches listed above, only the humanist and social constructionist approaches reject the scientific method. One reason why the scientific method is so highly valued is that it is seen as ensuring objectivity. We will see throughout the book that some of the most controversial issues in psychology revolve around whether or not psychologists are making objective claims. Given this, it is important that we understand why science is believed to ensure objectivity, and reasons why this belief may be misplaced.

1.2.1 The appeal of science

Jones (2008b, p.20) describes science as a "way of knowing" that has a particular appeal in modern society. Part of the reason for this appeal is that scientific findings can be tested by others, providing a degree of self-regulation in scientific claims: it is difficult, though not impossible, for idiosyncratic or unsupported claims to be accepted without challenge. Beyond that though, the appeal of science reflects changes in society since the Renaissance, and particularly since the Industrial Revolution. The technologies wrought in the Industrial Revolution were seen as improving people's lives, and science came to be seen as a benefactor. A significant reason why scientific psychology developed in the United States in particular is that people wanted a technology of social change (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Later in the book, we'll see many examples of how this desire for a practical science showed itself in the work of psychologists.

When scientific psychology first emerged in the late nineteenth century, there were competing ideas of what a scientific psychology might be like (Danziger, 1994). As psychology grew, and as behaviourism became the dominant approach to experimental psychology, a standard methodology developed in psychology. This standard method is that which is most commonly taught in psychology courses and most commonly used by psychology researchers, and is often presented as the "obvious and only way" to do psychology research (Jones & Elcock, 2001, p.60).

However, Danziger (1994) shows that the reasons why this particular form of science was adopted owe much to its value in a particular social context. McGhee (2001) shows how psychology's methods reflect philosophies of science that were extant in the 1930s, reflecting several hundreds of years of development of classical science. However, philosophies of science have developed since the 1930s, particularly with advances in quantum physics and an increased appreciation of the sociology of scientific knowledge (Potter, 1996). McGhee suggests that the result is that "some psychological research is still stuck in an earlier framework" (p.23). Despite this, it is still the standard methodology, and so is the method that we discuss here. As you might imagine, though, there are issues with this method. We shall discuss some of those in the next section.

1.2.2 The nature of science

The standard approach to science involves systematically observing regularities, making predictions from these regularities, and then testing the resulting predictions. This process can be repeated by others, so our results can be independently verified. This increases our faith that they are correct rather than the result of idiosyncratic supposition. Classical science has the aims of description, prediction, and control (Gross, 2009). These aims are related. In investigating a given phenomenon, we first give an objective and accurate description of it. We can then develop a theory, and use this to make predictions. We can test these predictions in a controlled study. If our predictions are correct, then we believe our theory to be correct, and we have a better understanding of the phenomenon. If the predictions turn out not to be correct, then there's a problem with our theory and we should either revise or abandon it. Having theories that we believe to be correct allows us to exert some control over the phenomenon.

Science has a number of features, and these features underpin the way in which science is conducted and the kinds of theories that science produces. Only some theories count as scientific, and they do so insofar as they display these features. When people debate whether psychology should be a science, they're asking whether psychology can and should display the features of science. Gross (2009) identifies these as including:

- *Positivism*. Science should attempt to find positive, objective truths.
- *Determinism*. Events have determining causes, and science is concerned with identifying these causes.
- *Materialism*. Only matter exists, and the causes of events are features of the material world.
- *Reductionism*. Complex phenomena can be understood through their constituent parts. Understanding of a whole situation comes from understanding the simpler parts that make up the situation.
- *Empiricism*. Scientific theories should be developed from observed evidence.

Most of the approaches to psychology described previously accept these features and develop theories that display them. However, these are assumptions that come about because of a desire to use the scientific method, and they are debated. For example, humanists reject the idea that psychologists should search for objective truths. We'll see in later chapters that scientific explanations may not be the best explanations for some psychological phenomena.

1.3 Issues in Scientific Psychology

While some debate whether psychology should be a science, it is a fact that most psychology is done scientifically. When later we look at some of the controversial claims made by psychologists, we'll see that these claims have been supported by evidence that is claimed to be scientific. To gain a better understanding of these controversies, we need to focus on the scientific approach to psychology, and consider what kinds of issues might arise in taking such an approach.

1.3.1 Issues in the quality of scientific psychology

One set of issues in scientific psychology relates to how well scientific research is done. Studies have to be carefully designed and conducted to ensure they provide the evidence that the researcher hopes for. In this section we'll look at some general issues in how scientific psychology is done.

Control

The logic of the psychology experiment is that if we change one aspect of a situation, and if we then observe a change in some measure, then we can say that the change in the situation caused the change in the measure. However, this is true only if we can guarantee that the only aspect of the situation that changed is the one we wanted to change. If anything else in the situation has changed, or if the two different aspects of the situation differ in any other way, then we can't draw the conclusion that our change caused the change in the measure – it could have been one of the other differences instead. To ensure that this doesn't happen, we need to exert control over the situation, such that the only thing differing between different aspects of a situation is that which we want to differ. We also need to know that there aren't any hidden, underlying differences. Only then can we say something causes a difference (Gomm, 2003).

Total control is very difficult to achieve in a pure experiment, but it is possible with careful design. However, many claims in psychology are based on quasi-experiments. In a pure experiment, the experimenter engineers a change and can, in principle, guarantee that this is the only difference between experimental groups. In a quasi-experiment, a researcher looks for differences between pre-existing groups. It looks like an experiment, but there's no control. Think about

this the next time you hear someone claim that they've found differences in, say, sociability between men and women. Usually when researchers report gender differences, they report them as fixed biological facts. However, the researchers aren't themselves changing the gender of their participants. They have no way of knowing whether there have been different life experiences between men and women that might affect their sociability, meaning that sociability might be entirely socially determined and have nothing to do with biology (Jones, 2008c). Chapter 5 considers problems with gender research in more depth.

Validity

The problem of control is an example of the wider issue of validity. *Validity* has two senses. On the one hand, it refers to the extent to which a study investigates what it claims to investigate, known as *internal validity*. A study without adequate control doesn't have internal validity, and hence its results can't be trusted (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2004).

The other sense of validity is that of external validity. *External validity* refers to the extent to which the results of a study apply more widely. Psychologists are usually interested in universal aspects of human nature. However, it's impossible to investigate everyone on a particular characteristic. Because of this, psychologists do research on samples from a wider population, and learn about the subset of the population that they test. They hope that they can generalise the results from that small group to the wider population. However, there are two main reasons why this may not be possible (Jones, 2008b). On the one hand, there is a trade-off between internal validity and external validity. The more carefully a researcher constructs a study to ensure internal validity, the less that study is like real life (McGhee, 2001). Think about a typical experiment investigating short-term memory. This may involve asking people to remember lists of words, but that's a very artificial situation. Most people don't remember lists of words outside of a laboratory. The other main threat to external validity comes from the fact that we have to rely on studying samples. We can only generalise from a sample to the wider population to the extent to which that sample is typical, or representative, of the wider population. Imagine that we gave a list of short words to one group of people, and a list of long words to another group of people. It may be that the group getting the short words just happened to have particularly good short-term memories, and so weren't typical of the wider population. In that case, it would be wrong to claim that in all cases, short words are easier to remember than long words (McGhee, 2001).

Measurement

A particular problem faced by psychologists is that it's not usually possible to directly observe psychological phenomena. For example, how do we measure "extroversion"? However, the scientific method relies on making observations. The difficulty of measuring internal mental states is one reason why philosophers such as Kant argued for the impossibility of a science of the mind, and part of the

reason why behaviourists focused on overt behaviour (Goodwin, 2004). The solution was found in physics. The principle of operationism stated that hypothetical constructs, such as extroversion, can be measured in terms of the observable behaviours they produce (Jones & Elcock, 2001). So, people with high levels of extroversion behave in outgoing ways, while people with low levels of extroversion behave in a less outgoing manner. This allowed psychologists to develop measures of psychological phenomena through operational definitions (Jones, 2008b). In the case of extroversion, a standard questionnaire measuring extroversion, the EPI (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964), asks respondents to indicate how frequently they behave in certain kinds of behaviour, with some behaviours counting as extroverted, and some behaviours counting as introverted.

The idea of operationism sounds reasonable, and it makes it possible to extend scientific psychology to a range of areas that couldn't otherwise be investigated. However, it does lead to a range of issues. One is that such measures have to be carefully designed to ensure that they measure what they claim to measure, and that they do so accurately. Numerous techniques have been developed to help psychologists do this (Michell, 1999). There are, however, more fundamental issues. In particular, someone has to decide what counts as part of a measurement. Which behaviours are extroverted, and which are introverted? This can lead to tests being a reflection of attitudes in a particular culture at a particular point in time (Richards, 2010), rather than a reflection of some enduring truth. This often goes unrecognised, and psychological measurements are often treated as true measures of fixed aspects of human nature. A further problem is that of reification (Jones, 2008b). When psychologists develop tests for hypothetical constructs, they assume that the existence of the test is proof that the construct exists, but this isn't necessarily the case. We might develop a questionnaire measuring degree of liking for hamsters that seems to give reliable and meaningful numbers. However, that doesn't mean that everyone has a fixed level of hamster liking as a stable personality trait. A similar criticism is sometimes levelled at intelligence: although there are many intelligence tests, there's considerable debate about whether intelligence exists as a single, fixed aspect of human capability (Richardson, 2000; see also chapter 3).

Artefacts

A final issue in the way in which scientific psychology is done is the possibility of artefacts. Artefacts are results in investigations arising from the behaviour of the participants or the researchers. As such, they invalidate the results of a study because the results aren't being caused by what the investigator believes the cause to be (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2007). Participant artefacts typically arise when participants are able to guess what they think a study is trying to find, and respond in a way that either helps or hinders the researcher's intention. Either way, the results are artificial because the participants aren't behaving naturally. Experimenter effects come in a range of forms, but in general come about because researchers have certain expectations about what the results of a study will be, and behave

either intentionally or unintentionally in ways that make those results more likely. For example, chapter 4 describes measurements of the cranial capacity of skulls to ascertain whether there were differences in capacity between the skulls of whites and blacks. Gould (1996) describes how the measurers knew beforehand which skulls were white and which black, and tried harder to fill the white skulls to get a higher measure.

1.3.2 Issues with bias in scientific psychology

The issues discussed in the previous section relate to whether scientific studies are conducted well enough for us to have faith in their results. It is possible to create and conduct well-designed studies that do give us results we can trust. However, this isn't always done, and in reading about psychological research it is important to consider how well research has been conducted. For the most part, poorly conducted research can be seen as carelessness by the researcher. However, in some cases research may be conducted which is explicitly biased (Banyard, 1999). This is particularly likely in those areas where psychology engages with controversial social issues, such as those covered in this book.

A range of different forms of bias has been identified within psychology. The most commonly discussed are ethnocentrism, androcentrism, and racism (Jones, 2008c). *Ethnocentrism* relates to the way in which psychologists approach cultural differences. In an ethnocentric view, the psychologist's own culture is seen as correct or natural, and any differences observed in other cultures are seen as deficient. For example, psychologists in strongly individualistic cultures may see the behaviour of people from more collectivist cultures in negative terms. *Androcentrism* relates to a male-centred point of view, where male characteristics and performance are seen as the norm, and any deviation by women is seen negatively. *Racism* similarly relates to looking for differences between ethnic groups, and seeing any differences found as suggesting a deficiency on the part of one group or another.

What unites these forms of bias is that they occur when the views, attitudes, and values of psychologists influence the claims they make. The existence of bias threatens psychology's claim to be an objective science. Banyard (1999) suggests that psychologists cannot be objective and value free, but adds that often psychologists are blind to their biases. In part this may be deliberate, but more generally psychologists often assume that the methods they use necessarily assure objectivity. However, both Banyard (1999) and Jones (2008c) show that the potential for bias is inherent in psychology's methods. Scientific approaches to psychology typically look for differences between groups, often assuming one group to be the norm; look at "average" measures, while failing to recognise the wide variation in performance within groups; ignore minority groups; and ascribe fixed, causal differences following quasi-experiments. In later chapters, we shall see these characteristics in much of the research reported on differences between racial and gender groups.

1.4 Chapter Summary

We began the chapter by defining psychology as an academic and professional discipline that engages in reflexive discourse, usually using the scientific method. This emerged gradually over the course of the nineteenth century, and grew quickly in the twentieth century. Its emergence and growth depended on a range of social factors. After a period in which psychology was characterised by distinct "schools" of psychology, contemporary psychology has become a diverse discipline that investigates a range of topics using a number of different approaches, while sharing a commitment to the use of systematic research methods. There is disagreement in the discipline over what the appropriate approach to use is, and particularly over whether psychology should try to adopt a scientific method. Some characterise *psychology* as an umbrella term incorporating a range of different forms of reflexive discourse, but for the most part psychology presents a united front as "the science of mind and behaviour."

Having established that most psychologists adopt a scientific approach to the discipline, we then looked at why the scientific method is so appealing. We saw that there are particular social factors encouraging the view of science as the best way of knowing about human nature. We went on to consider the features of science and how scientific psychology can be done, but saw that there are a range of issues in the conduct of scientific psychology. In particular, we suggested that there is a range of biases that might afflict psychology, both due to the views of psychologists and due to the methods that scientific psychology uses. The underlying theme throughout the chapter has been psychology's claim to be an objective, value-free science, divorced from its social context, that finds the truth of human nature. We've presented the grounds for this claim, but also suggested a number of reasons to doubt it. In the rest of the book, we'll look at ways in which psychology has been done, to consider the claim in more depth. We start in the next chapter by considering the extent to which psychology is embedded in particular social contexts.

Self-test Questions

1. What are the differences between *academic psychology* and *popular psychology*?
2. How can we define *psychology*?
3. What does the term *reflexive discourse* refer to?
4. Why did psychology emerge when it did?
5. What different approaches do contemporary psychologists adopt?
6. Why is a scientific approach to psychology so appealing?
7. What are the key features of science?
8. What issues arise in the way in which scientific psychology is done?
9. What forms of bias exist in psychology?

Thinking Points

1. In what ways does psychology differ from other forms of reflexive discourse such as philosophy, sociology, and theology?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of psychology's diversity?
3. What are the limitations of the scientific approach as a way of knowing for psychology?

Further Reading

Benjamin, L. T. (2007). A *brief history of modern psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

There are many histories of psychology available. As the title suggests, this one is brief, but it gives a clear coverage of the emergence of modern psychology.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd edn). London: Routledge.

Few introductory textbooks discuss social constructionism, but it is becoming an important approach to contemporary psychology. This book gives an accessible introduction to the field.

Gross, R. (2009). *Themes, issues and debates in psychology* (3rd edn). London: Hodder Arnold.

The chapter "Psychology as Science" has an introduction to the idea of psychology as a science and issues and debates around this.

Jarvis, M. (2000). *Theoretical approaches in psychology*. London: Routledge.

Gives a good coverage of the range of theoretical approaches to be found in psychology. It's particularly thorough on physiological approaches, but has little on social constructionism.

McGhee, P. (2001). *Thinking psychologically*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gives a very good critical overview to thinking about psychology, as well as doing psychology.

Richards, G. (2010). *Putting psychology in its place: Critical historical perspectives* (3rd edn). London: Routledge.

This is key reading for the critical, reflexive view of psychology described in this chapter.

2 Psychology and Society

Dai Jones

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the use of history as a way of understanding contemporary psychology.
- Identify how social context has shaped the development of psychology.
- Understand the relationship between psychology and society.
- Appreciate the mechanisms through which psychology interacts with society.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

Chapter 1 outlined a standard view of psychology as being an objective science that seeks the truth about human nature, and as such is necessarily unaffected by the social context the discipline is located within. We started to look at reasons why psychology's claims to be divorced from social context might be unfounded. In this chapter we look at this issue in more depth, and in the process develop a conceptual framework for the discussion of particular issues in the following chapters. This framework includes a consideration of the value of critical history in understanding contemporary psychology, and an examination of the ways in which the discipline of psychology interacts with its host society. We'll look at a range of historical examples to establish this framework; in later chapters, we'll see that the same situation obtains in the present day.

We start the chapter by looking at the use of history as a tool for thinking about the nature of psychology, believing that historical understanding offers insights into the fundamental nature of the discipline (Harris, 1997). We follow this by considering a number of examples where psychology appears to have been shaped by its host society, in the United States, in Germany, and in the United Kingdom. By interrogating these examples, we can start to identify the kinds of social forces that influence psychology, and the kind of effect psychology has, in turn, on its host society. We finish the chapter by investigating different aspects of the relationship between psychology and society, including the mechanisms through which this relationship is effected. In later chapters we'll look at the ways in which the relationship between psychology and society has affected the ways in which psychology has discussed a variety of social issues.

2.1 History as Metatheory

Throughout this book, we use historical examples to illustrate the claims we want to make about the nature of psychology. This may seem strange, because historical events are in the past and their contemporary relevance may seem doubtful. However, in recent years there has been an increasing awareness that studying history can teach us important lessons about psychology and its role in society (Jansz, 2004). However, to do so it is necessary to take a particular approach to understanding the history of psychology. In this section, we outline the approaches we'll adopt in the rest of the book.

2.1.1 Critical psychology

In Chapter 1, we presented a standard view of psychology as a science conducted by objective scientists who find the truth about human nature and behaviour. Prilleltensky and Fox (1997) contrast this with a range of competing views, grouped together under the label *critical psychology*. These include feminist psychology

(e.g. Crawford & Unger, 2003), gay and lesbian psychology (e.g. Coyle & Kitzinger, 2002), and critical social psychology (e.g. Hepburn, 2002). Although these various forms of critical psychology differ in their specific areas of concern, they share an emphasis on how a range of social factors influence the development of the discipline, the reflexivity of the discipline, and the socio-political consequences of psychological work (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Many forms of critical psychology adopt an explicitly political stance, offering a critique of society as well as a critique of psychology (Hepburn, 2002). Critical psychologists challenge the status quo within society (Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997), for example in how society deals with issues of gender, race, and sexuality. Further, they see mainstream psychology as a part of the status quo, and indeed as instrumental in shaping and maintaining social organisations. Their critique of psychology, then, is a part of a wider critique of society, with psychology being seen as a part of the problem (Hepburn, 2002).

In questioning psychology's role in society, critical psychologists question the assumptions and practices of psychology (Hepburn, 2002). However, these questions need not only form part of a political critique. Another form of critical psychology can be identified that doesn't pursue a particular political project but is concerned with the adequacy of psychological theory and practice. This form, described by Jones and Elcock (2001) as *metatheoretical critical psychology*, seeks a better understanding of the nature of psychology as a discipline, and of the knowledge products it produces. A *metatheory* is a theory about other theories. The term was originally used in mathematics to describe attempts to prove the consistency of mathematical theories, and later extended to other areas. The term isn't widely used in the social sciences, with the notable exception of Fiske and Shweder (1986), but the approach of analysing the foundations and results of theories is at the heart of critical psychology. If we view psychological knowledge as a collection of theories about human nature and behaviour, then a metatheory of psychology makes claims about the origins of those theories and their validity. We adopt a metatheoretical perspective to consider how psychological theories are arrived at, and use this understanding to evaluate theoretical claims.

2.1.2 History as metatheory

We use historical understanding as a tool for metatheoretical analysis (Jones & Elcock, 2001), and to do so take a particular approach to history. Historians of psychology distinguish between two main forms of history, "old" history and "new" history (Furumoto, 1989). Old-style histories are the more familiar. They tend to emphasise the work of a few great individuals, highlighting classic studies and breakthroughs in chronological order. New histories seek to be more contextual, and to identify the factors that shape historical developments (Goodwin, 2004). New-style histories emerged within psychology in the 1970s, in tandem with advances in the sociology of scientific knowledge – the recognition that science is a social activity, and its knowledge products are social creations

(Jones & Elcock, 2001). Old-style and new-style histories differ in some fundamental ways, which we'll review briefly.

The first difference between old and new history is in perspective. Old-style histories are presentist – the authors see their contemporary perspective as the true state of affairs, and historical work is judged in terms of how it contributed to present knowledge. New-style histories are more historicist, and try to interpret historical developments in terms of the knowledge and value systems extant at the time of the work. Goodwin (2004) gives the example of early intelligence testing. From a modern-day perspective, it is easy to criticise such work and attribute malign purposes to people such as Goddard (see Chapter 3). However, a historicist approach recognises the factors that shaped Goddard's work and evaluates it in its own terms, albeit without accepting it as true (Harris, 1997).

A second difference between old and new histories is that of internalism versus contextualism. The term *internalist* is used pejoratively to describe histories that exclude consideration of the wider context in which work is conducted, whereas contextualist histories see the development of psychology as resulting from the interrelation of many factors (Van Drunen & Jansz, 2004). A contextualist history of intelligence testing would consider factors such as the economic and political value of the tests.

The third distinction is between personalistic and naturalistic histories (Goodwin, 2004). Personalistic (or *heroic*, or *great man*) histories emphasise the efforts of individuals in shaping history, and overlook the extent to which any individual's work relies on others and the influence of the context in which individuals work. The naturalistic approach recognises that individuals' actions are influenced by the context in which they act. In this view, developments are seen as the result of an interplay between individuals and the environment in which they work (Goodwin, 2004).

The final dimension of difference is that of realism versus constructivism (Van Drunen & Jansz, 2004). Realist histories assume that theories reflect some real state of affairs in the world, and that psychology's development reflects improved understanding of the real state of affairs. Constructivist histories see theories as ideas that are accepted at a particular time, but not necessarily true in any real sense. The truth of any particular theory is less important than the ways in which it was arrived at, and the reasons why it was accepted. The same argument applies to currently accepted theories (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Just as behaviourist ideas were widely accepted in the 1940s, so are cognitive ideas widely accepted today. However, just as behaviourist ideas were ultimately rejected by mainstream psychology, so might cognitive ideas be rejected by future psychologists. The task of the constructivist historian is to understand why ideas are accepted or rejected.

These various dimensions of difference interrelate. Personalistic histories are necessarily internalist, whereas constructivist histories tend to be contextualist. Old-style histories are typically presentist, internal, personalistic, and realist, and celebrate contemporary psychology as a true set of theories, arrived at through the ever-improving work of a succession of great individuals. Such histories serve

to justify the status and validity of contemporary psychological knowledge (Jones & Elcock, 2001). In contrast, new histories are historicist, contextual, naturalistic, and constructivist. They seek a fuller understanding of the nature of psychology, and particularly of the contextual forces that shape the development and acceptance of psychological ideas. They are clearly compatible with metatheoretical critical psychology as described in the previous section (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Using new-style history, we can look at how particular sociocultural contexts have shaped psychology, as well as how psychology has shaped society.

2.2 Examples from History

In the previous section, we learned that adopting an appropriate approach to history can show us how psychology is shaped by the social context in which it develops. In this section we'll exemplify that claim by briefly considering some aspects of the historical development of psychology at the start of the twentieth century. In a necessarily very brief sketch, we'll concentrate on developments that show the effect of social context on psychology. These examples will be drawn from different societies to show that different societies produce different forms of psychology.

2.2.1 Psychology in the United States

Although psychology emerged in Germany, its quickest growth was in the United States. In the late nineteenth century, the United States was recovering from its civil war, rapidly industrialising, and experiencing increasing urbanisation. There was internal migration from recently emancipated African Americans, and high immigration from overseas. These changes led to numerous social problems, particularly in overcrowded cities (Jones & Elcock, 2001). At the same time, intellectual developments over the course of the century led to the belief that problems could be solved through the application of science and technology (Leahey, 2003). Solving human problems would require a science of human nature, and it was in this context that psychology grew in the United States.

When psychology developed in the late nineteenth century, there were three competing models of psychological science. In Germany, Wundt and others developed an experimental psychology of consciousness; in France, the focus was on clinical case studies; and in Britain, a psychology of adaption drew on evolutionary theory and statistics (Leahey, 2003). The first US psychologists were trained in Germany, where the PhD had been introduced as a form of graduate education unavailable in the United States. The newly trained psychologists returned to establish psychology departments in US universities (Goodwin, 2004). However, these early psychologists typically rejected the German approach and developed a distinctively American psychology (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

The discipline of psychology that emerged in the United States was shaped by an earlier tradition of "faculty psychology" that emphasised an understanding of

mental faculties in the context of moral education (Richards, 2010). The new psychology in the United States took an evolutionary perspective, drawing on the British tradition. However, an evolutionary perspective didn't allow the possibility of change, but the American social context required a human science that could inform social intervention. Addressing society's problems through psychology meant changing behaviour, so a form of psychology that allowed for behavioural change was needed. In this context, American psychology increasingly investigated behaviour rather than mind, ultimately leading to the emergence of behaviourism (Jones & Elcock, 2001). This occurred in a context of increasing individualisation (Jansz, 2004), and particularly in the United States a belief in self-advancement through individual effort. The psychology that developed focused on reductionist explanations of individual behaviour (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

While theoretical psychology in the United States developed along behaviouristic lines, a separate tradition also emerged. American psychology had always been concerned with application, but this application could be either interventionist, as with behaviourism, or descriptive, in the service of social management (Jansz, 2004). Social management grew throughout the nineteenth century, and before the Second World War was often concerned with protecting society from the more problematic members of that society, for example the mentally deficient or the criminal. The common view of such individuals was that they were congenitally deficient, and as such beyond redemption. Identifying them required techniques of description and diagnosis, leading to the growth of the mental-testing movement (Gould, 1996) and the application of such techniques to eugenics and immigration control. This movement is described more fully in chapter 3. For now, it's important to note that those engaged in diagnosis tended to adopt nativist views of human nature, whereas those involved in interventionist attempts at remediation tended to adopt nurturist views (Richards, 2010). A similar distinction is still evident today.

2.2.2 Psychology in Germany

In the United States between 1913 and 1935, behaviourism took hold in academic psychology, and the mental testing movement grew through offering its expertise to policy makers (Zenderland, 1998). However, the social context in Germany during the same period was somewhat different. The idea of a single Germany was an old one, but before 1871 there was no single German nation-state, but rather a collection of principalities, duchies, and other statelets. Perhaps because of this, there was an emphasis on a community united by a common language rather than individualism (Jones & Elcock, 2001). This fragmentation, and successive wars, retarded economic development, so that when the various statelets united as the German Empire in 1871, the new empire was keen to develop to rival the dominant powers of the time, the United Kingdom and France. Education, and the production of knowledge, was a major part of this development. A new university system provided a broad humanistic education (*Bildung*) emphasising community values, with the intention of creating an intellectual elite. In addition, the universities were

to generate new knowledge, particularly in the sciences (*Wissenschaft*). Philosophy played a key role in this as a bridge between Bildung and Wissenschaft, and hence enjoyed a privileged position. In addition, German academics were barred from interfering in social or political matters (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Although psychologists in the United States advanced their discipline by displacing philosophy, particularly through the promise of addressing social problems, the growth of German psychology was severely constrained (Leahey, 2003).

While psychology was slowly establishing itself in Germany, traditional German society was coming under attack from rapid industrialisation, another element of the German Empire's attempt to rival the United Kingdom and France. This brought with it increased urbanisation and increased individualism. The intellectual elite bred by the university system saw themselves as part of the defence of the old value system, and forms of psychology developed that were compatible with this role (Jones & Elcock, 2001). These forms of psychology were holistic, emphasising the extent to which mental life was culturally situated (Ash, 1995). The most important approach was Gestalt psychology, which rejected reductionist approaches to psychology, believing that they ignored human values (Richards, 2010). Gestalt psychology had its main period of dominance between 1910 and 1930, and was seen as an alternative to the behaviourism that developed in the United States, for example receiving equal coverage in Woodworth's (1931) *Contemporary Schools of Psychology*. The contrast between Gestalt psychology and behaviourism illustrates the extent to which the kind of psychology produced depends upon the cultural context in which the discipline emerges.

Traditional histories of psychology tend to dismiss Gestalt psychology as a short-term movement that was doomed to failure for being unscientific (Richards, 2010). This is an example of celebratory history – if Gestalt psychology wasn't suitably scientific, then that suggests that behaviourism was suitably so. However, behaviourism and Gestalt psychology differed in their view of what being scientific meant (Richards, 2010). Behaviourism attempted to model psychological science on existing natural sciences, whereas Gestalt psychologists tried to model their science on the newly emerging quantum physics. The very modern scientific approach of Gestalt struggled to find acceptance in other social settings such as the United States, although it had an ongoing influence on developments in social and cognitive psychology (Murray, 1994). Arguably, though, the main reason why Gestalt failed to develop significantly beyond the 1930s was because of a dramatic change in German society.

In 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. The Nazi regime purged many leading Gestalt psychologists from their posts, with others resigning in protest. However, the new state apparatus encouraged psychology on its own terms (Geuter, 1987). These psychologists were purged because they were Jewish, or because they were viewed as politically unsound. Others, however, were allowed to remain in post, and the number of posts was expanded, displacing philosophy. Psychology appealed to the Nazi Party for two reasons: because psychological

theory could be used to support Nazi ideology, and because psychology could be applied in service to the state apparatus. Those psychologists who remained adapted their theories to suit Nazi ideology, and developed theories that demonstrated the necessary inferiority of non-Aryan groups (Jones & Elcock, 2001). These helped to justify actions by the state in discriminating against, and ultimately attempting to eradicate, these other groups. Psychology was also applied more specifically, for example in selecting officers for the army (Geuter, 1987). What we see then is that with the rise to power of the Nazi Party, German psychology changed from being a largely academic discipline concerned with defending traditional values to being a professional, applied discipline directly engaged with social policy. We consider the Nazification of German psychology more fully in chapter 7.

2.2.3 Psychology in Britain

We've looked briefly at the development of psychology in the United States and Germany in the first half of the twentieth century, because these were the two societies where psychology grew most quickly. The situation was rather different in the United Kingdom: until the 1930s, there was effectively no discipline of psychology in Britain. There was a tradition of psychological work carried out by some individuals, including Spencer and Galton, but a very limited presence in university departments (Bunn, 2001). Hearnshaw (1964) suggests several reasons for this, including inadequacies in the organisation of British science, conservatism in universities leading to a resistance to new subjects, and a philosophical resistance to human sciences. During the interwar period, religion still had a central role in British life, and Christian academics were anxious to restrict spreading disbelief (Richards, 2000a). Indeed, an early attempt to establish a psychology laboratory at Cambridge University was rejected as it would "insult religion" (Hearnshaw, 1964, p.171). Clearly, British society wasn't ready for a widespread, institutionalised psychology.

2.3 Psychology's Relationship with Society

In the previous sections, we've looked at the approach to critical psychology that we take in this book, that of metatheoretical critical psychology, and evaluated the use of history as a technique for pursuing metatheoretical reasoning. We then considered some brief historical examples to show how historical understanding can highlight certain features of the relationship between psychology and society. We saw that different societies produce different kinds of psychology, suggesting that psychology is shaped by its relationship to its host society. In this section, we'll look more closely at this relationship, and look at some factors that mediate it.

2.3.1 A reflexive relationship

We've used the term *reflexive* a number of times already in this chapter and the last. We've described psychology as a form of reflexive discourse, and talked about the discipline of psychology as having a reflexive relationship with its subject matter, human psychology. In this section, we'll characterise the relationship between psychology and society as also being reflexive, before going on to look further at the ways in which society influences psychology, and the ways in which psychology influences society.

We saw in chapter 1 that the typical representation of psychology is as an objective science conducted by unbiased scientists, unaffected by social concerns, who uncover the truth about human behaviour. This "myth of objectivity" (Jones & Elcock, 2001), we would argue, serves to obscure the true nature of the relationship between psychology and society. In some cases the adoption of this appearance of objectivity is deliberate, allowing psychologists to produce socially controversial claims in the name of doing science. For example, "race realists" claim that their work is objective science, and that any criticism of that work is unscientific and motivated by political correctness. We reject this notion of objectivity, and instead suggest that psychology is fundamentally influenced by the social context it exists within, as shown in the previous section. Beyond this, however, psychology also influences its host society, shaping beliefs and perceptions about human nature, and sometimes affecting social policy. For example, debates around racial segregation in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s were influenced by the claims of "race realist" psychologists using science to argue against social change, and by liberal psychologists arguing that segregation was psychologically damaging and so unconstitutional (Sarat, 1997). We argue that psychology has a reflexive relationship with its host society because it is both influenced by the host society and in turn influences its host society. The relationship is cyclical and interactive, in that as society changes, so psychology changes. (See Figure 2.1.)

2.3.2 Society shaping psychology

One side of the reflexive relationship we're discussing is the influence society has on psychology. There are several ways in which society exerts this influence, which we'll briefly review here.

At a fundamental level, psychologists are members of a particular society, and share the prevalent interests and concerns of that society. What psychologists choose to investigate is sometimes a reflection of those concerns. For example, we'll see in chapter 3 that early work on intelligence testing took place at a time when there was widespread concern in American society about declining intelligence in the American population, due to immigration – particularly of ethnic minority groups – and procreation amongst the feebleminded (Gould, 1996). IQ tests were developed in part to assess the scale of this "problem", and to inform solutions to it by identifying problematic members of society. Richards (1997) suggests the notion of "constituencies" to

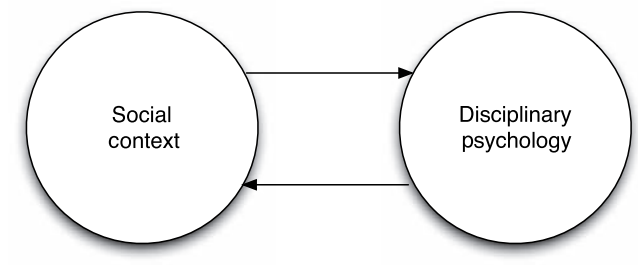

Figure 2.1 Psychology and society.
Psychology is shaped by the society it develops within, but in turn psychology shapes that society.

explain this. Modern society is clearly diverse, and can be characterised as made up of different subgroups with specific concerns and interests, for example white men, homosexual men and women, and so on. Any given individual will feel a sense of membership of a particular subgroup; and, if a psychologist, that individual is likely to produce theories that suit the interests of that group: the group is the psychologist's constituency. At the beginning of psychology, psychologists were overwhelmingly white, middle class, male, and at least overtly heterosexual. In the society of the time, such people represented the elite of society, and it served the interests of that group to develop psychological theories justifying their dominant position in society. Over the course of the twentieth century, with increasing equality, members of other groups entered the discipline and began representing their own constituencies, previously marginalised by – because unrepresented within – psychology. Due to this, psychology diversified and in some parts began producing theories representing the interests of minority groups, for example with the rise of feminist, and gay and lesbian, psychologies (Jones, 2008c).

As well as representing certain groups and producing theories to suit the interests of those groups, psychologists come to the discipline with pre-existing beliefs and expectations about human nature. These beliefs will shape the topics they investigate and the ways in which they investigate the topic (Jones & Elcock, 2001). For example, psychologists who believe *a priori* that racial differences in intelligence exist and are caused by fixed genetic characteristics may undertake studies to "prove" that such differences exist. However, a statistical finding that on average blacks score lower than whites on a measure of intelligence can be interpreted in several ways. Such differences may be the result of genetic differences. Alternatively, they may be the result of different educational experiences and life opportunities between the different ethnic groups; or they may be an artefact caused by cultural biases in a particular test. Therein lies the problem for psychology: someone has to perform an interpretation. Clearly, if someone looks at the results already believing in the reality of fixed racial differences, then they'll take the first of the three possible interpretations. Further, they'll then publish this interpretation as an "objective fact", which may reinforce others' beliefs in the existence of fixed racial differences (Gould, 1996). In this case, psychology is being used to confirm pre-existing views rather than to find objective facts. As Benjamin Harris has suggested, psychology often involves putting a "scientific gloss on the accepted social wisdom of the day" (quoted in Jarrett, 2008, p.759).

The argument we make above is that psychologists' own psychology influences what they do and what kinds of claims they produce. However, there are wider social forces affecting the work of psychologists. Different cultures view different concepts as important, and treat those concepts in different ways. Kurt Danziger

(1997) describes his experiences as a young psychologist taking up a teaching post at a university in Indonesia. The university already taught courses in what might be called "Eastern" psychology: Danziger's role was to teach "Western" psychology. He and an Indonesian colleague decided it would be interesting to hold seminars discussing particular concepts in psychology from Eastern and Western viewpoints. However, they found that they didn't share concepts that could be discussed. For example, Danziger suggested the concept of motivation. In Western psychology, motivation is treated as a fundamental, "real" aspect of human personality, with everyone having a certain level of motivation. Occupational psychologists then measure motivation for personnel recruitment and boosting productivity. However, the concept didn't feature as a topic in Indonesian psychology. This omission wasn't due to any inadequacy on the part of Indonesian psychology, but rather was a reflection of the different psychologies produced by different societies. Motivation is important in an industrial culture that wants to maximise the productivity of the workforce, but rather less important in other cultural settings. A similar distinction can be seen in comparing intelligence testing in France and the United States. The notion of intelligence as unitary, biologically based, and measurable became very important in the United States, with its emphasis on individual advancement and its concerns around immigration and segregation. This notion acquired considerably less importance in France, where society was more welfare orientated and less individualistic, so French and American psychology can be seen to have different concepts of intelligence (Carson, 2006).

Although the sociocultural context of a particular society exerts an influence on psychology, specific organisational factors may also nurture or hinder the discipline. In the previous section, we saw that one of the barriers to the growth of psychology in Britain in the early twentieth century was poor organisation of science, while a significant factor in applied psychology's growth in Germany was the support of the Nazi regime. In contemporary Western societies, the organisation of funding and patronage, and the marketability of a discipline, strongly affects what a discipline does and how it does it (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Most research in any discipline needs to have a funding source, with academics in particular spending much time seeking research grants. One of the effects of this is that what gets researched depends on what can get funded. Government funding agencies are likely to focus their grants on research projects that inform social policy or have a direct benefit to the economy, while special interest groups will fund research that advances the interests they represent (Pachter, Fox, Zimbardo, & Antonuccio, 2007). Regarding marketability, psychologists have long found a need to sell their skills. Apart from societal pressure for psychology to be a practical science, there were financial and institutional pressures towards producing marketable knowledge in the United States (Goodwin, 2004). For many early American psychologists, the preferred career was in a university, but there were too many qualified individuals seeking too few academic posts. In response, psychologists found themselves having to find other employment using their skills. Not all were pleased about this: Hollingworth, one of the leading early applied psychologists,

claimed he became so only to make a living (Goodwin, 2004). Others, however, eagerly pursued a market for their expertise. When we look at the development of intelligence tests, for example, we will see that Yerkes marketed intelligence tests to industry and educationalists, on the basis of claims that his army intelligence tests helped win the First World War (Gould, 1996). Even those within university posts faced pressures to prove themselves useful, particularly in contrast to philosophy. Yerkes's original interest was in animal psychology, but he was pressured by his institution to produce more useful work (Reed, 1987).

These factors come together most clearly when we consider the extent to which psychology is influenced by the state. As a significant source of funding and employment, the state is able to define roles for psychologists, and dictate the kinds of topics investigated. We saw this in the context of Nazi Germany, where the state was particularly powerful and interventionist. However, Herman (1995) shows similar mechanisms operating in the United States throughout the second half of the twentieth century. We look more closely at the interplay between psychology and government in chapter 7.

2.3.3 Psychology shaping society

We've seen that the nature of psychology, its social role as a discipline, and the concepts it investigates are affected by the society within which the discipline develops. We also claimed, however, that psychology in turn influences its host society. In this section, we look at some of the ways in which psychology shapes society.

One direct way in which psychology affects society is through the concepts it investigates. We've seen that psychological concepts may arise out of particular social contexts. However, when psychologists work with these concepts, they change them and give these changed concepts back to society. A notable example of this is the way in which psychologists took everyday notions of intelligence, gave them a technical definition and measurement through IQ tests, and then promulgated psychology's idea of what intelligence is. In addition, psychologists may create new concepts which are adopted by the wider society and become part of the way in which we understand ourselves and others. This is the process of reflexivity described in chapter 1. Richards (2010) gives the example of the psychoanalytic concept of the Oedipus complex. Although we can presume that people have long suffered from a range of issues that we would now term *neuroses*, until Freud developed the concept of the Oedipus complex no one could be said to suffer from that complex, because the identification of the concept creates a new category we can use to ascribe causes for behaviour. A similar effect can be seen in labelling theory, which suggests that labelling an individual with a psychological category will affect the ways in which that person develops a conception of themselves (Kroska & Harkness, 2008), and also the ways in which that person is treated by others (Davies & Tanner, 2003). This isn't a new idea: Brinkmann (2004) suggests that Dewey, for example, was aware of the reflexivity of psychology and the ways in which the discipline produces and changes its subject matter. However, the desire to see psychology as an objective science has served to obscure this effect.

Focus Box 2.1 A Liberal Bias?

A 2001 article in the American Psychological Association's house journal, *American Psychologist*, created something of a stir. The article, entitled "Sociopolitical Diversity in Psychology: The Case for Pluralism," claimed that American psychology suffered from a "liberal hegemony" (Redding, 2001, p.206). Redding presented the results of a content analysis of articles published in *American Psychologist* showing that some 97% of the articles advanced liberal views, and only 3% advanced conservative views. He further presented evidence that academics and practitioners in psychology were more liberal than the general population. From this, he suggested that there was a "pervasive liberal zeitgeist" in psychology (Redding, 2001, p.210), and that conservative views were underrepresented in the discipline. This, he believed, had negative consequences for research and practice in psychology and for social policy. He called for strategies to be employed to increase socio-political diversity in psychology, and called for psychologists to be more aware of the role their values play in research. Redding's article was the starting point for considerable debate about political bias in psychology, and about the role of values in psychological research and practice. In particular, there was an exchange of views in the April 2002 issue of *American Psychologist*. This exchange is informative of how psychologists view their discipline, and particularly the interplay between politics and psychology.

One group of articles rejected the idea that values should be made explicit in psychology research, instead supporting the notion of psychology as an objective science. Brand (2002) called for greater balance within psychology research, attempting to achieve objectivity through such balance. Kendler (2002) went further and argued that scientists should provide evidence to inform social policy, but shouldn't attempt to prescribe policy – they should stick to saying what is, not what ought to be. To achieve this, Kendler suggests that psychologists should adhere more closely to the standards of the natural sciences, and not try to dictate moral standards. A similar call in a different context was made by Lilienfeld (2002b), who argued that research findings should inform but not dictate policy decisions. Others took issue with Redding's claim that there was a liberal bias in psychology. Campbell and colleagues (Campbell et al., 2002) suggested that Redding relied on a selective sample of nonrepresentative literature to support his case, and that Redding's argument showed more about his own values than the discipline's. They performed an alternative analysis that suggested that research articles in psychology are generally politically neutral. Gergen (2002) suggested that Redding was championing a conservative cause against a perceived liberal bias in certain parts of psychology.

The exchanges provoked by Redding's papers are interesting in the context of this book. We argue against the idea of psychology as an objective science, and show examples where it seems not to have been so. While Brand and Kendler suggest that psychology research should be unaffected by values, we argue that it cannot be so. We agree with Redding that psychologists should be more open in explicating their values when reporting research results. In this, we agree also with Thompson (1999). By making value systems explicit, researchers alert the reader to the need to evaluate the results reported through considering the authors' value system. We also agree with Redding that socio-political diversity is needed within the discipline to ensure that all views are represented. However, in saying this we adopt Sampson's (2002) view that this diversity should be characterised in more sophisticated terms than a simple liberal-conservative dichotomy.

We'd disagree with Redding in his claims that psychology shows a consistent and pervasive liberal bias. Many of the examples we'll see in this book are of psychologists advancing as fact views that could be judged as conservative, as with psychology's treatment of race and gender. As we've seen, most early psychologists were white, male, and middle class, and presented as objective scientific fact theories that advanced the interests of that constituency. As the discipline diversified in ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, new theories were produced representing the interests of these constituencies. In this view, writing from a liberal critical psychology position, psychology can be seen as starting conservative and gradually becoming more diverse in its orientations.

Figure 2.2 Self-help for the U.S. Army.
Extract from the self-help cartoon book *The Story of Mack and Mike*, provided to US troops during World War II.

Psychologists are able to promulgate their concepts and theories in a number of ways, including through popular publication. A major route is through the marketing of psychological expertise. Psychology has long marketed its expertise to organisations, educationalists, and in clinical settings. This practical engagement not only changes the ways in which, for example, organisations and schools have treated clients, but also affects the ways in which clients see themselves and others. An example of this is given in Herman (1995), who traces the ways in which psychologists were involved in improving troop morale and intervening with veterans' psychological problems during and after World War II (see Figure 2.2). This led to the growth of counselling psychology, and also greatly increased awareness of mental

health issues and mental health concepts. This increased awareness, of course, was of the psychologists' definitions of mental health.

Other effects of psychology on society occur when psychologists work for governments, acting as a source of expertise for policy makers. The introduction of the eleven plus selection test in British education in 1944 had the effect of categorising children into separate groups, using psychological theory to advance meritocratic ideals (Wooldridge, 1994). Apart from the immediate effect on the life opportunities of the children so categorised, it reinforced the notion of intelligence as a fixed attribute of individuals in the public imagination. For many critical psychologists, as mentioned, psychology plays a role in maintaining the status quo in society, justifying inequality (Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997). As we shall see when we consider psychology's engagement with issues of "race" and gender, psychological claims of essential differences between groups can reinforce prejudice. For example, Williams and Eberhardt (2008) report research that beliefs in race as biologically determined increase acceptance of inequality. Psychological theories are sometimes seen as absolving society of blame for such inequality, and also for psychological disorders. The medicalisation of disorders such as ADHD, ascribing them to biological causes that can be treated with drug therapy, may distract attention from the influence of social conditions, and so prevent those conditions being addressed (Goldacre, 2008).

The role of psychology, and related disciplines such as psychiatry, in categorising and regulating behaviour has led some sociologists to identify the "psychological complex" (Rose, 1985), or *psy-complex* for short. The psy-complex is seen as a web of power, knowledge, and practice relationships that constitutes a regulatory apparatus to produce psychological selves that fit the expectations and standards of members of the complex (Burman, 1991). For critical psychologists, there's a need to understand how psychological knowledge is constructed and how the psy-complex has arisen, with the aim of transforming the discipline of psychology (Parker, 1999). This requires a rejection of the view of psychology as objective, value free, and divorced from particular social contexts, and a recognition that psychology is embedded in particular sociohistorical contexts, and both reflects and shapes those contexts.

2.4 Chapter Summary

We began the chapter by considering the nature of critical psychology, and the role of history in informing critical analysis. We characterised critical psychology as a family of views of psychology that shared the feature of rejecting the standard view of psychology as an objective science. We saw that there were a number of forms of political critical psychology, particularly concerned with addressing psychology's perceived support for inequality in society, and with instead using psychology to argue against the basis of such inequality. We contrasted that with metatheoretical critical psychology, which has more academic concerns regarding the adequacy of psychological theory, research, and practice. We saw that a particu-

lar kind of history, one that is historicist, contextual, naturalistic, and constructivist, can help uncover the ways in which psychology interacts with society.

In the second part of the chapter, we used a number of historical examples to examine the claim that the nature of psychology that develops in a particular social setting depends on the nature of society, with different societies producing different kinds of psychology, and with social change leading to change in the discipline. We saw that in the United States, a form of psychology emerged that was individualistic, reductionist, and practical, whereas in Germany the dominant approach to psychology was holistic and theoretical. As the respective societies changed, so too did the dominant approach to psychology, with American psychology coming to emphasise the importance of behaviour to better facilitate intervention, and German psychology changing to fit with Nazi political ideology. We also saw that in Britain, social factors inhibited the growth of psychology.

In the final part of the chapter, we examined the ways in which society can shape society, and in which psychology can shape society. We saw that the concepts that psychology uses were an important mechanism for this interaction, supporting the idea of reflexivity introduced in chapter 1. We characterised such concepts as being derived from wider society, but also as influencing society when psychologists applied and promulgated those concepts. We'll look more closely at such effects when we consider intelligence testing in a later chapter. We also saw that psychology's role as an applied discipline and particularly psychology's interactions with social policy issues have shaped the discipline. Again, we'll look more closely at this in chapter 7 considering psychology in service to the state. We considered the consequences of psychology's social engagements, for example in supporting inequality, which we investigate further in chapters 4 and 5 on race and gender, respectively. Finally, we considered the notion of the psy-complex and its role in regulating behaviour, suggesting that critical psychologists were engaged in understanding and changing the psy-complex.

Self-test Questions

1. What is *critical psychology*?
2. What does the term *metatheory* refer to?
3. What are the four dimensions on which "old-style" and "new-style" histories differ?
4. What factors shaped early American psychology?
5. Why did American psychology adopt a behaviourist approach?
6. What influences did the Nazi regime have on German psychology?
7. What factors inhibited psychology's growth in Britain?
8. In what way is the relationship between psychology and society reflexive?
9. In what ways does social context influence the concepts psychology investigates?
10. What dangers might arise in psychology shaping society?

Thinking Points

1. How does modern psychology reflect the concerns of contemporary society?
2. To what extent are everyday ideas about intelligence influenced by the theories of psychologists? What about motivation?
3. What influences of psychology can you identify in modern society?

Further Reading

Ash, M. G., & Woodward, W. R. (Eds.). (1989). *Psychology in twentieth-century thought and society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Discusses the interplay between psychology and society, and analyses ideas and institutions in various areas of psychology.

Fox, D., Prilleltensky, I., & Austin, S. (2010). *Critical psychology: An introduction* (2nd edn). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

A very good overview of critical psychology in its political forms. The first two chapters are especially valuable for the material covered in this chapter.

Jones, D., & Elcock, J. (2001). *History and theories of psychology: A critical perspective*. London: Hodder Arnold.

Introduces history to understand the nature of psychology, and uses that understanding to inform a discussion of contemporary psychology.

Leahey, T. H. (2003). *A history of psychology: Main currents in psychological thought* (6th edn). London: Prentice Hall.

This is one of the best general histories of psychology, paying more regard to social context than most.

Richards, G. (2010). *Putting psychology in its place: Critical historical perspectives* (3rd edn). London: Routledge.

This is a very good discussion of psychology from a historical perspective. It introduces some of the key concepts of critical history, such as reflexivity.

Van Drunen, P., & Jansz, J. (Eds.). (2004). *A social history of psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

This collection gives an overview of the relationship between psychology and society, together with social histories of different areas of practice within psychology.

3 Psychology, Intelligence, and IQ

Philip Tyson

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the origins of the concept of intelligence and tests which were designed to measure it.
- Appreciate the role that both cultural and individual factors played in the development of the concept of intelligence and intelligence tests.
- Understand that intelligence measures are cultural constructs.
- Reflect on continuing controversies in intelligence theory and research.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

Intelligence is a concept which is much misunderstood in society today. The plethora of devices aimed to "train your brain" and "test your IQ" portray intelligence as a definable and measurable cognitive trait which we all possess to a greater or lesser degree. What few people realise is that intelligence as a concept is questionable – both in terms of whether there is a definable entity akin to the sum total of our cognitive capacity which can be defined as intelligence, and also in terms of whether we are able to develop valid and reliable tools to measure such an ill-defined concept. The purpose of this chapter is to consider these issues and also consider the role that society and social norms have played in conceptions of what intelligence is and how it can be measured. This necessitates a consideration of the history of ideas of what intelligence is, and how it can purportedly be measured. Throughout, there will be an attempt to examine the role that the cultural context played in the development of intelligence as a concept susceptible to precise measurement.

3.1 Initial Ideas in Intelligence

3.1.1 The victorian age of measurement

During the nineteenth century, the scientific community began a longstanding preoccupation with measurement and classification. This included craniometry (measuring the size of different parts of the skull), physiognomy (the study of facial features), and phrenology (studying the shape of the skull). The goal of this endeavour was to classify individuals into different types (e.g. in relation to class or race), and also to provide an indication of their character, intellect, and temperament. It was believed that cranial capacity could be used as a measure of intellect and that facial features and the shape of the skull could be used to indicate personality attributes or criminal potential (Gould, 1996).

One of the pioneers of psychology, Francis Galton (1822–1911), was particularly concerned with the hereditary nature of mental abilities, and at the London International Health Exhibition of 1884 he set up his own experimental booth, the Anthropometric Laboratory, to assess a wide range of mental and physical abilities (Galton, 1885). The exhibition attracted 4 million visitors, 9000 of them venturing into Galton's laboratory to be tested. He assessed people's vision, hearing, weight, height, breathing, and pulling and squeezing power; the length of the middle finger of their left hand; and the accuracy and strength of their punches (Murdoch, 2007). He also collected personal details of the participants, including their occupation and social standing. Galton was a firm believer that there was something akin to a natural ability that not only blessed people with superior mental and physical skills but also provided them with superior capabilities to enable them to rise to social and occupational prominence and become highly regarded people within society. One of the goals of Galton's data collection was to demonstrate an

association between natural abilities, as demonstrated by the tests he conducted, and people's success in life. He was looking to reinforce the existing social strata by finding a biologically driven reason why some individuals were successful in life, such as himself, and others less so (Galton & Schuster, 1906). Such an association would feed nicely into his eugenic ideas where only the successful would be allowed to breed (social Darwinism). Galton's tests are arguably the starting point for the formal assessment of mental ability which eventually became IQ tests.

With the work of Galton, we have an indication of the shaky foundations on which current ideas on the nature of intelligence and intellectual assessment are based. With his work, Galton was looking to reinforce the existing social strata by finding evidence that the abilities of those people, like himself, existing in the upper classes were greater than the abilities of those who resided in the lower classes. He was, in essence, seeking evidence that the working classes were degenerate. There is clear evidence therefore of a personal agenda guiding ideas on the nature of intelligence and purported group differences, and we will see many other examples of this throughout the chapter. Galton's work was very influential in the United States, where the psychologist James Cattel (1860–1944) developed his own set of tests (and later established the Psychological Corporation), and in France, where Alfred Binet was becoming interested in the behaviour of his own children.

3.1.2 An educational need

Alfred Binet (1857–1911) was the director of the psychology laboratory at the University of Paris and the founder of the journal *L'Année Psychologique*. He was initially heavily influenced by the work of his fellow Frenchman, Paul Broca, who was convinced that brain size, and hence the size of the skull around it, was associated with intelligence. After publishing several articles on this topic, however, Binet began to have doubts about the relationship between head size and intelligence (Gould, 1996). Studying local schoolchildren, he found that the differences between skull sizes of bright and dull children were very slight (e.g. a mean difference of a millimetre), and he also found that some size differences were in favour of the dull children. Furthermore, ahead of his time, he began to recognise that his own preconceptions and biases might have influenced the results he obtained. He wrote in 1900,

> I feared that in making measurements on heads with the intention of finding a difference in volume between an intelligent and less intelligent head, I would be led to increase, unconsciously and in good faith, the cephalic volume of intelligent heads and to decrease that of unintelligent heads. (p.323)

To test his idea that bias may have influenced his measurements, Binet remeasured the heads of "idiots and imbeciles" and found differing values – on the second occasion, the measurements were 3 mm smaller. Clearly this method of assessing ability was fraught with problems and extremely unreliable

(Gould, 1996). A new method of assessing intelligence was needed, and for this Binet turned to inspiration from Francis Galton and his own two young daughters.

At the time of Binet's initial interest in mental testing, his daughters were both under 5 years old and Binet was fascinated by their personality differences. He noted, for example, that whilst learning to walk, Madeleine was quiet, cautious, and slow whilst Alice was the opposite: loud, enthusiastic, and quick. Such observations led Binet to speculate about the nature of individuality and drove him to discover appropriate methods for assessing people's individual qualities. He used some of Galton's and Cattell's tests to assess the abilities of his children, such as reaction time and sensory acuity, but he became aware of the limitations of such tests. For example, he noted that one of the factors that influenced his daughters' performances on tests was their level of attention; when they concentrated, they could perform to the same level as adults. However, when they were distracted, their performance declined. He also noted that his children were slower at naming colours than adults, but just as quick when matching colours. If his young children could perform just as well as adults on tests designed to assess mental ability, then there must be some problem with the tests because it should not be expected that a 5-year-old child has the same mental faculties as an adult. In addition, his observations of the role of attention in test performance, and the distinction between naming and matching in some tests, led him to consider the role that higher mental functions must play in intelligent behaviour (Wolf, 1973).

With this conceptual breakthrough, Binet started devising and testing a wide range of mental tests on his children and some selective adults. Coincidentally, at around the same time as Binet was developing his tests, the French government decreed that all children needed to attend school. This necessitated the identification of children who would not benefit from a standard school environment due to difficulties in learning, a task suited to Binet's tests (Schneider, 1992). Using his years of trial and error in devising suitable tests to use with his children, and with the assistance of his colleague Théodore Simon, he settled on a battery of 30 tests which were published in 1905 under the title *New Methods for the Diagnosis of the Intellectual Level of Subnormals*. They were designed to assess a wide range of ability graded in difficulty from simple tests (e.g. following a moving object with the eyes, grasping an object, and distinguishing between edible and nonedible objects) to quite complex ones (e.g. detailing the similarities between objects such as a newspaper, a label, and a picture; and defining abstract terms, e.g. what is the difference between weariness and sadness? See Focus Box 3.1). A later version of the battery published in 1908 contained substantial changes to the individual tests, and with this he decided to assign an age level to each task. Using a sample of 300 children aged between 3 and 13 for standardisation purposes, Binet was able to estimate at what age children should be able to complete each task. Children could therefore be assigned a mental age based on the age-related difficulty of the hardest task they could complete. The general intellectual level of a child could be determined by subtracting their mental age from their chronological age. Fulfilling his remit from

Focus Box 3.1 Alfred Binet's Tests of Ability

Below is a sample of some of the tests that Alfred Binet (1905, pp.191–244) devised to assess the abilities of schoolchildren. Consider their suitability as tests of intelligence for children.

Verbal Definition of Known Objects: What is a house, a horse, a fork, a mamma?

Repetition of Sentences of 15 Words: The horse-chestnut tree in the garden throws upon the ground the faint shade of its new young leaves.

Resemblances of Several Known Objects Given from Memory: In what way are a newspaper, a label, and a picture alike?

Synthesis of Three Words in One Sentence: Make a sentence using the following three words – Paris, river, fortune.

Reply to an Abstract Question: When one asks your opinion of someone whom you know only a little, what ought you to say?

Definitions of Abstract Terms: What difference is there between esteem and affection? What difference is there between weariness and sadness?

the French government, children could be identified as needing special education if their mental ages were behind their chronological ages (a 2- or 3-year discrepancy was suggested). Here, then, we have the birth of the concept of intelligence being represented by a single score obtained from a battery of tests. However, Binet was sceptical about the utility of a single number to express the intellect of a child, and he did struggle with a definition. He wrote in 1905 that "the scale, properly speaking, does not permit the measure of the intelligence, because intellectual qualities are not superposable, and therefore cannot be measured as linear surfaces are measured" (p.40).

Binet was also worried that a test score could be used as an indelible label, rather than a guide to identify children who needed help. He speculated that a schoolmaster might use the excuse of a test score to exclude a difficult child from school. Furthermore, he was concerned about the potential for a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby a teacher would demonstrate a negative attitude towards a pupil with a low score, hence further limiting the child's potential for development. Binet was adamant that his scale's proper purpose was in the identification of pupils who would benefit from special education (Jarvin & Sternberg, 2003). It was not suited to the assessment of intelligence in mainstream children, and neither should the results of the tests be used to speculate about the congenital or acquired basis for a low score. Irrespective of the basis of an intellectual impairment, the emphasis should be on the implementation of special training for all children with difficulties (Gould, 1996).

An important amendment to Binet's calculation of intellectual ability was suggested by the German psychologist William Stern in 1912. Binet's method of subtracting mental age from chronological age could not distinguish between the *degree* of intellectual deficiency for different age groups. For example, a child aged 6 with a mental

age of 3 has potentially a much more serious intellectual deficiency than one aged 16 with a mental age of 13. However in both cases the chronological versus mental age discrepancy is the same. Stern suggested that the mental age should be divided by the chronological age, and he also multiplied the figure obtained to eliminate the decimal point. Using Stern's method, the younger child would have an intellectual level of 50, whilst the older child's would be 81. With Stern's adjustment to Binet's method of intelligence assessment, the Intelligence Quotient (or IQ; the word *quotient* means the result of the division of one number by another) was born (Fancher, 1990).

3.2 The Development of the IQ in the United States

3.2.1 Idiots, imbeciles, and morons

Henry Herbert Goddard (1866–1957) was the director of the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys in Vineland, New Jersey, United States. Like Binet before him, he was interested in using tests to give him an idea of the capabilities of the children in his charge. He knew that the physiological examinations, in the vein of Galton, were not linked to mental capabilities from his own small-scale studies. In 1908, he embarked on a fact-finding mission to see what work was being done within similar institutions in Europe, and although he was generally disappointed with the standard of care for the "feebleminded", he did learn about Alfred Binet's 1905 tests whilst in Belgium (Wolf, 1973). On his return to the United States, he had the tests translated into English and assessed his pupils with them. He compared the results to the assessments of the children's abilities carried out by his teachers, and found a remarkable degree of consistency. He was clearly excited with the prospect of having a measurement tool which would aid in the diagnosis of mental deficiency, and he began to advocate the widespread use of the scale in the United States. However, his perception and advocacy of the scale differed markedly from those of Binet.

Whilst Binet was focussed on the practical value of his tests (i.e. in identifying children who needed special education, and he did not promote the idea that his tests could be used to measure intelligence), Goddard thought that the scores obtained were indicative of an individual's level of innate, biologically determined intelligence (Fancher, 1985a). Therefore, such individuals could not be helped through education; instead, they needed to be managed so that they did not pose a burden on society. He wrote in 1913 that "no amount of education or good environment can change a feeble-minded individual into a normal one". He popularised the use of the test to define different degrees of mental disability, a novel approach which was adopted by the American medical profession. According to Goddard, an adult with a mental age of less than 2 on the Binet scale should be termed an *idiot*, someone with a mental age of between 3 and 7 an *imbecile*, and someone with a mental age of between 8 and 12 was a *moron*. Goddard was not concerned with speculations about the potentially numerous causes of a poor

score (e.g. poor environment, poor education, culture, test situation). Instead, he was convinced that the score provided clear indication of inherited mental deficiency, that is, low scorers were from an inferior genetic stock. Furthermore, Goddard began to speculate about the role that intelligence, or lack of it, played in antisocial behaviour. Criminals, prostitutes, and alcoholics were "morons" because of a lack of intelligence and a concomitant inability to control their emotions (Gould, 1996). He wrote in 1913, "The best material out of which to make criminals … is feeble-mindedness".

One of the key pieces of work which Goddard used to support his ideas was the study of the "Kallikak family" (*Kallikak* was a pseudonym thought up by Goddard which derived from the Greek words *kalos* and *kakos*, meaning good and bad respectively). Goddard embarked on a project to trace the ancestral history of Deborah "Kallikak", one of the female residents of the Vineland Institute. He found that Deborah was the product of six generations of feebleminded people, originating in the liaison of a soldier returning from the Revolutionary War, Martin Kallikak, with a feebleminded barmaid. According to Goddard, this union produced 143 feebleminded descendants, many of whom led immoral lives. Furthermore, Martin Kallikak then went on to marry a respectable lady, and the descendants of this union were all moral, successful, and intellectually normal (See Figure 3.1). The contrast was stark between the descendants of the feebleminded girl and those of the lawful wife (Zenderland, 1998).

Despite the numerous methodological flaws in this work (e.g. basing estimates of the intelligence of dead family members from the memories of living relatives), Goddard was convinced that he had indisputable proof of the inheritance of feeblemindedness and immoral behaviour. Furthermore, he conjectured that had the original union of Martin Kallikak Sr and the feebleminded girl not taken place, then society would not have been burdened with successive generations of immoral and criminal individuals. Indeed, writing about Martin Kallikak Sr, he said that "society has had to pay the heavy price of all the evil he engendered". Such a problem suggested an obvious eugenic solution for Goddard: stop the feebleminded from breeding and keep them apart from the rest of society by making them live in segregated colonies. Goddard's book on the Kallikak family attracted a lot of attention from the academic community and the general reader. It sealed his reputation as one of the world's leading experts on the causes of, and assessment of, mental deficiency.

At about the same time that Goddard's work with the Kallikaks was popular, the United States was experiencing a massive influx of immigrants. This led to a national concern about the quality of the immigrants that were arriving on Ellis Island – were they honest, moral, and fit to make a positive contribution to American society? Certainly Goddard's ideas of segregation and limited breeding amongst the feebleminded within his own country would be rendered useless if the feebleminded of other countries kept landing on their shores. Therefore, it became a priority to identify the mental capacity of foreigners arriving at immigration. Indeed, an American law passed in 1907 specified that the "feeble minded" were not to be allowed into the country. However, the identification

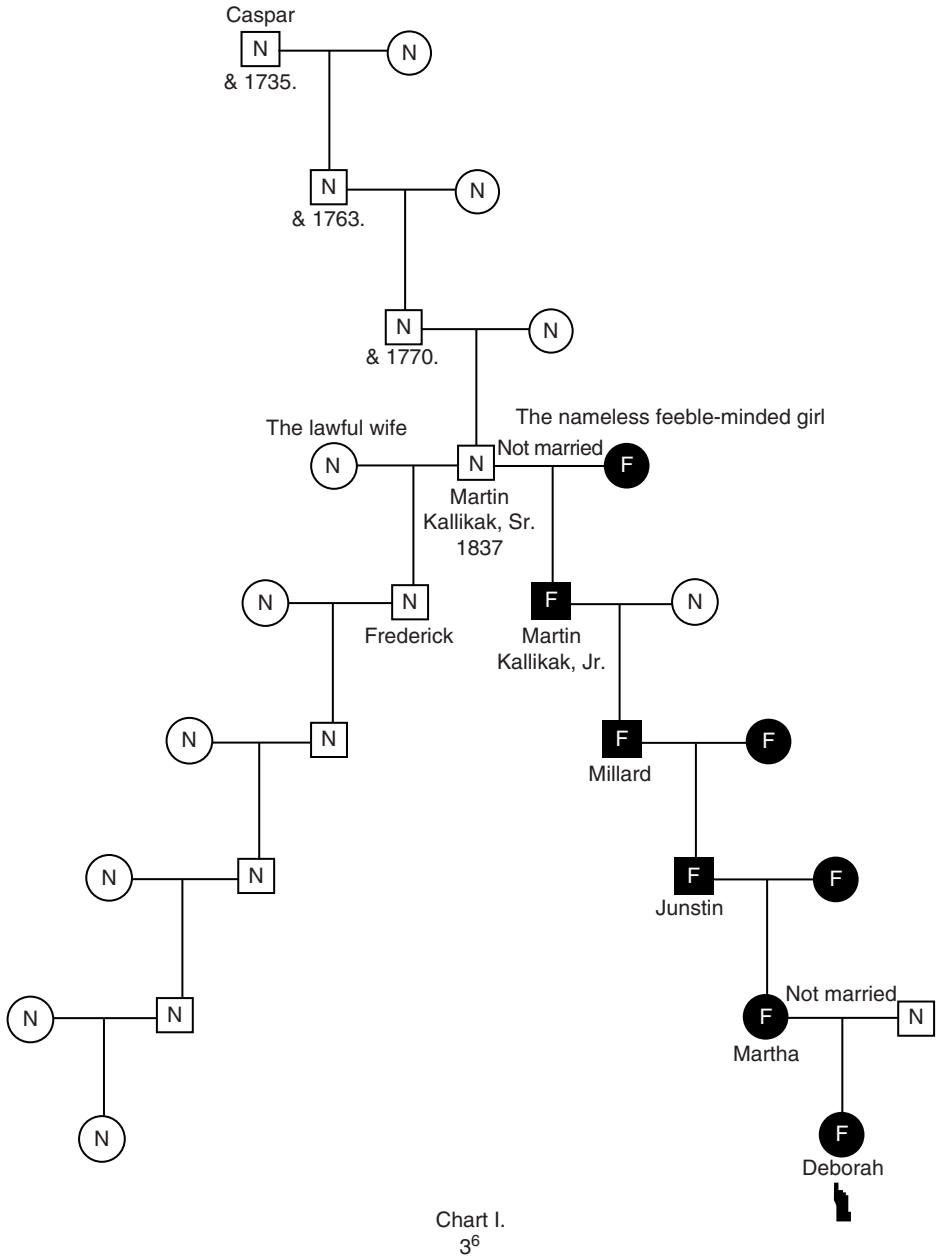

Figure 3.1 The ancestors of Deborah Kallikak. F = Feeble Minded; N = Normal.
A diagram from Goddard (1913) detailing the ancestry of Deborah Kallikak. Her great-great-great grandfather, Martin Kallikak Sr, fathered a child (Martin Kallikak Jr) to a feebleminded girl. This union led to a long line of feebleminded individuals, including Deborah. Martin Kallikak Sr then went on to marry a "lawful" and intellectually normal wife, and their descendents were all "respectable citizens", including "doctors, lawyers, judges, educators, traders, landholders".

of such individuals was an overwhelming task for the physicians on Ellis Island, who were originally given the task as part of their general screening of immigrants (Zenderland, 1998). To assist them in this task, in 1912 Goddard devised a method whereby his psychologically trained assistants would help identify feebleminded immigrants. As the immigrants filed past, one assistant would identify the feebleminded ones through some aspect of their appearance or mannerisms, and these people would be taken to another assistant for the administration of the Binet test. Using this method, Goddard found that his assistants were better at identifying "defectives" than the Ellis Island doctors, although the methods he used were criticised by the chief medical officer of Ellis Island, who was concerned that the lives of some immigrants could be ruined on the basis of a rushed and highly subjective diagnosis (Zenderland, 1998). Indeed, immigrants could fail the tests for a variety of reasons aside from having feeblemindedness. Some did not speak or read English, some had never had schooling, some had never held a pencil, some were not familiar with objects which were present in American homes, and all were probably very frightened by their new environment. Nevertheless, testing was continued, and as a result the deportation rate increased from 186 in 1908 to 1077 in 1914 (Zenderland, 1998).

Aside from just using the Binet tests to identify mental defectives, in 1913 Goddard became interested in the intellectual level of the average immigrant from different countries. His team gave a battery of mental tests to 165 immigrants, including Russians, Jews, Hungarians, and Italians, and found that 87% of Russians, 83% of Jews, 80% of Hungarians, and 79% of Italians fell into the feebleminded category (Goddard, 1917). These results surprised and worried Goddard, and initially he thought that there was a problem with the construction of the tests and decided to exclude some questions which some immigrants struggled the most with. These included questions requiring imaginative and creative-thinking skills. For example, the following situation is described in one test: *A young woman's body is found in a room, cut into 18 pieces. The police say she committed suicide. Is this likely?* Typical responses amongst the immigrants included "I was not there" or "It is a great sin for her to kill herself". After excluding some of the questions and retesting, Goddard found that the percentage of feebleminded immigrants was cut to around 40% (Goddard, 1917). This was still an unexpectedly high percentage, but Goddard did not consider that there was still a problem with his test. Instead, he speculated that the immigrants were just of very low intelligence, and an inferior type of immigrant than the ones who had previously made successful lives in the United States and helped make the country what it was (Zenderland, 1998).

In 1915, Goddard and his team attempted to follow up the immigrants who were feebleminded as he was sure that some would end up in institutions such as his own. However, he failed to find any in institutions, and the few he found in the community seemed to be faring quite well. Their supposed feeblemindedness had not hindered their ability to work and to be socially successful. This led Goddard to revise his ideas that the Binet scale measured innate intelligence, and he adopted more of an environmentalist approach. He considered that perhaps immigrants fared badly

on his tests because of the deprived environment which they inhabited prior to coming to the United States. Furthermore, since apparent feebleminded immigrants could become useful members of society, he also revised his ideas about segregation and breeding restrictions. Perhaps the feebleminded were not as much of a menace to society as he previously thought, and may even prove useful (Goddard, 1917).

3.2.2 The militarization of IQ tests

Despite the widespread adoption of the Binet scales, there were psychometric and pragmatic limitations to it which were identified by high-profile American psychologists. Lewis Terman (1877–1956) was professor of psychology at Stanford University, and for several years leading up to 1916 he had been developing a new version of the Binet test (Terman, 1919). He was concerned that the original test was inadequate at testing higher levels of intelligence, and that the administration procedure was ill defined and there were problems in the interpretation of the results obtained. Based on studies which involved testing 2300 subjects (1700 normal children, and 400 adults and 200 children with either very low or very high mental capacity), he published his version of the scale – the Stanford Revision and Extension of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale – in 1916 (Feldhusen, 2003). This scale became better known as the Stanford-Binet scale, and with this was the first appearance of a standardised intelligence scale with an average score of 100, a standard deviation of 15, and a classification system which categorised people as having definite feeblemindedness (below 70), borderline deficiency (70–80), dullness (80–90), average intelligence (90–110), superior intelligence (110–120), very superior intelligence (120–140), or genius (140+) (Terman, 1919).

Despite the success of this scale, with many people considering it to be an improvement on the original Binet tests, several problems were identified. Some questions did not allow original and feasible responses to be marked as correct. For example, in one section entitled "Problem Questions", the following item is presented:

> An Indian who had come to town for the first time in his life saw a white man riding along the street. As the white man rode by, the Indian said 'The white man is lazy; he walks sitting down'. What was the white man riding on that caused the Indian to say 'He walks sitting down'.

The only answer which Terman considered correct was 'bicycle', and all other reasonable responses (horse, wagon, and automobile) were marked as incorrect. Terman also used the test manual to display his ideas of race differences in intelligence; for example, in discussing the test scores of two young Portuguese brothers, Terman (1919) states that 'their dullness seems to be racial' and that 'no amount of school instruction will even make them intelligent voters or capable citizens' (p.91). Terman's ideas therefore were similar to Goddard's in that intelligence was considered hereditary and (at least partly) racially derived.

The year 1917 saw the entry of the United States into the First World War, and with it came a focus on the use of intelligence tests for military purposes (Zenderland, 1998). Indeed, Henry Goddard suggested that military victories were due to superior intelligence, and cautioned against the army enlisting feebleminded men and morons. To emphasise the potential danger of such a practice, he used the example of a moron on sentry duty who is tricked into betraying the whole camp (Zenderland, 1998). He argued for the testing of new recruits whose background might suggest intellectual deficiency (e.g. only employed in menial work). This would still be a substantial task as the American army contained several million men at that time. Concurrently, another eminent psychologist of the day, Robert Yerkes, was also devising a plan to use intelligence tests in the military.

Robert Yerkes (1876–1956) was president of the American Psychological Association in 1917 and was intent for his professional body to oversee the testing of army recruits in order to identify those who were mentally unfit for service. He set up the Committee on the Psychological Examining of Recruits, whose members included several prominent psychologists of the day, including Henry Goddard and Lewis Terman. The committee embarked on the ambitious project of devising an intelligence test which would be suitable for testing groups of people at the same time, and therefore potentially all new army recruits. The tests they devised were actually split into two: an Army Alpha test which was a written examination designed for literate recruits, and an Army Beta test which was pictorially based and designed for those who failed the Alpha test or were illiterate. For those failing the Beta test, an individual examination was given using variations on the Binet tests. Hundreds of psychologists were trained to administer the tests at a new School of Military Psychology, one of those being a young David Wechsler. By the end of January 1919, nearly 2 million recruits had been tested, and on the basis of the scores obtained, recruits were graded from A to E with suggestions for an appropriate placement within the military. Those scoring an A (Very Superior) were considered to be commanding officer material, whilst those scoring a C were considered to be private material. At the lowest end of the spectrum, those scoring an E were considered barely intelligent enough for military service (Fancher, 1985a).

Aside from the purported usefulness of the tests in identifying appropriate military placements for recruits, the wealth of data also had the potential to provide a snapshot of the intelligence level of the young men of the United States. One startling finding was the high rate of illiteracy amongst recruits; 25% could not read or write and were therefore given the Beta test. Half of these were native-born Americans. Furthermore, one of Yerkes' assistants on the project, Edwin Boring, undertook a detailed analysis of the test scores from 160,000 recruits, converting the scores on the Alpha, Beta, and individual tests to a common standard to enable the calculation of racial and national averages in intelligence. The findings from this analysis were even more worrying than the high rates of illiteracy. If the test results were reliable, the average white American adult had a mental age of 13, and, more worryingly, 37% of this sample had a mental age of between 8 and 12, which put them in the category of "moron". This finding led psychologists to rethink their

original idea of excluding all "morons" from the army; if they did, they would have to exclude 47% of white and 89% of Negro recruits. When the test results were compared to look at national differences in intelligence, Boring found that the average Russian recruit had a mental age of 11.34; the Italian, 11.01; and the Pole, 10.74. However, the lowest score was obtained, not by any European nation, but by America's own Negro population, with a mental age of 10.41 (Gould, 1996).

Faced with these findings, an enlightened psychologist of the day might have suggested that the results were invalid for any number of environmental reasons: the tests were too hard, recruits were nervous in the test situation, few recruits had attended or completed school, racism and bias might have played a part to explain the Negro scores, and scores for the non-native English speakers were low due to comprehension difficulties (Gould, 1996). Despite these possibilities, the psychologists who led the project were adamant that the results reflected innate intelligence which was largely unaffected by environmental factors. How strong is such an assertion?

Clearly the environmental factors listed above would have affected scores on the Army mental tests. Indeed, can innate intelligence be assessed with questions such as the following?

- Washington is to Adams, as first is to … (*president, second, last*, or *Bryan*).
- Indiana is to the United States, as part is to … (*hair, China, Ohio*, or *whole*).
- Yes is to affirmative, as no is to … (*think, knowledge, yes*, or *negative*).

Is knowledge of American presidential history in the genes, unaffected by schooling?

Furthermore, it is no surprise that recent immigrants drafted into the army were unfamiliar with aspects of American culture, as assessed with the following questions:

- Five hundred is played with … (*rackets, pins, cards*, or *dice*).
- The most prominent industry of Gloucester is … (*fishing, packing, brewing*, or *automobiles*).
- Alfred Noyes is a famous … (*painter, poet, musician*, or sculptor).
- Becky Sharp appears in … (*Vanity Fair, Romola, A Christmas Carol*, or *Henry IV*).

It is also no surprise that recruits with limited school did poorly on such tests. Neither were Beta tests free from this obvious cultural bias in the material. On the picture completion test, recruits had to identify the missing item from a visual scene. However, many of the items and scenes depicted were from American middle-class life, and would have not been familiar to either southern European immigrants or rural recruits from within the United States. For example, in one picture, recruits have to identify that the filament within a light bulb is missing, and in another that there is a bowling ball missing from the hand of a man engaged in a game of bowling (see Figure 3.2). It has also been noted that even though the Beta tests were meant to be reliant on visual skills, they also required an ability to hold

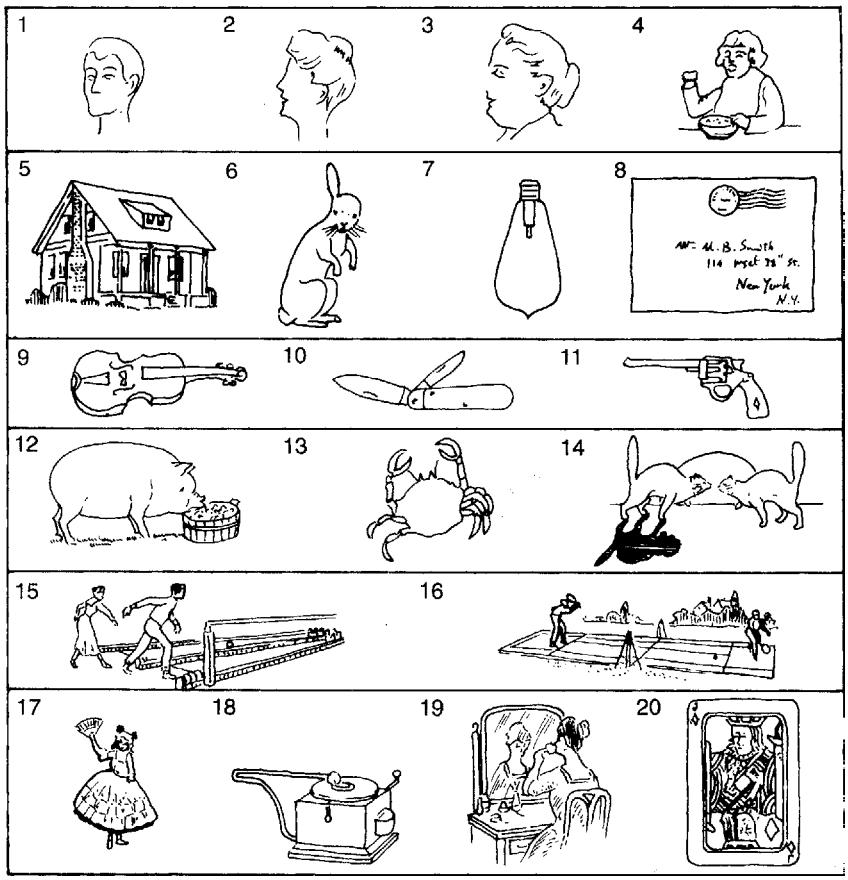

Figure 3.2 Picture Completion test from the Army Beta battery. Recruits had to identify what item was missing from the picture.
To perform well on this test, recruits would have had to have a good knowledge of middle-class American culture.

and draw with a pencil, plus a knowledge of numbers. This could not be taken for granted as some recruits had never been to school (Gould, 1996).

Other problems were identified in terms of the complicated nature of the instructions, the crowded and rushed conditions in which the tests were taken in, and the acoustics which hindered men at the back of the room from hearing the instructions clearly. In addition, there were different criteria used between camps for selecting those who should take the Alpha and Beta tests; some barely literate recruits were mistakenly given the Alpha test, and consequently scored very poorly (Gould, 1996).

Despite all these problems, Yerkes and his colleagues stuck fast to their hypothesis that these tests measured innate intelligence, and even explained, counterintuitively, that a correlation between test results and years of education is due to the fact that those with more innate intelligence spend more time in school.

Even with the problems inherent in the army tests, they were perceived as a widespread success, most notably in identifying suitable candidates to become officers. Furthermore, the *process* of constructing the army tests proved very beneficial for the discipline of psychology in the United States, and later in Europe. The formation of the Committee on the Psychological Examining of Recruits, under the leadership of Robert Yerkes, united a disparate bunch of psychologists and set the scene for the development of a more unified and professional approach to the testing of intelligence. Strict guidance on the design, administration, scoring, and interpretation of tests could be provided to a growing number of psychologists. In addition, the perceived success of the Army tests gave the profession scientific credibility and social utility which had been lacking (Zenderland, 1998). If intelligence tests could successfully allocate people to roles within the military, then surely they could perform the same purpose within society in general? Indeed, Terman advocated mass intelligence testing and suggested, for example, that those with an IQ of 75 or below are only suitable for unskilled labour, whilst a well-paid, prestigious profession is not suitable for anyone with an IQ of less than 100. With such claims which were widely advertised, the assessment of intelligence became a mass market industry worth millions of dollars.

3.3 To the Present Day

3.3.1 The legacy of Alpha and Beta

In the years following World War I, the Stanford-Binet test surpassed other intelligence scales to be the most popular test to be administered on an individual basis. In addition, the need for mass testing in schools and workplaces led Robert Yerkes and Lewis Terman to create the National Intelligence Tests (Fancher, 1985a). These were heavily based on the Army Alpha tests and, although initially designed for children, were adapted to suit an adult population so that they could be used in industry. As a result, schools, colleges, and workplaces were able to categorise people according to their mental ability and either tailor their education to suit their capability or, in the case of employers, find a job to suit the person. The assumption that intelligence tests provided an accurate estimate of innate mental ability which could be represented by a single score was widely held at that time by psychologists, academics, other professionals, and the general public. However, this assumption was soon to be challenged by one of the psychologists who graduated from the School of Military Psychology, David Wechsler.

David Wechsler's (1896–1981) introduction to intelligence testing came when he was employed by the military to score the performance of recruits taking the Army Alpha tests. Later he was given the task of administering the individual tests to the recruits who could not complete either the Alpha or Beta tests. These individuals usually had had no formal schooling, and many could not read English. Wechsler used a combination of the Stanford-Binet test to measure verbal abilities and the

Army Beta test to measure nonverbal abilities. During his time with the Army, Wechsler began to have doubts about the reliability and validity of the tests that were used. In his scoring of the Alpha tests, he noticed that individuals who performed very poorly had still been able to function at an adequate level in civilian occupations. Therefore he doubted the reliability of these verbal tests to provide an accurate estimation of intelligence. He did, however, find that scores on the nonverbal Beta tests were more reliable. His concerns led him to question the prevailing opinion of intelligence being a single definable entity (Wechsler, 1949). After leaving the army, Wechsler completed his doctorate and worked for the Psychological Corporation for 2 years (1925–1927) before setting up a private clinical practice. He became the chief psychologist at New York's Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital in 1932, and whilst in this post began to develop his ideas about the nature and assessment of intelligence (Matarazzo, 1981). He viewed intelligence as a multifaceted concept incorporating many elements, and as such tests of intelligence should assess a wide range of skills. However, he also considered that an aggregate of such skills could be used to give an overall estimation of intelligence. Using these ideas, he developed a test which was the first to accurately provide a profile of people's intellectual strengths and weaknesses using a variety of subtests. Furthermore, his test distinguished between verbal abilities and nonverbal (performance) abilities, which combined to give an overall intelligence rating. He produced the Wechsler-Bellevue test in 1939, followed by the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) in 1955, the WAIS revised ® in 1981, the WAIS III in 1997, and the most recent WAIS IV in 2008. These scales have almost monopolised the field of adult intellectual assessment (Boake, 2002). He also produced an analogous scale to use with children, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC).

Nevertheless, unlike many of his predecessors, Wechsler was keen to emphasise that intelligence was much more than a score on a score sheet, and emphasised numerous personality factors which can have an intellectual influence, including "drive, persistence, will … perseveration" and "aspects of temperament" (Wechsler, 1949, pp.81, 82). With the work of Wechsler, intellectual assessment became more than a task in categorisation and classification. Instead, his tests attempted to provide a detailed analysis of an individual's strengths and weaknesses, and within the context of other contributory factors such as personality they could be used to measure "the capacity of an individual to understand the world about him and his resourcefulness to cope with its challenges" (Wechsler, 1975, p.139).

3.3.2 A critical reflection

A consideration of the history of intellectual assessment reveals a number of issues, not only about the purported nature of intelligence and intellectual assessments per se, but also about the relationship between psychological ideas and how they are shaped by individuals, politics, and wider social factors. We have seen that Francis Galton, in attempting to categorise and measure mental and physical phenomena, was trying to find a "natural" justification for the class divide and

Victorian inequalities that existed at the time. He was pursuing a personal agenda, albeit reflective of the wider social context. Henry Goddard was influenced by the social concerns of the early twentieth-century United States, immigration, poverty, and crime when he advocated the use of intelligence tests as tools to identify individuals who should be segregated from the rest of society or who should not be allowed to land on American shores. He was not concerned that the tests he used might not be reliable indicators of an individual's mental abilities. Lewis Terman, the architect of the Stanford-Binet scales, displayed a similar lack of critical appraisal of his test, as did Robert Yerkes when considering the findings from his Army Alpha and Beta tests. Preconceived ideas about who should not perform well on the tests (e.g. racial minorities) superseded any thoughts that the tests might not be valid, reliable, or suitable to measure the mental abilities of such individuals. Furthermore, little consideration was given to environmental explanations for low scores on the tests: factors such as language barriers, cultural familiarity, educational level, and the test situation were not considered as important contributors to test performance.

More generally, there are three key themes that are prominent throughout the history of intelligence testing which need some consideration. The first one of these is the suggestion that intelligence is a singular, measurable entity, akin to a mental energy. This conceptualisation of intelligence was begun with the work of Charles Spearman (1863–1945), who observed that there were often positive correlations between scores on different mental tests. This suggested to Spearman that there might be a single underlying factor which accounted for mental ability; this factor was termed *general intelligence*, or *g* (Spearman, 1904). As early as 1939, the British Statistician Godfrey Thomson proposed an alternative explanation of the correlations between different mental tests. He suggested that the pattern of correlations could be obtained if the brain contained a large collection of independent mental abilities whose neurons were all active at the same time (Fancher, 1985a). Indeed, correlation does not imply commonality, and test scores may correlate for a number of plausible reasons other than there being something akin to general intelligence. Perhaps positive environmental conditions nurture a range of diverse mental abilities leading to a correlation between test scores (Block & Dworkin, 1977). More importantly, Fancher (1985b) found a large number of errors in Spearman's original work which formed the basis of his ideas about unitary intelligence. Nevertheless, most intelligence tests constructed since Spearman's time have also adopted the notion of a general intelligence, and are constructed on the basis of this presupposition. Subtests within a battery of intelligence tests are included on the basis of them showing a substantial correlation with the test as a whole, and tests which do not show such correlations are excluded. The theory is that if they show such a correlation, then they must be tapping into general intelligence as measured by the whole test, and so should be included. However, what if there is no such thing as general intelligence, but, instead, a diverse range of independent mental abilities? If this was the case, then excluding items which do not correlate with the test as a whole will only make the whole test a less adequate measure of intelligence as it would not tap

into the full range of diverse mental functions (Block & Dworkin, 1977). Other reservations about the concept of *g* are existent today (e.g. Flynn, 2007), and several contemporary psychologists consider intelligence to be a diverse concept incorporating a host of abilities which cannot all be measured using traditional pencil-and-paper tests (Gardner, 1999; Goleman, 1995).

The second issue arising from our summary of the history of intellectual assessment relates to the conception that general intelligence is a biologically defined entity – there is an area of the brain or a collection of neurons which are responsible for intelligence. However, it cannot be claimed that any factors identified on intelligence tests correspond to discrete biological regions (Gould, 1996). We would not, for example, postulate the existence of a group of neurons responsible for attitudes if we found that scores on different attitude questionnaires were highly correlated.

The third issue to discuss is that of the hereditary basis of intelligence. This is a very controversial issue, because supporters of the hereditarian position have tended to identify specific populations who score lower than an average on IQ tests as genetically inferior. The key example of this is the controversy over ethnic differences in intelligence, with some authors citing evidence of a mean "white IQ" being 100, whilst the mean "black IQ" is 85 (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Importantly, rather than explaining such differences as due to environmental influences (e.g. educational disadvantage; Neisser et al., 1996), some authors have argued for a genetic explanation (e.g. Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1969; Rushton & Jensen, 2005). However, proponents of this position often fail to distinguish between intellectual abilities which are directly caused by genetic transmission, and those which are indirectly caused by genetic transmission. If someone faces discrimination in the classroom and workplace because of their skin colour and as a consequence has low social status with all the concomitant problems (e.g. higher rates of unemployment, and poorer health), then these problems do not stem directly from the genes which code for skin colour, but indirectly from the attitude of society to people with that specific genetic configuration. This explanation for IQ differences between "black" and "white" populations is highly plausible when one considers the history of exploitation and discrimination which ethnic minorities have suffered in Europe and the United States (Gould, 1996). The issue of race and IQ will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, "Psychology and Race".

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has traced the history of the development of the concept of intelligence and attempts to construct appropriate instruments of measurement. We have seen that the beginnings of this work lie in the voracious Victorian appetite for measurement, classification, and general scientific investigation. However, we have also seen with this early work how one man's preconceived ideas about the hereditary nature of genius informed the work that he was to do, and in his

studies, Francis Galton was looking for confirmation that he was from superior genetic stock. With the work of Alfred Binet, we build up a more positive picture of a man trying to do the best for children with learning difficulties, although it also must be said that the motivation for the development of his tests came partly from a French government initiative (Schneider, 1992). There is little doubt that Henry Goddard wanted to use intelligence tests as a social and political tool to identify those individuals who were feebleminded and hence likely to fall into immorality. Had Goddard had his way, such individuals would have been segregated from the rest of society and not allowed to reproduce. Goddard also had influence on the immigration policy in the United States, with thousands of immigrants labelled as imbeciles or feebleminded and stopped from entering the United States. Here, then, we have clear evidence of how the pioneers of intelligence testing, and the scales that were developed, were extensively influenced by the wider concerns of society and the political agendas of the day. Furthermore, in the construction of the Army Alpha and Beta tests, we can see the clear bias toward middle-class American soldiers who had been well schooled. Who else would know the occupation of Alfred Noyes? With the work of David Wechsler, we have a recognition that intelligence test performance is influenced by a variety of outside factors, and he made genuine attempts to reduce the bias of earlier tests. Finally, we have questioned several assumptions about the nature of intelligence; that there is something called *general intelligence* or *g*, that there is a discrete area of the brain where this ability lies, and that intelligence is hereditary.

Self-test Questions

1. What was the social context within which Francis Galton devised the first measures of mental ability?
2. How did the work of Binet differ from that of other mental testers?
3. What influence did Binet's daughters have on his ideas about the nature of intelligence?
4. What did Goddard think were the social problems caused by feeblemindedness?
5. How did Goddard think the problem of feeblemindedness could be dealt with?
6. Describe some of the problems with the Army Alpha and Beta tests.
7. Why were the Army Alpha and Beta tests considered a success?
8. How did the approach to intelligence adopted by Wechsler differ from his predecessors?
9. Is there such a thing as *general intelligence*?
10. In what ways can suggestions of the heritability of intelligence be questioned?

Thinking Points

1. Consider the social and political factors that have influenced the development of ideas of intelligence, and the design of intelligence tests.
2. To what extent has the development of intelligence tests been guided by the preconceived ideas of the test designers?
3. Is intelligence a definable entity susceptible to precise measurement?

Further Reading

Binet, A. (1905). New methods for the diagnosis of the intellectual level of subnormals. *L'Année Psychologique*, *12*, 191–244. Retrieved 5 November 2010 from http://psychclassics.asu.edu/Binet/binet1.htm

This article outlines Binet's original ideas about the nature of intelligence and how he thought mental abilities could be measured. It includes his original battery of tests.

Goddard, H. H. (1917). Mental tests and the immigrant. *Journal of Delinquency*, *2*, 243–277. Retrieved 5 November 2010 from http://harpending.humanevo.utah.edu/Documents/goddard.html

This article gives a unique insight into the ideas of Goddard regarding the dangers of feeblemindedness and how they changed in the light of his research and experience.

Gould, S. J. (1996). *The mismeasure of man*. London: Norton.

A detailed consideration of the problems which arise when attempts are made to classify and rank people according to their mental and physical characteristics. Considered a classic.

Murdoch, S. (2007). *I.Q.: The brilliant idea that failed*. London: Duckworth Overlook.

A journalistic, yet accurate, account of the history of intelligence testing which adopts a critical stance to the concept of intelligence and supposed measurement tools.

4 Psychology and Race

Philip Tyson

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Critically reflect on the origins of modern ideas of race.
- Appreciate the role that psychology played in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in reinforcing ideas of racial differences.
- Consider evidence that racism continues to be a concern within professional psychology today.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

> *Please show me how Psychology could* not *be racist.*
>
> Milner (1996, p.348)

This quote may be shocking to those who perceive psychology to be an unbiased, ethnically sensitive, insightful, reflective, and ethical discipline. After all, isn't psychology the discipline that investigates racism, rather than practices it? It is true that psychology is one of the disciplines which has made honest attempts to understand and eradicate racist thought and behaviour within society. However, as the following chapter will demonstrate, psychology and key psychologists have also played a major role in adopting and reinforcing societal and political ideas of racial differences, and in this sense have been complicit in promoting a wider racist ideology. At a more subtle level, this continues to be the case today. In this chapter, we will first consider the historical origins of ideas of race and racism and learn how these influenced early psychology. We will then consider early psychological work and key figures within it, in order to assess their contribution to scientific racist discourse. Finally we will look at psychology today, and see to what extent our discipline is free of the racism which has tainted our past.

A note about terminology: Throughout the period of history served by this chapter, the victims of racist ideas have been variously termed *African*, *Negro*, *black*, or *ethnic minority*. In order to faithfully represent the material to be discussed here, it is necessary to use these same terms within their historical (or contemporary) context.

4.1 Race and Scientific Racism

4.1.1 The origins of race

Contemporary ideas of the existence of distinct racial groups can be traced back to the classification system developed by the Swiss botanist and zoologist Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778). He proposed the existence of four distinct kinds of human – American Indian, European, Asian, and African – with each group ascribed particular physical and psychological characteristics (e.g. Europeans were white, sanguine, and muscular, whilst Africans were black, unemotional, and relaxed) (Gould, 1996). One of Linnaeus' students was the German naturalist Johan Blumenbach (1752–1840), who added another subtype of human and also proposed a hierarchy of worth for each racial type. *Caucasian* was the term adopted by him to describe light-skinned Europeans, *Mongols* to describe "yellowish"-skinned people from Eastern Asia, *Ethiopians* were the dark-skinned people originating in Africa, *Americans* were the red-skinned inhabitants of that continent, and *Malayans* were the brown-skinned inhabitants of the Pacific Islands and Australia. Aside from changes in the names ascribed to races and the adoption of the Malayan

category, Blumenbach sought to suggest that the different races could be ordered in a hierarchy of worth, with one group who were closest to the ideal of humanity as created by God, and the others of differing degrees of departure from this ideal.

Within the Eurocentric and colonial context of the time, it is no surprise that Blumenbach proposed that Europeans were the closest group to the gold standard of humanity, and this in part explains why he chose to adopt the name Caucasian for this group. On his European travels, he noted that the people from the Caucasus region (between Europe and Asia, currently comprising Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and southern Russia) were particularly physically appealing, and he wrote in 1795 that "Mount Caucasus … produces the most beautiful race of men" (cited in Gould, 1996, p.401). Furthermore, Blumenbach was so impressed with the appearance of these people that he suggested that the whole of mankind must have originated from this area, "in that region, if anywhere, we ought with the greatest probability to place the [origins] of mankind" (cited in Gould, 1996, p.401). The Caucasian variety of human, then, was not only an impressive physical specimen but also the original aesthetic archetype of humankind, clearly the pinnacle of any hierarchy of racial classification. Other groups, by comparison, fell short of this ideal, and Blumenbach designed a hierarchy based on how far removed (he thought) these other racial types were from this "perfect" archetype. At the bottom of this hierarchy, he placed the Mongols and Africans.

This idea of distinct races organised in a hierarchy of worth led to extensive speculation by European scholars of physical, social, cultural, intellectual, behavioural, and moral differences between the groups. This was the starting point for scientific racism and the role that psychology played in its perseverance. Indeed, the hidden agenda behind much of this work was a justification for the exploitation of "other" races by the Europeans. This was an age of rapid European expansion and colonisation where it was perceived as perfectly acceptable to invade remote lands, exploit resources, and enslave whole communities.

The classification system of Blumenbach has had surprising longevity, and as recently as 1998 definitions of race have included parts of his taxonomy. Indeed, the *Collins English Dictionary* describes three principal races: Caucasoid, Mongoloid, and Negroid (*Negro* being the Spanish and Portuguese for black, which replaced *African* as a racial type) with each race being primarily identified by physical features. More contemporary dictionaries, however, tend to avoid detailing different racial groupings, although few question the validity of the concept of race itself (see Focus Box 4.1).

4.1.2 The scientific racism discourse

Europe was a changing place in the mid-nineteenth century, and science was becoming more than an amateur pastime and was increasingly being seen as an alternative perspective to religion. Indeed, Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859, acted as a catalyst for human scientific investigation, and there was an increasing realisation that science and empirical investigation could assist tremendously in

Focus Box 4.1 Racial Differences in Intelligence

There are few topics in psychology that have caused such huge controversy and debate as the issue of race and intelligence. Stemming from research to suggest that the average black IQ is around 85, whilst the average white IQ is around 100 (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), the key aspect of the debate surrounds *explanations* for these differences. Hernnstein and Murray and others (e.g. Rushton & Jensen, 2005) argue for a genetic explanation for these differences, whilst such assertions have been strongly contested with environmental explanations being favoured (e.g. Gould, 1996; Richards, 1997). Gould (1996) argues that the concept of race itself can be questioned. Racial classifications are historical, arbitrary, and artificial, and they are based primarily on physical characteristics such as skin tone, facial features, and hair texture. There is so much variability in physical characteristics between individuals that to pick on three arbitrary differences (e.g. skin colour) and use them to categorise races is naïve in the extreme. Therefore, there are no clearly defined races with which to compare IQ test scores. A second objection to genetic explanations of IQ differences considers the distinctions which should be made between characteristics which are directly and indirectly caused by genetic transmission. If an individual's genes make them look different in some way (e.g. black skin, ginger hair, or small stature), and society stigmatises those people because they are different, then they would be socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged. One of the consequences of this would be a lack of educational opportunities which would affect their ability to perform well on traditional IQ tests. These problems do not stem directly from the genes which code for skin colour, ginger hair, or height, but indirectly from indirect causation (i.e. the attitude of society to people with that specific genetic configuration). Therefore, any proposed suggestion of genetic differences between races needs to take account of indirect causation as well as direct causation. Furthermore, there is no general agreement as to what intelligence or IQ is, and so it is meaningless to try to compare groups of people on such an ill-defined concept, particularly one which reduces the sum total of an individual's cognitive capacity to a single number (see chapter 3 for a general consideration of intelligence testing).

our understanding of the natural world independently from religion. Within this context, some early psychologists were curious about human nature and about differences between people of different races. Indeed, the prevailing opinion of the day, stemming from evolutionary theory, was that the African (often termed *Negro*) and Mongol races were lower down the evolutionary spectrum than the Caucasian race and were doomed to extinction because they could not compete in the Darwinian survival of the fittest. Purported evidence for the lower evolutionary status of the Negro included maturing earlier than Caucasians, having smaller brains, being more impulsive and emotional, and displaying better "primitive" skills than whites, for example better hearing and vision (Richards, 1997). The application of science to the investigation of the differences between these apparently primitive people and the "superior" Caucasians is now termed *scientific racism*.

The hidden agenda for scientific racism was to provide a justification for European imperialism and the exploitation of the African people and land. If it could be demonstrated that the Negro race was inferior in terms of intellect,

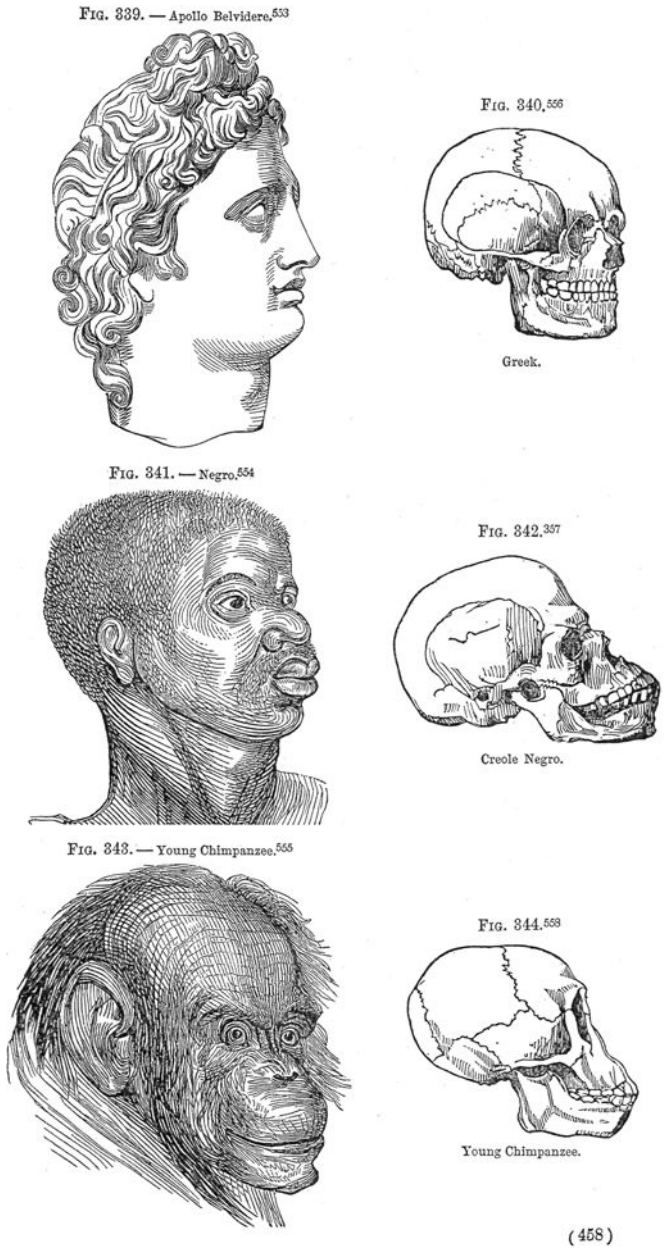

Figure 4.1 Illustrative racism, part 1.
Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the prevailing opinion of the time about the subhuman nature of the Negro and their simian similarity. It is important to note that in Figure 4.1, the Negro skull is drawn to resemble more closely the chimpanzee skull than the Caucasian one. This is anatomically spurious. Both images are from Nott and Gliddon, *Types of Mankind* (1854).

emotion, and physiology then, this meant they were not the same as the Caucasians and did not warrant being treated with the same rights. Indeed, serious attempts were made to detail similarities between the Negro and monkeys and apes as a means of justifying the inhumane treatment they received (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

Within this context of a desire to explore human nature, the discipline of psychology was born. One of the immediate questions which intrigued some of the pioneers of psychology was the presupposed mental, emotional, and physical differences between the Negro and Caucasian. In particular, the work of Francis Galton, Paul Broca, and Herbert Spencer was very influential and, in tandem with the work of other early psychologists, made a major contribution to the pervasive ideas of the era with regard to racial differences and the superiority of the Caucasian.

4.2 Scientific Racism and the Role of Psychology

4.2.1 Psychological thought on race

Francis Galton (1822–1911) is sometimes considered to be the father of modern psychology (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Richards, 1997) and can be credited with pioneering ideas about the nature versus nurture debate and the use of parametric statistical tests (correlation and regression). In addition, being the cousin of Charles Darwin, Galton was also heavily influenced by the Darwinian ideas of the survival of the fittest (Gillham, 2001). In essence, he sought to consider what Darwinian evolution meant to humanity, and he was particularly concerned that the British nation was in danger of declining

due to their superior genetic pool being tainted by that of inferior races (Richards, 1997). He laid the foundation for the eugenics movement with his ideas of preserving particular "bloodlines" and selective breeding, ideas which were taken to the extreme in Hitler's Germany. In addition, Galton's attitude and behaviour towards other races in some instances were extreme and brutal. As a young man he went on expeditions to Syria, Egypt, and Namibia, and during the latter trip he hired the Damaran people to work as his servants. When he found their conduct unsatisfactory, he held his own courts of justice and meted out punishments such as flogging or scalding with hot sand or hot water (Forrest, 1974).

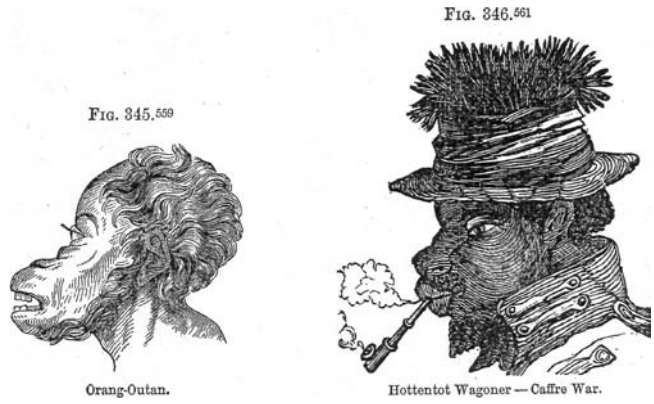

Figure 4.2 Illustrative racism, part 2.
A further illustration of the mis-representation of the Negro and their alleged similarity to simians. The Hottentot is drawn with an exagerated lower face to make the head shape appear similar to that of an orang-utan.

As well as being a pioneer of eugenics, Galton was also one of the first scientists to consider the issue of intellectual differences between people of different races. However, he did not use any tests to formally investigate intellectual differences, and his ideas were formed from his own observations of people from different races on his frequent expeditions. For example, he noted on a trip to the United States that "the mistakes the negroes made in their own matters were so childish, stupid and simpleton like, as frequently to make me ashamed of my own species" (1869/1962, cited in Richards, 1997, p.18). Using his subjective and Euro-Christian-centric view of other people and cultures, Galton concluded that Anglo Saxons had the highest intelligence whilst the Negro race and the Australian Negro (Aborigines) had the lowest (Richards, 1997).

Paul Broca (1824–1880) was professor of clinical surgery at the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Paris. He is perhaps most famous in psychology and neurology as the individual responsible for identifying the area of the brain which plays a major role in speech production and which carries his name, Broca's area. He was also one of the chief advocates of the theory that brain size is a predictor of intelligence and that the brain is larger in "superior" races than it is in "inferior" races, and hence superior races have higher levels of intelligence. He also adopted the notion that certain facial features were associated with intellectual abilities and emphasised that black skin and woolly hair were indicative of intellectual and social inferiority. However, unlike some of his scientific contemporaries, Broca was an advocate of good science in that he proposed that scientific conclusions should be generated from data rather than data should be used to support *a priori* assumptions. Indeed, he was critical of several of his contemporaries whom he felt were dominated by preconceived ideas.

However, as much as he advocated good science, he did make many fundamental errors in his interpretation of his data, and detailed analysis indicated that he was as guilty as some of his contemporaries in fitting his data around preconceived ideas about the inferiority of black races (Gould, 1996). One example will suffice to illustrate this. The position of the head and neck in relation to the body in man and animals differs depending on whether the animal stands upright or on all fours. The hole in the base of the skull, called the *foramen magnum*, is where the spinal cord is attached to the brain, and in animals which are on all fours this is located towards the back of the skull. However, in humans it is located beneath the skull as a result of our upright posture. The foramen magnum in great apes is situated between the posterior location of that in four-legged animals and that of man. At the time of Broca, it was hypothesised that inferior people would have their foramen magnum located further towards the posterior of the skull, indicating more apelike anatomy. Using a sample of 60 white and 35 black skulls, Broca measured the length of the skull before and behind the foramen magnum. Contrary to his *a priori* hypothesis, Broca found that the foramen magnum of blacks lay further forward than that of whites, which should indicate black superiority over whites, and indeed that whites were more ape-like than blacks. Faced with either a revision of his central idea of white superiority on which much of his academic career and research were focussed, or a revision of the meaning of the data, Broca chose the latter. He suggested that the further forward foramen magnum in blacks meant that their brains were deficient in frontal areas and overdeveloped in more basic areas towards the rear. Therefore, with this innovative reinterpretation of the data his central tenet was still supported: according to him, blacks were inferior to whites because of brains that were poorly proportioned and deficient in frontal areas (Gould, 1996).

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) is credited with establishing the nineteenth-century British psychological tradition with his 1855 work *Principles of Psychology*. He also coined the term *survival of the fittest* and wrote an elaborate exposition of the role that biology played in shaping people and in turn shaping the society in which they lived. His central tenet was of social Darwinism, and his ideas encompassed both the "inferior races" and the disadvantaged people within his own society (Francis, 2007). He believed both were doomed to failure and extinction because they had inherited inferior characteristics that stemmed from inferior biological makeup which limited their mental capabilities and consequent social and cultural development. Evidence to support the assertion of the primitiveness of certain people and cultures came from his readings of Westerners' encounters with "inferior races", which noted such characteristics as a lack of adaptiveness, impulsivity, emotional simplicity, and lack of curiosity (Richards, 1997).

In terms of the unfortunate people living in poverty within his own culture, Spencer also believed that they were in this position because they were inferior and essentially were not deserving of life. For such reasons, he vociferously opposed social reforms of the day which sought to bring education to all and greatly improve health and sanitation. According to Spencer, any initiative which improved the chances

of the poverty stricken to survive and procreate should be opposed because in the Darwinian scheme of things these people were inferior and should succumb to the natural law of Darwinism (i.e. die out) (Francis, 2007). Spencer was a very influential man, particularly in the United States, and his ideas provided the American government with a scientific justification for racial segregation.

In addition to the work of Broca, Galton, and Spencer, several other figures in psychology echoed their ideas of racial superiority of the whites, including Karl Pearson, Charles Spearman, Edward Thorndike, Carl Jung, Konrad Lorenz, Cyril Burt, and Sigmund Freud.

4.2.2 The primitive superiority hypothesis

It is perhaps not surprising that with such influential thinkers of the time promoting the idea of white superiority, these ideas permeated the scientific community and society at large. Such opinions were given the guise of scientific credibility and were adopted wholesale by academic psychologists of the day who sought to experimentally validate racist ideas.

For example, Bache (1895) published the results of a study entitled "Reaction Time with Reference to Race" in the *Psychological Review*. The theory behind the paper was that reaction time is a primitive, automatic reflex and that intellectual growth is at the expense of such primitive behaviour. Therefore, the hypothesis was that inferior people would have faster reaction times than superior ones. He tested 12 whites, 11 Indians, and 10 Africans on multiple reaction time (RT) tests. Results indicated that whites were indeed slowest, indicating their superiority to the other groups. However, contrary to Bache's hypothesis the African group was not the fastest; rather, the Indian group was. Bache considered the Indian race as superior to the African, and so he would have expected them to be slower on the RT tests to the Africans. Nevertheless, and as is often seen in the race psychology literature, results can be interpreted to fit in numerous ways to be consistent with prejudiced ideas. In this example, Bache explains the slower RT of the Africans in comparison to the Indians as being due to the adverse effects of slavery, which had changed them from their previous primitive level. In terms of the Indians, their quickness of reaction times was not due to their primitiveness; rather, it was due to the speedy demands of the Indian lifestyle. Other studies of a similar nature were conducted at the time, for example Stetson's (1897) "Some Memory Tests of Whites and Blacks", with most (erroneous) interpretations of results confirming the preconceived ideas of the primitive superiority of the African.

In order to rigorously test the primitive superiority hypothesis, a team of academics from Cambridge University went on an expedition in 1898 to a remote set of islands, the Murray islands, which lay off the northern coast of Australia within an expanse of water named the Torres Straits. The expedition became known as the *Torres Straits expedition* and is considered to be the first example of cross-cultural psychology. There were two key psychologists on board: W.H. Rivers, who had an interest in visual perception; and C.S. Meyers, whose specialism was audition,

olfaction, and reaction time studies. An impressive amount of data was collected on the expedition which was to be published and be the subject of debate for many years. The control data was collected in Britain after their return. Rivers' research in visual perception mainly involved visual acuity, measured by being able to discriminate between two points which are of varying differences apart. He also investigated colour vision and visual illusions. In summary, Rivers found that the Murray Islanders had slightly better visual acuity, less colour discrimination, and more susceptibility to visual illusions involving movement but less to static illusions. In short, there was little convincing evidence of the superiority of the Murray Islanders on primitive skills. Furthermore, methodological problems limited the validity of some findings (Richards, 1997).

Myers' research on auditory discrimination (telling musical notes apart), olfaction (discriminating different scents), and reaction time found a slightly superior performance of British controls on several measures. But, again, methodological problems limited the findings. Nevertheless, the results from all the studies conducted did not support the primitive superiority hypothesis (Richards, 1997).

With the Torres Straits expedition came the opportunity to comprehensively and intensively investigate dominant ideas of differences between whites and blacks, particularly the idea of black superiority on basic functions (vision, hearing, olfaction, and reaction time). Little, if any, evidence of primitive superiority on basic functions was found. Certainly the evidence gathered had the potential to challenge the dominant scientific racist paradigm, and one of the positive influences of the trip was that it emphasised the need to gather empirical evidence to support ideas of racial differences (Richards, 1997). In addition, the lack of evidence for the superiority of the Negro on primitive skills paved the way for investigations of differences in higher functions (i.e. intelligence) between races.

Following the domination of European theorising and explorations into race in the latter half of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century, the United States then began to be at the forefront of this work. This stemmed partly from the legacy of slavery when debate arose as to the place in society of ex-slaves, their children, and their grandchildren.

It was proposed that Negros would not benefit from the same type of schooling as that provided to the white population, but instead needed a separate emphasis on more vocational training which befitted the types of occupations to which they were thought to be better suited (e.g. agriculture and industry). In addition, the United States at that time saw an influx of immigrants, many European, and questions arose as to the nature of these immigrants, many of whom were considered to be inferior to the host population.

These questions about Negro education and the role of the immigrants within American society were ideally suited to the new discipline of psychology, and during the period from 1910 to 1940 there was intense work to identify differences between the races in terms of intelligence, personality, and psychopathology. Indeed, Richards (1997) did an extensive literature search on psychology articles within the race psychology tradition (supporting the Negro *biological* inferiority

hypothesis) and found that between 1909 and 1940, there were 331 published articles. In the same time period, anti-race psychology articles (which largely argued that race differences were environmental, not genetic, in origin) were half that number, 176.

With the Second World War, psychological research into race differences was largely neglected. The social context for this work changed, and it became unacceptable to hold opinions which could be perceived as being similar to those of the Nazis. Indeed, the Holocaust brought a realisation of the uncomfortable implications of race research. In tandem with this, segregation and discrimination began to be seriously challenged in the United States by the civil rights movement. This was an uncomfortable time to hold a scientific racist position.

As a response to these social concerns, research into race during this period tended to focus on cross-cultural psychology, prejudice, discrimination, and the authoritarian personality (Richards, 1997). However, behind the scenes scientific racism was continuing, and continues, in some quarters, with a focus particularly on racial differences in intelligence (see Focus Box 4.1).

The presence of scientific racism in psychology reveals a number of important things about our discipline and those within it. First, we have clear evidence of the symbiotic relationship between our discipline and the sociopolitical thought of the day. Blacks and other non-white groups were perceived as being inferior within our colonial Victorian culture, and this was reflected in the research that was conducted and the interpretation of research findings. Indeed, the work of Broca and Bache outlined earlier show how research findings which contradict a prejudicial hypothesis can be reinterpreted to be consistent with that prejudice. Second, we have evidence that psychology is not the objective science that some claim it to be. Psychologists are not observers of the psychological world; we are actors within it and prone to the same influence and bias of the society around us. An example of this is the switch from a plethora of race difference research being conducted up until the Second World War, to barely any being conducted afterwards when the full implications of racist ideology became apparent. Third, the potential for psychology to be used as a tool for great harm should not be underestimated. For example, the eugenic ideas of Francis Galton gave a scientific rationale to pre-existing prejudice and discrimination which ultimately led to the Holocaust.

4.3 Contemporary Concerns

Are contemporary psychologists immune from the sociopolitical influences of today? Does our long history of colonialism and ethnocentrism affect the academic and clinical work that psychologists conduct? If we consider that psychologists, both personally and professionally, have a symbiotic relationship with their host culture, then it is perhaps not surprising that they adopt the values, beliefs, and behaviours which are endemic in that culture. Certainly we have seen that key psychological figures of the past have adopted and internalised (and perhaps

shaped) the wider societal beliefs of the time, however spurious. There is little reason, therefore, why contemporary psychologists could be immune from this process.

4.3.1 Racism in academic psychology

In this section, we will first look at the underrepresentation of black psychologists within academia and psychology and consider some reasons for this. We will then consider the issue of race within the research community and finally consider evidence for racist claims within recent psychological work.

A study in the United States revealed that within US universities, African Americans comprise only 4% of associate professors and professors compared to white Americans, who have 87% of such appointments. Slightly down the hierarchy at the lecturer level, the figures are similar, with 7% being African American and 83% white American (Allen, 2000). This is within the context of African Americans comprising 13% of the American population as a whole (American Community Survey, 2006). Aside from this glaring underrepresentation in academia, there is also evidence that once within an institution, African American professors, compared to white American ones, work at institutions with less prestige, spend more time on teaching and administration than research, are less likely to be tenured, and have lower academic status (Astin, Antonio, Cress, & Astin, 1997; Nettles & Perna, 1995). Allen (2000) explains such inequalities as being representative of those prevalent in society as a whole, stemming from historical, cultural, and social factors which place the white American at an advantage in terms of status, power, and wealth. Educational opportunities for African Americans are also a casualty of longstanding racist attitudes, and there is evidence to suggest that the lack of black academics affects both the willingness of young black people to enrol in higher education and, if enrolled, their successful graduation (Blackwell, 1981).

Turning our attention specifically to academic psychology, although there are no available data to indicate the underrepresentation of black academics or students within our discipline, there is certainly no reason to suggest that there is a fair representation. Indirectly, though, evidence for the underrepresentation of black academic psychologists has come from the work of Graham (1992), who found that between 1970 and 1990 only 4% of 15,000 psychology articles were about African Americans. This figure worryingly dropped to only 2% between 1985 and 1990. One explanation for this finding was that there were so few African American psychologists. However, another explanation suggests that white psychologists may stay clear of this type of research for fear of accusations of racism. In addition, the lack of published research in this area may also stem from editorial biases where research dealing with African American issues is not deemed either of sufficient interest to a journal audience or academically credible. An example of this latter bias is reported by Korchin (1980), who conducted a study looking at personality competence in young black men which involved comparing a

high-competent group with an average-competent group in order to look at the nature and determinants of competence. The study write-up was rejected from a major psychological journal by one editor because (they said) it had a serious flaw in not including a white control group. Perhaps the opinion of the editor was that black personality characteristics can only be judged in the context of their deviation from (the ideal of) white personality characteristics. As Korchin observes, would a study looking at the personality characteristics of white youths be criticised for not having a black control group?

Aside from concerns about the quantity of research articles in academic psychology journals dealing with black or ethnic minority issues, a concern has been highlighted about the racist content within those articles which are published (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1990). Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1990) looked at articles considering race in the social psychology section of the *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* between 1962 and 1980. They found evidence of five racist strategies: stereotyping black people (e.g. as being aggressive), marginalising racism (psychologists not considering racism to be a major problem in society), overlooking important issues to do with race in research (e.g. black subject–white experimenter dynamics), neo-imperialism (assuming that Western psychological constructs are more valid than non-Western ones, e.g. personality tests), and blaming the victim (black people are sometimes blamed for their own misfortune, such as a suggestion by Dawson [1969] that Aborigines are not suited to modern-type work and therefore their social marginalisation within Australian society is their own fault).

Concerning as such findings are, contemporary psychologists might argue that the attitudes inherent within such work are historic, but are no longer prevalent in twenty-first-century psychology. This assertion would be mistaken. Manley and Elcock (2008) undertook a qualitative study to consider whether there was still evidence of racist discourse within recently published peer-reviewed psychology articles. They found an article by Yoo and Johnson (2007), which they claim portrays the idea of black inferiority. The study concerned with the behaviour of adolescent girls, and in particular their responses to teasing. Manley and Elcock argue that the authors construct African American girls as being more aggressive than their European American counterparts, and cover in some detail African American responses to teasing, which usually involve fighting. However, they do not review any research looking at European American responses to teasing. Their portrayal, therefore, is of an association of African Americans with aggression, the stereotype that has been prevalent for decades. Furthermore, such discourse also implies that the African American girls are at the mercy of their emotions, and hence are more primitive than their European American counterparts.

In addition, Manley and Elcock (2008) argue, when Yoo and Johnson (2007) report their own findings, they give preference to their observations of European American girls, which are covered first and in some detail. Conversely, details of their findings from African American girls are presented last, and often in the

form of single insignificant statements. For example, after considering in detail Caucasian responses to teasing, they state, "Similar sentiments were not expressed by African American participants". Such discourse suggests that the findings from the African American girls are not as important as those from the European Americans, and, intentionally or not, reasserts the status quo of power relations between whites and blacks, with whites being firmly on top.

Relatively uncommon as articles containing racist discourse are, we must remember that this article was published in a peer-reviewed international journal, and it is surprising and worrying that editors and reviewers thought that such biased and racially disharmonious work was worthy of publication. In addition, this article was not met with criticism in the psychological community following publication. It is therefore clear that work is still to be done to make academic psychology free from racist discourse.

In addition to racist ideas appearing in psychology journals, mainstream psychology textbooks have also been identified as containing racially inappropriate material (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994). The added danger with educational material propagating such ideas is that successive generations of psychology graduates will be exposed to racially biased material which may affect their attitudes and behaviour. One such textbook identified by Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) was *Introduction to Psychology* (10th edn; Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem, and Hilgard, 1990). This is one of the most popular psychology textbooks; it was originally published in 1953 and has been translated into many languages. Within the pages, however, Howitt and Owusu-Bempah (1994) identify several key sections which contain racist ideas. First, similarities are drawn between apes, monkeys, and Africans in that all these groups are portrayed as primitive and savage. Second, the word *tribe* is used to describe only communities of black people or monkeys, whilst the word *society* is used for Western communities. Third, there is an implication that African society is savage and barbaric, and the authors cite the "tradition" within the Asanti of Africa that intercourse with a girl who has not undergone puberty is punishable by death for both participants. However, there is no evidence to support the assertion made, and one of the authors of the critique of Atkinson et al. (Owusu-Bempah) is an Asanti and has never heard of such a practice. Fourth, there is a portrayal of Africans in general as suffering from symptoms of schizophrenia, stating that it is common for some African *tribes* to hear disembodied voices or see visual hallucinations. Fifth, there is an implicit assumption that black people do not possess the same visuo-cognitive skills as white people and are therefore less than human. Here, in research looking at expression and emotion, the authors expressed surprise that the people of New Guinea were able to identify the emotional meanings behind facial expressions. This point is still made in the most recent edition of the textbook (Smith, Nolen-Hoeksema, Fredrickson, & Loftus, 2003). Perhaps textbooks such as this one are not updated as thoroughly as they should be, and the racially inappropriate material may reflect thought that was prevalent when the first edition was published in 1953.

Should it be surprising that psychology textbooks reveal such outdated, colonial ideas about black people? Perhaps not, when we consider that textbooks are not objective sources of knowledge. Neither are they independent of culture, politics, social trends, and individual opinions. Instead, they are the result of the dominant political, economic, and cultural climate operating within the host society, written by people with their own biases, agendas, outlook, and ambition. Similarly, they are published within specific political and economic constraints which favour the dominant group (i.e. whites; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994).

There remains much work to be done before the discipline of academic psychology can be considered multicultural in terms of the material taught and the professionals employed. Indeed, psychology from a black or African perspective continues to be a niche market, and few universities teach courses in black psychology.

4.3.2 Racism in clinical psychology

The profession of clinical psychology has been lax in recognising the different needs, concerns, and problems facing minority groups within the host culture. There has also been a lack of reflective work to investigate whether racist attitudes (implicit or explicit) and/or overt racist behaviour are problems within the profession (Carter, 1998). Indeed, a literature search using the terms *clinical psychology* and *racism* (conducted in the summer of 2008) returned less than a dozen articles, and the lack of clinical psychology articles covering any issues related to race has been observed before (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1990). Korchin (1980) suggests that this neglect has historically stemmed from the attitude that somehow race is irrelevant to the profession because clinicians are able to relate to the individual humanity of clients and adopt an impartial approach. Not only is such an assertion erroneous in the context of the social constructionist approach (the clinician observes and judges behaviour in the context of a particular cultural, political, and economic climate), but also it blinds the profession to the particular needs of racial minorities.

Halsey and Patel (2003) identify four challenges which clinical psychologists may face in relation to race and culture which may hinder good therapeutic practice.

1. *Lack of consideration of the external realities faced by the client*. Clinicians should be concerned not only with the internal world of the client, but also with the particular domestic, cultural, and ideological circumstances which the client is embedded within. For example, there are particular psychological challenges faced by ethnic minority immigrants and asylum seekers.
2. *The assertion that "colour is unimportant" in clinical work*. This is tempting as it implies that the clinician treats every client equally and impartially. Irrespective of the point that clinicians are certainly not immune from racial biases, this attitude also fails to acknowledge that a contributory factor to the client's difficulties may stem from their ethnicity itself. For example, are they the victim of prejudice and discrimination? Therefore the clinician should not be "colour blind".

3. *Conversely, clinicians should also avoid giving special attention to clients from ethnic minorities*. This is in the sense of viewing them as novel, exciting, and different and hence worthy of special consideration. Such an approach emphasises the "otherness" of the client and highlights their differences from the host culture.
4. *The clinician should be careful of imposing Eurocentric clinical solutions to clients from non-European cultures*. A therapeutic intervention developed in the West and based on Western ideals may not have optimum relevance to clients from non-Western cultures.

The challenge for the clinical psychologist, then, is to be aware of potential issues in their therapeutic relationships with ethnic minorities, and also to engage in a process of continual critical reflectiveness to ensure that their practice is culturally competent.

However, not only is there a concern about culturally appropriate practice with regard to clients, but also there is a concern about racial factors hindering the relationship between supervisors and their supervisees within clinical psychology doctoral programs. Constantine and Sue (2007) investigated the issue of perceived racial biases among black supervisees with white supervisors using qualitative methods. Seven themes emerged from black supervisees' accounts:

1. *Invalidating racial-cultural issues*. "I felt like he just didn't want to deal with the racial dynamics in the room, which were definitely affecting how we related to each other" (p.146).
2. *Stereotyping black clients*. "My supervisor kept saying things like, 'you shouldn't expect a lot of African American clients to be in touch with their feelings'" (p.146).
3. *Stereotyping black supervisees*. "My supervisor used to say things like 'don't be late for supervision. I know that black people sometimes have a different time orientation and think it's ok to be late for stuff'" (p.146).
4. *Reluctance to provide feedback for fear of being viewed as racist*. "My supervisor would literally flinch every time he had something critical to say about my work" (p.147).
5. *Focusing on clinical weaknesses*: "all he could do was keep telling me what an awful therapist I was. I knew I was better though because the feedback was not consistent with the feedback I'd received from [prior] supervisors and clients" (p.147).
6. *Blaming black clients for the circumstances which brought them to therapy*: When talking about a client who was stressed due to feeling racially harassed by white co-workers, "my supervisor said, 'Well, [your client] has to know to expect some of that treatment in the workplace because she is a minority in a majority situation. If she doesn't learn how to deal with the fact that racism exists, she won't be successful in most [jobs] in this country. [Black people] need to stop playing the race card'" (p.147).

7. *Suggesting culturally insensitive treatments*: One Jamaican client was drinking daily in response to a relationship breakup – "my supervisor said 'in some cultures, it's normal for people to cope with their problems by drinking … so I don't think you should make a big deal out of it' " (p.147).

This study therefore suggests that some white clinical supervisors display a range of culturally inappropriate attitudes and behaviours, and these not only affected their supervisory relationships with black supervisees but also, through the advice given, affected the clinical therapy which clients received. Furthermore, if any of these supervisors had clients from ethnic minorities on their caseload, it is clear that the attitudes displayed would have had very detrimental consequences.

Our review of the issue of race and racism in academic and clinical psychology informs us that we are still not free from the race bias that has hindered our profession since its inception. No doubt if we undertook a review of other domains of psychology, then we would probably also find instances of racist discourse and practice. This is inevitable since psychology was born within and thrives in a culture where racist discourse and practice still exist. The main point here is the reflexive relationship between psychology and society – both influence and reflect each other.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Modern ideas of race are based around rather subjective classifications of people with different physical characteristics who come from different geographical locations. This classification led to the development of a hierarchy of "worth" of different races, with Caucasians being considered (by Caucasians) to be the ideal type of mankind, whilst other races were perceived as being inferior. Within this social context, early psychological work promoted and erroneously supported the prevailing opinion of race differences until the Second World War. However, with a growing awareness of the political dangers of such work, as well as the growth of the black civil rights movement in the still exists, investigations into race differences became unacceptable to the mainstream scientific community. The contemporary professions of academic and clinical psychology are not free of the cultural, political, and economic biases which prevail in society. Within academia, there is a worrying lack of staff from ethnic minorities which is also reflected in psychology. In addition, research investigating ethnic minority issues has been worryingly sparse, and there is still evidence of racist discourse within journal articles and textbooks. Clinical psychology has historically failed to fully appreciate the importance of multicultural dynamics within its profession. Both clinical and academic psychology need to be more aware of the racial biases which affect their professions, so that they can guard against the mistakes made by some of their predecessors.

Self-test Questions

1. Consider whether "race" is a meaningful concept.
2. Can early psychologists such as Francis Galton be considered racist?
3. Why did Paul Broca revise the explanation for his research findings regarding the foramen magnum?
4. Why did Herbert Spencer think that some cultures would die out?
5. Describe the primitive superiority hypothesis.
6. Why was the Torres Straits expedition an important event in the history of psychology?
7. Why is it important for psychology textbooks to be free of racist terminology?
8. Why is there a lack of published research regarding African Americans?
9. Discuss the challenges faced by a clinical psychologist when working with a client from an ethnic minority.
10. How have ideas of race in society influenced psychological thought on the issue?

Thinking Points

1. How critical should we be of early psychologists who adopted a scientific racist opinion?
2. In the context of the social constructivist approach, evaluate the potential of psychologists to investigate racial issues free of bias.
3. How can the profession of psychology become more racially representative and racially aware?

Further Reading

Howitt, D., & Owusu-Bempah, J. (1994). *The racism of psychology: Time for change*. Hemel-Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

One of the goals of this book was to expose the racism inherent in psychological theory and practice, both historically and contemporarily. It does a convincing job in an engaging and informative way.

Richards, G. (1997). *Race, racism and psychology: Towards a reflexive history*. London: Routledge.

This is probably the most comprehensive and insightful account of the historical origins of racism within psychology and, more generally, the ways in which the profession expresses the cultural ideas which dominate a particular time.

5 Psychology and Women

Jonathan Elcock

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Gain introductory knowledge about the history of sex and gender within.
- Understand the complexity around using gender as an independent variable.
- Have an appreciation of why research on differences between men and women is appealing.
- Be able to apply the critiques from this chapter to other research into sex and gender.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine an area of controversy that has been with psychology for over a century: what, if any, meaningful psychological differences there are between men and women. As we shall argue, one of the complicating factors is the way that differences between women and men are reported in some sections of the popular media.

> For men, it will merely confirm what they have long suspected – and clever women will let them go on thinking it. Psychologists have found that men have bigger brains and higher IQs than women, which may explain why chess grandmasters and geniuses are more likely to be male.
>
> Fiona Macrae, *Daily Mail* 25 August 2005

The *Daily Mail* account of the meta-analysis by Paul Irwing and Richard Lynn began sensationally: had psychologists proven what was first said over a hundred years ago, that men have bigger brains than women and therefore are more psychologically developed? This often refuted idea still seems to have currency both in society in general, and amongst at least some psychologists. Understanding psychology in relation to how it treats women is a complicated but rewarding task. In this chapter, I am going to introduce you to a number of selected topics around psychology and gender.

We will examine early history, with examples of ideas that in their best possible light can be said to reflect existing societal prejudices about women, and the early rebuttals of these ideas by pioneering women psychologists. We will discussed the measurement of masculinity and femininity, from the work of Terman and Miles, to the work of Sandra Bem regarding how and why psychology has attempted to measure gender roles. Finally, modern gender difference research, the feminist critique of just including gender as an independent variable, and evolutionary psychology will be examined.

5.1 Early History of Psychology

In highlighting these few examples from the early history of psychology, we are attempting to do two things: first, enable you to question whether or not psychology as an academic discipline has moved on from its late nineteenth-century roots; and, second, give an account of some of the early female psychologists whose contributions were often ignored at the time. Given the amount of social change since this period of history, it is worth recounting the inequalities between men and women in this time period.

In late nineteenth-century Britain, women had few rights, but the picture varies slightly at the sites of the early growth of psychology, continental

Europe and the United States. By the late Victorian period, women in the United Kingdom had gained some limited rights. Women had no right to vote in general elections but had gained some voting rights in local elections. Women gained limited property rights across the Victorian period, and along with these had increased rights with regard to custody of their children and very limited rights to divorce. It became legally possible for women to become doctors; in addition, Girton College at Cambridge and late London University admitted women. Some of the concerns of psychology in this period can be seen potentially as backlash to these concessions, as we will discuss below (Gordon & Nair, 2003).

Another important societal influence on psychology was the sense that science could be deployed to understand people within society, mirroring the success of the physical sciences in understanding the natural world. Scientific commentators on psychology were thus able to write about men and women as if they were doing so from firm foundations. While with modern eyes it is difficult to take some of these pronouncements seriously, it may be that even at this time psychology was both reflecting and trying to shape society simultaneously.

In terms of a broad-brushstroke history, we can see division into two phases for the psychology of sex and gender. There is remarkably little work into sex and gender differences between the founding of psychology and the 1960s. Following that, there is an explosion in work. although there is not the space to discuss everything that happened, there is an opportunity to discuss work in the early twentieth century in some depth (Richards, 2002).

That psychology did not pay much attention to sex differences in its early history can be well illustrated by examining the review by Helen Thompson Woolley in 1910. In contrast to the vast amount of literature investigating differences between men and women, Woolley has a much smaller amount of literature to draw upon. However, there are a number of areas that still have some concern for us today, and Woolley's review highlights some of these. Woolley mentions two popular sources, the work of Möbius (1903) and Weininger (1906), as standing in contradiction to her conclusion that there is little evidence that the majority of psychological differences between men and women are social rather than biological in origin.

While there was little systematic work on the psychology of women before Helen Woolley's work, that did not stop psychologists commenting on women. According to Rosenberg (1982), it is possible to find assertions that women, like domesticated rabbits, are frailer and dumber than their primitive ancestors. In addition, the ideas of Galton were that women were in all their capacities inferior to men, and of William James that the maternal instinct transforms women from being vain, egotistic, and irritable to becoming totally selfless and finding absolute delight in their infants. That these societal prejudices are so easily repeated within psychology might explain why pioneering women psychologists were so frustrated.

Woolley's 1910 general literature review, while suggesting that the general tone of the literature is improving, asserts that it does not meet the standards of science:

> The general impression produced by a survey of this motley mass of material is first, that the literature of the subject is improving in tone. There is perhaps no field aspiring to be scientific where flagrant personal bias, logic martyred in the cause of supporting a prejudice, unfounded assertions, and even sentimental rot and drivel, have run riot to such an extent as here. (p.342)

Of particular interest is where she finds that authors have come to conclusions in contradiction to the data they cite, and on occasion have misrepresented others' data in order to reach conclusions.

It is unfortunate that, despite the explosion of research on differences between men and women that happened in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, some of these faults persist to this day. Crawford (1995) suggests in her literature review of differences between men and women in speech that authors have a tendency towards being hypercritical of their own work when it fails to meet stereotypic expectations.

While the work of Woolley is important to us for highlighting what work was being done in the early history of psychology, it is nevertheless true to say that much of the early history of psychology neglected women. While there were female psychologists, they were very much in the minority, and what was developing was a psychology mainly based upon men, with women, when they were mentioned at all, more often being mentioned in the light of prevailing cultural stereotypes rather than according to the, admittedly, sparse experimental evidence.

In addition, the relative scarcity of work on gender in this period, compared to for example the huge amount of work on "race" differences, may reinforce the idea that psychology reacts to concerns within its host societies as understood by the psychologists working at that time, but it gives little scope for much analysis beyond that. Woolley's dissertation work can be seen to have addressed questions about whether or not women should be in higher education, which had been seen as an issue since the late nineteenth century, but within male-dominated psychology much of the understanding of people was an understanding based on taking the male experience as normal.

Finally, it is important to note the contributions of women psychologists even at this point, and it is frustrating that the points which they raise have such echoes into the future.

5.2 Measuring Masculinity and Femininity

One of the features of psychology is the way that the discipline attempts to quantify various qualities of people. The work on measuring masculinity and femininity should help to demonstrate how these measurements are often culturally bound,

and that the attempts to classify often have a normative function over and above the stated aim to measure. The work reviewed in this section is a good illustration of how existing social stereotypes may become enshrined in measuring scales that continue to be used long after the time period they were designed within.

5.2.1 Terman and Miles

Lewis Terman is perhaps best known for his contributions to intelligence testing, but the work that Catharine Cox Miles and he did on developing a masculinity scale may have formalised what masculinity and femininity were for a generation of Americans.

Catharine Cox Miles was already a full professor teaching German and physical education at the College of the Pacific in San Jose when she returned to Stanford University (her alma mater for her bachelor's and master's degrees) to work alongside Lewis Terman to obtain her doctorate. Terman had just begun his longitudinal study of gifted children, and although this project did not offer a suitable dissertation project (her Ph.D. dissertation was a groundbreaking study in biographical psychology), Terman and Miles collaborated on the 1936 *Sex and Personality*. According to Hartman's contemporary review, Terman generated the idea of a test of masculinity and femininity out of his observations of the differences between gifted boys and girls. Unlike some of the later masculine-feminine tests, the Attitude Interest Analysis was a large test, consisting of 454 items organized into seven subscales: (a) word association, (b) ink blot association, (c) information, (d) emotional and ethical response, (e) interests, (f) personalities and opinions, and (g) introvertive response.

According to Lippa (2001), Terman and Miles were aware of the cultural constraints of their test, acknowledging that it was based on differences between men and women "in the present historical period of the Occidental culture of our own country" (p.6). Terman and Miles, together with other research associates, carried out a large-scale validation and norming exercise before bringing their work forward for publication, and although to modern eyes some of the test items may seem quaint, they were a product of careful systematic empirical analysis.

Of importance to us is what the Terman-Miles Masculinity-Femininity (MF) scales led to in developments elsewhere in psychology. The idea that there was a single scale from masculine to feminine was not seriously critiqued until the 1970s, so embedding the notion that men and women are polar opposites. While the idea of MF as a measure of personality never had quite the same impact as IQ as a measure of intelligence, the Terman-Miles scale and subsequent scales were used in occupational settings. Importantly, it also reinforced the notion of "inversion" as a diagnostic tool for homosexuality, then perceived as a mental illness. Hartmann's (1937) review summarises their findings:

> The passive male homosexuals do not differ markedly in physical measurements from those of college and army men and none show the slightest defect of the genital organs. Nevertheless their preferred interests and activities have been distinctly feminine from early childhood.

> Active male homosexuals yield an M-F score that is almost identical in mean and variability with the record of male undergraduates. The authors rightly indicate the M-F scale may be found useful in the legal disposition of cases of homosexuality, since it seems reasonable that different types of treatment should be accorded true homosexuals and inverts as compared with mere perverts. These case studies confirm the validity of the instrument since the scores discriminate nicely the various degrees of homosexual conduct in the male from the extremely "feminine" to the "bisexual" individual. (p.106)

Some items from the Terman and Miles scale were later incorporated into the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), and in its original form the scale was used to help with the diagnosis of homosexuality as a mental health problem. The idea that homosexuality was a mental health problem, and that archetypal masculinity and femininity were the way forward for mental health, came under pressure in the 1960s.

5.2.2 Beyond binary distinctions

The work of Sandra Bem and others (e.g. Constantinople, 1973; Wakefield, Sasek, Friedman, & Bowden, 1976; Cook, 1985) on psychological androgyny also marked a shift away from a single masculinity-femininity score and to an abandonment of developing scales with the aim of looking for inversion. However, this did not affect existing measures like the Mf scale in the MMPI, and while the purpose of this measure in the revised MMPI is unclear, it still exists.

The first conceptual problem is the tautology inherent in the operational definition of masculinity and femininity produced by masculine-feminine scales. The tests define *masculinity* by the statements that men most often endorse and measure masculinity by the extent to which men agree with these statements more often than women do. *Femininity* is defined by the statements that women most often endorse and is measured by the extent to which women agree with these statements more often than men.

A literature review by Constantinople (1973) examined whether the psychometric approach to masculinity and femininity had a conceptual framework; in addition, Constantinople examined the contention that a low score for the gender-stereotypical trait led to mental health problems, including "problems" with sexuality. She concluded that not only did the tests not support the theoretical prediction of poor psychological functioning, but also the tests did not support the assumed bipolarity of masculinity and femininity.

For Bem and other androgyny researchers, both masculinity and femininity were qualities that any individual, female or male, could have in any quantity. Bem argued that the most psychologically healthy individual would score high in both. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) became one of the most popular measures of masculinity and femininity and is still in widespread use today, although Bem has to a large degree shifted her own focus away from psychometric measurement and

towards understanding the ways that culture supports certain traits as masculine and others as feminine. The scale consists of a number of "masculine" items, a number of "feminine" items, and some filler questions. A respondent fills in a Likert-type rating for each item.

Although the work of Bem with the BSRI is important, the measure still has some of the weaknesses associated with the older generation of scales. To a great extent, it is measuring stereotypes associated with masculinity and femininity, and as Bem's later work demonstrates it misses the important question of how a particular trait becomes culturally associated with a typical woman or a typical man.

5.3 Modern Psychology of Sex and Gender Differences

From the late 1960s on, the amount of work on looking for differences between men and women has increased. There are a number of possible reasons for this, some of which are explored below, but of no little consequence are the changing demographics of the students of psychology. Like many current psychology degrees, the degree we teach on has 80% to 90% female students. From the early 1970s on, although the proportions were more even at this stage, there has been the opportunity for psychologists to use their female undergraduates as participants in studies and to include the sex of participants as an independent variable.

5.3.1 Defining *sex* and *gender*

Before we continue this section, it is worth just exploring some issues of terminology with regard to the difference research. Much of this work was originally called *sex differences research*, with a tacit or explicit notion that the psychological differences between men and women had a biological foundation. As feminist writing and psychological research began to explore the social differences between men and women, in for example the ways that parents and teachers treat boys and girls differently, at least some of these differences became known as *gender differences*, reflecting a social origin. This simple dichotomy is, however, problematic. There is a tendency amongst some researchers to use the term *gender difference* while using an explicit biological framework to explain those differences. As with other instances of what is a nature–nurture distinction, there is also a growing realisation that the debate is somewhat futile. Most (if not all) psychological phenomena come about because of a complex series of interactions and transactions between the natural and the social, so the distinction is at beast blurred if not completely misleading. Finally, as some social constructionist orientated feminists (e.g. Crawford, 1995) have argued, the more important distinction is between essentialist theories and constructionist theories. Throughout much of this section, I will use the two terms together; later, I will explore the notion that *sex* and *gender* are things that we do, rather than things that are given.

5.3.2 Investigating differences

The investigation of psychological differences between men and women from approximately the 1960s onwards has not been a project in the same way that race psychology was a project just after the turn of the twentieth century. At least some of work was inspired by the ideal of finding "true" differences in order to examine whether prejudices had any basis in "reality". Other sex difference findings have come about because of the habit amongst some psychologists of including sex (or gender) as an additional variable, sometimes for no better reason than it allows for more complicated statistical procedures. Still other work appears to have had at its root the notion that women are intrinsically worse than men, perhaps as a backlash to the social changes that were happening (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Almost every area of psychology has had work on sex or gender difference (Jones & Elcock, 2001). A stereotypical experimental study of sex or gender difference takes some dependent variables of interest and measures men and women upon that variable. If differences are found, then there is a sex or gender difference; which term is used often depends on the dependent variable. The findings may be accompanied by a biological or social rationale about why the difference exists, but often it is the "fact" that men and women are different that underlies that explanation (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

There are a number of problems with the single experiment that uses sex as an independent variable. Jacklin (1981) called the number of variables that interact with gender the most pervasive problem in sex and gender research. For example, in an unequal society, men tend to earn more and have more powerful positions than women, so a group of men and women will tend to differ on socioeconomic factors as well as their biological sex. As well as these economic and status differences, there is the idea that men and women live in different social worlds. The way that a person is reacted to differs because of their gender. These interactions lead to confounding factors. It is difficult to know which factors need to be controlled or matched, and which do not. Yet despite these objections, and the notion that all studies involving an independent variable that is not under the control of the experimenter are necessarily quasi-experiments (and thus strong claims of causality should not be made), research into sex differences continues. There are further issues around who the participants are in these studies and who they can represent. This problem was labelled by Crawford the problem of the *generic woman*.

Crawford (1995) suggests that we should question which women a piece of research refers to and if a research study does suggest that there is some difference between men and women. Bohan (1993) reminds us that it is important to ask, "Which women do we mean?" When a study finds a sex difference, unless we have considerably more information about the participants than that normally provided for in experimental reports, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to work out what that sex difference might mean.

Often sex or gender differences are fairly small in these single studies, and that may explain some of the inconsistencies in findings because small but reliable

differences may not be detected in typically small-scale psychology experiments. In an attempt to surmount this problem, and perhaps with the hope that larger sample sizes may make findings more representative, there has been an attempt to use meta-analysis on sex and gender difference research.

Meta-analysis is a statistical way of combining the results of a number of individual studies. There are various techniques of meta-analysis available; according to Rosenthal and Rosnow, the statistically best method is one called *effect size combination*. Hyde (1986) argued against the narrative literature review as a way of combining studies. She claimed that meta-analysis has a twofold advantage: it is a systematic and quantitative way to synthesise and integrate numerous studies, and by using effect size estimation it avoids some problems of hypothesis testing.

There are difficulties with even the best meta-analyses; many of these are to do with the lack of agreement around the definition of topics such as aggression. Whether there is a single psychological entity that deserves the label *aggression*, and whether it is sensible to attempt to combine studies that use different measuring techniques, are probably the most contentious problems. There are also problems that derive from the *generic women* issue that Crawford raises. If the men and women are drawn from different sections of the population, there is a question of whether like is being compared to like in the meta-analyses. There are also deeper problems: often the effect sizes in gender research are very small, often much smaller than the variation in the populations, yet the headlines from such research will tend to trumpet the difference, which tends to establish or reinforce stereotypes. There is also the problem that very often we do not know the meaning of these differences; much psychological research tends to work within very sketchy theoretical frameworks. Partly because effect size estimation is a relatively new technique for psychologists, we cannot often translate effect sizes into practical effects.

While meta-analyses have advantages, they should not be seen as (yet another) empirical way to ignore thorny theoretical and meta-physical issues. Mary Crawford demonstrates this by examining the research on women's language, and we will examine her argument on that topic in the next subsection.

5.3.3 Women and men's language

Crawford (1995) takes as her starting point the claims of Robin Lakoff (1973) that women's language differed from men's language on nine points. Lakoff's work was not based on empirical research because in her words her publication was meant to function as a "goad to further research". It almost certainly did this; at the same time, it spawned a cottage industry of self-help books, including the infamous "Venus and Mars" series of books by John Gray. Before examining some of the empirical work, it is worth reflecting on its popular impact. Somewhat like the work on assertiveness training in the 1960s, this work individualises the issue of gender relations. Women and men fail to understand each other because they talk a different language; if only individual men and women tried harder, they

could understand each other. This holds the implicit assumption that women might want to change their language to make themselves understood while attempting to understand how men talk (more psychological self-help books are bought by women than by men). To some extent, it is likely that lay constructions have been more affected by the popular self-help books than they have been by empirical research.

Even the easier to study variables (e.g. tag questions) have led to very inconsistent findings, depending on who the men and women were; one study (Mulac & Lundell, 1986) is even cited by Zalin (1989) as showing "no sex related differences" but by Pearson (1991) as showing differences. Elsewhere the findings are mixed, with differences sometimes falling in the expected direction and sometimes not. As Crawford points out, when the differences are against expectations, the researchers will normally give elaborate explanations of why the study "failed" for those differences; and when they are in the expected direction, the explanation given is often fairly simplistic: the differences exist, most often, because of cultural differences between men and women, without any attempt made to elaborate how such mechanisms may work or to examine the wider social impact.

After some meticulous work on each of the main variables highlighted by Lakoff, Crawford (1995) goes on to discuss how the number of variables explored has escalated over the last four decades, with over 35 possible variables having been examined, still with fairly inconsistent findings. As Crawford points out, when an enterprise, after almost 30 years of asking the same question, appears no closer to reaching a conclusion, it may be that the very question is incorrect.

There appear to be a number of stumbling blocks in the enterprise. We have already discussed the issues of so-called generic women and the problems of using "average" findings when discussing very divergent populations. Added to this is the tendency to treat any findings of difference as complete without the need for further explanation of why such differences may occur. Another problem is how results are utilised.

5.3.4 Developmental psychology and gender

Interest in developmental psychology began soon after the founding of psychology. With the then prevalent notion of recapitulation (the idea that an individual in its lifetime repeats the development of the species) investigating how the child develops were not only a way of answering technical questions about schooling but also a way to understand the history of the species. Although this idea has long since been discredited, the enterprise of developmental psychology still betrays its roots in that form of evolutionary thinking (e.g. Morss, 1996). As Burman (1998) discusses in an essay on the possibilities or otherwise of a feminist developmental psychology, there is a powerful appeal in using the rhetoric of "the child" that has to some extent inoculated developmental psychology from the same analyses that have been applied to gender, "race", class, and sexuality.

Gender development, despite the sometimes unwanted conceptual baggage, has provided a resource for understanding the impact of society on how children

understand themselves as gendered beings, and this has itself led to a wider discussion of those impacts. The notion that we react differently to newborn boys and girls, and that these differences in reaction continue throughout childhood and into adulthood, comes out of research into gender development. The notion of gender roles as things that come out of expectations, enacted by parents and later teachers, has led to resources that liberal feminists and others can use to try to raise consciousness about the impact of child-rearing practises and educational materials, and to change public opinion about accepted gender roles.

The shift from describing how boys and girls develop to examining the social and cultural effects of gender roles may have contributed to an acceptance that there was a need for courses and modules on the psychology of women, which may have helped in the struggles to establish the Psychology of Women's Section within the BPS and its equivalent in other national psychology associations. However, at the same time the politics of gender subjugation is not seen as being part of a psychology that is still projecting the image of being a value-free natural science. To some extent, feminist psychology has sought to redress that balance.

5.3.5 Feminist psychology

Feminist psychology can be identified with the cultural impact of second-wave feminism upon psychology. Although there were occasional criticisms of the androcentrism in psychology prior to the 1970s, for example Horney countering the Freudian notion of "penis envy" in women with "womb envy" and the publication of de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949/1984), there was little critical work upon psychology. Part of the reason for this may have been, as Sherif (1979) points out, the ways in which the topics that psychologists studied were often heavily funded by government agencies, and part may have been due to the concern that psychology is a neutral, and therefore apolitical, science; another consideration is the relative lack of women in the discipline prior to the 1960s, due to institutional barriers and a general cultural sexism. From the late 1970s and through the 1980s and 1990s, feminist critiques of psychology have been growing, and the impacts of feminist psychology have become more extensive.

The first place where this could be seen was probably the cross-cultural work on sex roles, which heralded work on the sources of sexism and culturally constructed gender differences. At this point, with the exception of some radical feminist voices, the approach was that of trying to understand how psychological differences are imposed upon boys and men, and girls and women, through factors such as child-rearing practise, by culture in general and through social psychological processes (see e.g. Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* [1982]).

Part of the argument becomes about whether the methods that psychology uses are inevitably masculine, so for example Wendy Hollway's (1989) publication of *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology*, and Sandra Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism* (1987).

The argument over whether or not there are distinctive feminist methods has grown more complex, with Peplau and Conrad (1989) arguing that there are no methods that can be guaranteed to produce nonsexist research. These arguments have become complex, with writers like Sue Wilkinson (1997), arguing that given the priority that feminism psychology gives to the political, it follows that feminists should adopt whatever research methods tactics work for a given topic. Many feminist writers have grave concerns that a position that is too social constructionist may undermine any points that could be made. However, the style of research used in mainstream psychology (some times labelled *male-stream* as a reminder of just how androcentric it has been) is seen, at least by some feminist writers, as an overwhelmingly masculine exercise, and the critiques of it often have their roots in social constructionism.

Feminist psychology has had a range of impacts on psychology as a whole and on how gender research is treated in particular. Throughout the section so far, the critiques that we have highlighted have come from feminist psychologists; although in chapter 9 we cite Danziger on the notion that psychology and politics are intertwined, it is important to make clear that this idea is very clear in the writings of feminist psychologists.

Despite the considerable impact of feminist psychologists, there remains a body of work looking for difference between women and men. While much of this research has little in the way of a theoretical unity, there has been an attempt made by evolutionary psychologists to provide a mechanism for understanding the differences between women and men.

5.4 Evolutionary Psychology

For most of the history of psychology, there have been attempts to explain the differences between men and women, using evolutionary theory as an explanation. Helen Woolley at the turn of the twentieth century, on the basis of her own careful experimental work and critique of the existing literature, had no hesitation in rejecting this position, stating the "brain is not a secondary sexual characteristic" (Woolley, 1910). At around the same time of the feminist critiques of psychology, work began in sociobiology (e.g. Dawkins, 1976; Wilson, 1980) making the argument that men and women have developed different strategies in order to maximise their potential to have offspring. Differences between women and men have become a major part of evolutionary psychology, which is a more subtle theoretical position than sociobiology and which is developing an evidential basis beyond that of earlier formulations.

Buss (2002), who is one of the major figures in evolutionary psychology, reviews the literature, suggesting various ways that men and women differ in terms of their behaviour when trying to attract a "mate" (it is one of the peculiarities of this literature that the language of human sexual attraction is reduced to biological terms).

> Finally, studies of the behavioral tactics that men and women use to attract mates, retain mates, and derogate their rivals all correspond closely to the expressed desires of the opposite sex. Women, for example, tend to put more effort into appearance enhancement in mate attraction and mate retention, and when they derogate their rivals they focus on the rival's physical flaws. … Conversely, men tend to display and bestow resources on the women they are trying to attract and retain. (Buss, 2002, p.52)

In a paper with Greiling, the evidential basis for these claims is made clear.

> [A] number of clues point to an ancestral past in which some women sometimes departed from monogamous mating. Physiological clues come from testes size in primates and from recent evidence on sperm insemination and sperm retention. Behavioral evidence comes from the existence of affairs in every known tribal society for which relevant data exist. And psychological clues come from the existence of a powerful male desire for sexual variety and a powerful psychology of sexual jealousy. … [T]hey must have evolved in response to adaptive problems and adaptive opportunities, imposed and provided by women's sexual strategies. (Greiling & Buss, 2000, p.932)

Although modern evolutionary psychology theorising deals with the idea that if men were sleeping with more than one women, given nearly equal populations of women and men, the converse must also be true. However, note how it is *some* women who *sometimes* departed from monogamous mating, despite the relatively clear mathematics that on average men and women must have had the same number of partners. While the work of Buss is careful, I feel it still has an unexamined set of stereotypes about men and women underlying its theoretical statements.

This contrasts with Kanazawa, who uses evolutionary psychology to explain *why beautiful people are more intelligent* (also the title of a 2004 paper co-authored with Kovar) and the idea that the well-known gap in pay between men and women is not due to discrimination but rather because of sexual selection strategies: "In the ancestral environment or the environment of evolutionary adaptedness (EEA), where our ancestors were hunter gatherers, there was a clear division of labor by sex" (Kanazawa, 2005, p.272). In summary, according to Kanazawa it was the male who accumulated material resources through game hunting and competition, while the female took physical care of the children. Ancestral women gathered plant foods and thereby contributed to the nutritional needs of their children, but their child care responsibilities prevented them from devoting themselves to amassing and accumulating material resources to the same extent that men did. Women therefore inherited this ancestral trait of looking for men with greater resources rather than searching for their own resources. The gender pay gap can be explained simply by this fact: women unconsciously do not wish to be paid as much as men due to their inherited characteristics.

Of course, one might ask through whose eyes game hunting is "accumulating material resources" while gathering plants is "contributing to the nutritional needs of children"; one might even ponder why both behaviours are not labelled "gaining food" for the extended family group.

However, evolutionary psychology explanations seem scientific, possibly because they both uphold existing stereotypes and can appeal to the scientific methods of a more established academic discipline.

5.5 Chapter Summary

Despite over a hundred years of critical writing, it appears that it is still possible to repeat the claim of Möbius that women are constitutionally more stupid than men. At least the claims of Irwing and Lynn (2005) were quickly critiqued in print (Blinkhorn, 2005), but the popular media articles did not give Blinkhorn's refutation the same prominence that they gave to the original study. However, I feel that the main problem now is not the clearly ideologically motivated writing of a few psychologists but rather the tendency to throw gender in as a variable without adequate conceptual and theoretical work. This is allied to a number of factors, such as statistical techniques that mean it is easier to find differences than commonalities, a journal publication bias toward reporting studies with statistically significant findings, and a tendency in the media to highlight only stereotype-confirming research. I hope to have demonstrated that there are enough resources available to all of us that this depressing pattern need not continue.

Self-test Questions

1. What is a *sex difference*?
2. What is a *gender difference*?
3. What factors may have shaped early psychological research into sex differences?
4. To what uses were masculinity-femininity tests put in the mental health field?
5. Why is it difficult to use sex or gender as an independent variable?
6. What is meta-analysis?
7. How is meta-analysis used in trying to establish sex and gender differences?
8. What assumptions underlie evolutionary psychology?
9. How might evolutionary psychology be biased?
10. What is the *generic woman* problem?

Thinking Points

1. What similarities are there between the way that psychology has treated gender differences and differences between "races"? What might be the cause of these similarities?

2. Is it possible for anyone to carry out truly unbiased research into issues of sex and gender?
3. What different explanations for sex or gender differences should the careful researcher consider before arguing that a difference between men and women is biological?

Further Reading

Bem, S. L. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

In this book Bem, who has long been interested in psychology and gender, questions the way that gender is seen in society, suggesting that we are culturally prepared to best understand men and women as essentially different.

Crawford, M. (1995). *Talking difference: On gender and language*. London: Sage

This is a classic book that sets forth a social constructionist feminist perspective on the psychology of gender. The chapters on assertiveness training and how language differences have been reported are foundational to the understandings of the intersection between psychology and gender in this chapter.

Hollway, W. (1989). *Subjectivity and method in psychology: Gender, meaning and science*. London: Sage.

This book sets forth an argument about the way that method in psychology affects not only the way that research is carried out but also the meaning we attach to that research.

Stainton Rogers, W., & Stainton Rogers, R. (2001). *The psychology of gender and sexuality*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

This accessible textbook gives a good overview of traditional psychology theories and the challenges to that from recent critical theorising.

6 Beyond Nature Versus Nurture

Dai Jones

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the nature of the environment and of genetic inheritance.
- Understand the ways in which genes interact with the environment in shaping individuals.
- Evaluate the validity of behavioural genetics as an approach.
- Identify the reasons why genetic explanations are appealing.
- Appreciate the problems associated with genetic explanations of human psychology.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

In chapter 1, we considered a range of approaches that are taken in studying psychology. We characterised one of these as the *physiological approach* and suggested that the approach entailed investigating brain function, brain chemistry, and genetics in their influences on psychological function. As this list suggests, the physiological label covers a range of more specific approaches. In particular, we can distinguish between neuropsychological approaches, which investigate the brain; and genetic approaches, which investigate the influence of genetics.

Neuropsychological approaches in psychology are generally uncontroversial, although it has been suggested that an increasing emphasis within society and policy making on neurosciences generally, and neuropsychology in particular, has led to changing conceptions of psychological syndromes such as depression (Rose, 2006). We consider some of these issues in chapter 10. More controversial are attempts to provide genetic explanations for psychological phenomena. The most famous such controversy is the longstanding *nature–nurture debate*. This debate has particular implications for psychology's consideration of the issues around "race" and gender differences that were considered in the previous two chapters. Genetic explanations are increasingly popular, both within the discipline of psychology and within popular discourses about psychological phenomena. However, there is heated debate about the validity of such explanations.

In this chapter, we consider this controversy around genetic explanations in psychology. We'll look at the terms of the nature–nurture debate, and its modern expression in behavioural genetics. We'll see that human psychology is best understood as resulting from an interaction between genetic and environmental factors. We'll then consider why such genetic explanations are so appealing within everyday discourse, and the problems such explanations may present.

6.1 The Nature–Nurture Debate

The nature–nurture – or heredity–environment – debate is a longstanding one. It predates the emergence of psychology, because any form of reflexive discourse needs to consider the origins of human nature and the causes of differences between individuals. The debate concerns the extent to which our nature is determined by our genetic inheritance, or *nature*, versus the extent to which it is determined by the environment in which we develop, or *nurture* (Gross, 2009). The nature–nurture debate relates to questions about both universal aspects of human nature and the causes of individual differences (Jarvis, 2000). We'll focus on explanations of individual differences, and consider behavioural genetics as a modern genetic approach to human differences in the next section.

6.1.1 The unfolding debate

The nature–nurture debate in its modern form can be seen in seventeenth-century philosophy: René Descartes believed that human capabilities were determined at birth, while John Locke suggested that the human mind was a blank slate (or tabula rasa) to be written on through experience. The debate appears in the earliest stages of psychology. Herbert Spencer applied evolutionary theory to human society in developing what became known as *social Darwinism*. This suggested that members of society are engaged in a battle for survival, and that if freed from government interference the "best" will rise to the top of society. This was followed by the eugenic theories of Francis Galton, who suggested that individual differences in capability were the result of biology, and that society could only be improved through policies of selective breeding. Others viewed human character as being environmentally determined, and they advanced theories of *reform Darwinism*, which suggested that society needed to be reformed to improve individuals (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

The social Darwinist approach reflects the managerialist view that individual character is fixed and can only be managed to protect society from the unfit, while the reform Darwinist approach reflects the view that psychology can be applied to change individuals (Jansz, 2004). This reflects, to some extent, fundamental political differences between the respective theorists, and predates any understanding of genetics (Gould, 1996). This political aspect explains in part why the debate is at the heart of some of the greatest controversies in psychology, such as those covered in chapters 4 and 5. The difference between social and reform Darwinists shows the polarised terms of the debate, with the respective theorists claiming that human characteristics were entirely the result of nature or nurture. However, it became apparent that both heredity and environment have an influence. For example, two tall parents will tend to produce tall offspring, but the actual height of any child will depend upon the environment within which that child develops (Lewontin, 2001). If the child is raised in an impoverished environment, then the child is unlikely to be as tall as might be expected. Average height in Western society has increased over recent history due to improved nutrition and health care rather than genetic change.

With the acceptance that both heredity and environment affect an organism, the nature–nurture debate changed to consider "how much" of a given characteristic was shaped by heredity, and how much by environment. This reflects an assumption that heredity and environment have separate effects. However, Jones (1993) suggests that this view is misguided, and that trying to separate the effects of heredity and environment is akin to trying to separate the ingredients of a cake after it has been baked. The modern view is that heredity and environment interact in shaping organisms. In the remainder of this section, we shall look at the nature of the environment and of genetics, before examining how they interact.

6.1.2 Examining the environment

The common view of "the environment" within the nature–nurture debate is that it is *external*, in that it exists outside of the individual, and *postnatal*, in that it has effects only after birth; and that it acts upon passive individuals, who are shaped by the environment but don't contribute to it (Gross, 2009). All of these views are wrong. The term is taken to mean the way in which the child is raised: this is seen as something that happens to children, and as largely static in that it doesn't vary between children in a family, or over the life span of the child. This can be seen in reports of twin studies. One approach to twin study research is to look at the similarities on some measure between identical twins raised together and between non-identical twins raised together. Because identical twins have the same genetic inheritance as each other, whereas non-identical twins have no more genetic similarity than other siblings, then any increased similarity between identical twins compared to non-identical twins is ascribed to genetic factors. This assumes that identical twin pairs and non-identical twin pairs share the same environment as each other, because they are raised in the same family. This isn't a safe assumption, as we shall see. The environment is best seen as consisting of everything that affects the organism after conception, when the organism's genetic inheritance is fixed (Rose, 2006). If identical twins have more similar life experiences to each other than non-identical twins, then any increased similarity they display may be due to environmental rather than genetic factors.

The environment includes physical and social factors that impinge upon the organism throughout its life. Jones (2008d) distinguishes between organic and stimulative factors. Organic factors, such as disease and nutrition, lead to physiological change. Stimulative factors, such as schooling or social class, constitute the social context of development. In addition, Jones distinguishes between broad and narrow factors. Broad factors have long-lasting effects, while narrow ones have short-term effects. These combine to determine how facilitative an environment is in supporting developmental outcomes (Gross, 2009). A child raised in an environment with excellent nutrition is likely to be taller than a genetically identical child raised with poor nutrition. In addition, people shape their own environment through eliciting particular responses from others and through seeking out particular environments. Different physical and behavioural characteristics of an organism generate different responses from others. For example, children with cheerful dispositions elicit more friendly responses from others. Similar effects might be seen due to gender, ethnicity, attractiveness, and so on. These may be cyclical, wherein being treated in a friendly way by others reinforces cheerfulness in the individual. Organisms also act upon the environment through active agency, selecting, modifying, and creating environments (Plomin, 1994). These actions create micro environments compatible with the organism's propensities, so an outgoing child may actively seek friends, whereas a more withdrawn child may avoid social situations. The environment we describe here is broader, more dynamic, and more interactive than is usually assumed.

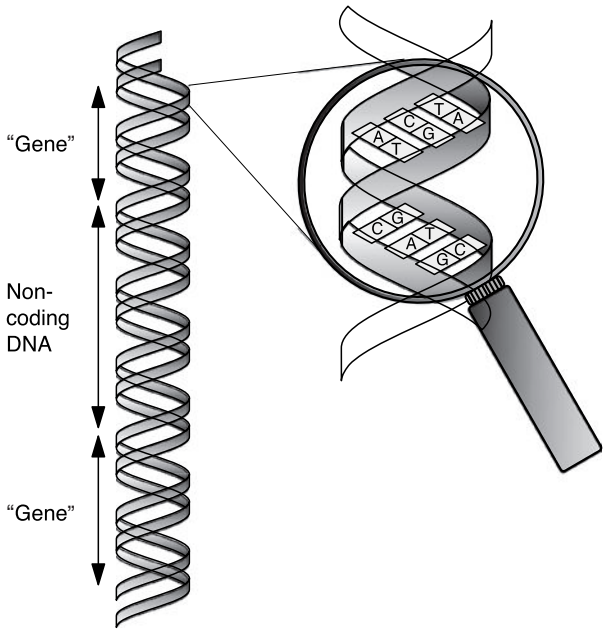

Figure 6.1 The structure of the genome.
The genome is a chain of molecules made up of pairs of nucleotides. Certain sequences along the chain have a function in making proteins and enzymes, or in regulating the operation of other sequences. Other parts of the genome do not have a known function.

6.1.3 Examining genetics

Genetics is the means through which characteristics are transmitted from generation to generation. Heredity information is encoded in the genome, the complete set of genetic material in an organism. The genome is a chain of DNA, comprising some 3 billion nucleotide base pairs in humans (Plomin, 1994). Along this chain, some sequences of base pairs code for particular functions. Such sequences are commonly called *genes*, and come in two main forms. Structural genes code for particular proteins and enzymes, and ultimately lead to biological traits such as eye colour or blood type. These are outnumbered by regulator genes, which regulate the operation of structural genes in response to the environment (Plomin, 1994). The remainder of the genome is made up of sequences that do not code for any known function, sometimes known as *junk DNA* (see Figure 6.1). Any given species has a particular genome – members of the species share consistent gene sequences with particular functions. Within a species, a particular gene sequence has a number of variations, called *alleles*. These variations have different combinations of nucleotide base pairs in that part of the genome sequence identified as the gene. Any individual – apart from identical twins – has a unique pattern of alleles, called their *genotype*, which is determined at the point of conception.

The genotype acts as an initial blueprint for the individual, who then develops a particular set of traits, termed the *phenotype*. The nature–nurture debate can be seen as asking how directly the genotype determines the phenotype. The derivation of the phenotype from the genotype is complex, and includes the operation of alleles. Alleles may be *monogenic*, in that a single gene directly determines a trait, or *polygenic*, in that two or more alleles interact to determine a trait. Monogenic alleles operate according to Mendelian genetics, with dominant and recessive alleles determining whether a particular trait arises or not. This accounts for a number of genetic disorders; for example, phenylketonuria (PKU) – an inability to control the amino acid phenylalanine which leads to mental retardation – occurs when an individual inherits two recessive alleles (Chandler, 2008). However, most traits are polygenic, including physical characteristics such as eye colour. Polygenic traits are influenced by environmental effects and do not show Mendelian inheritance. Rather, polygenic traits like height usually form a normal distribution (Lewis, 2009).

The nature side of the debate suggests that psychological characteristics in humans are polygenic phenotypic traits. For example, it's been suggested that schizophrenia arises from the operation of many genes, each with a small effect (Owen, Craddock, & O'Donovan, 2005). Behaviour genetics attempts to explain variation in psychological traits by estimating heritability, which measures the extent to which variation in a trait within a population is under the control of genes. For example, height is highly heritable, whereas manners are low in heritability (Jarvis, 2000). Behaviour geneticists use twin and adoption studies to try to ascertain heritability estimates. This is sometimes seen as an attempt to decide "how much" of a trait is determined by genetics, but behaviour geneticists reject this, emphasising that behavioural genetic research provides strong evidence for the importance of the environment (Plomin, 2001). Another approach is molecular genetics, which looks for genes that affect psychological traits. This has led to a number of claims suggesting that a gene "for" some psychological characteristic has been discovered. For example, one study found that a particular allele of the gene IG2FR occurs more frequently in people with high IQ than in the general population, and estimated that the gene accounts for 2% of the variance in intelligence between individuals (Jarvis, 2000). However, the majority of high-IQ people didn't carry this allele, and not all carriers had a high IQ. Given this, and the small amount of variance explained, there must be other factors, genetic and/or environmental, that influence IQ.

6.1.4 Gene–environment interaction

We opened the chapter by suggesting that there is an interaction between genes and the environment in shaping organisms. In this section, we summarise the major views of gene–environment interaction. The "environment" affects the gene at a fundamental cellular level (see Figure 6.2). The introduction of toxic chemicals into this environment can have very damaging effects on development. For example, alcohol is toxic to brain cells during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy, causing foetal alcohol syndrome (Gross, 2009). Epigenetic effects alter gene expression through a range of mechanisms, such as switching genes on and off through the operation of enzymes (Jaenisch & Bird, 2003). For example, genes responsible for producing haemoglobin switch from producing foetal haemoglobin to producing a different, adult form by the sixth month after birth. Another mechanism is prion infection, as implicated in Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, a fatal degenerative brain disease. Environmental epigenetic changes lead to persistent effects on organisms, explaining some gene–environment interaction (Rutter, 2006). These accumulate over the lifetime, so factors such as childhood diet may affect DNA in old age (Martin, 2002). There is evidence that accumulated epigenetic effects can be heritable, that is, they can be passed on to later generations without changes to DNA (Rando & Verstrepen, 2007).

Gene expression is also influenced by the environment that's external to the organism. This includes the physical environment and other organisms within it; other members of the same species; and, for humans, our social and cultural histories (Rose, 2001). These influences include direct effects on physiology such as brain

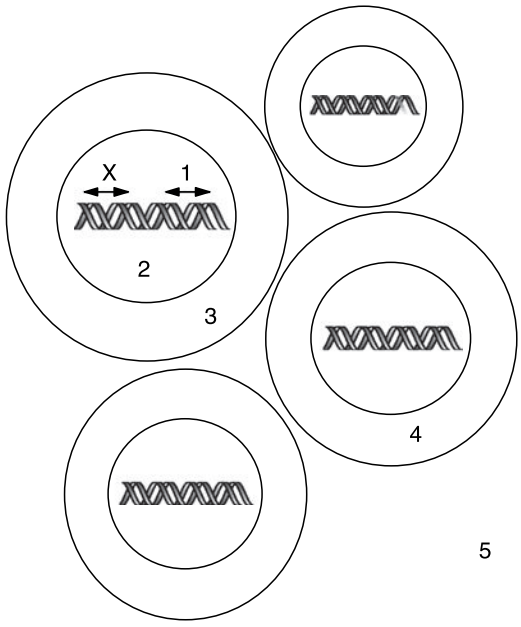

Figure 6.2 The environment of the gene. The immediate environment of the gene (X) includes (1) other segments of DNA; (2) the chemical environment of the cell nucleus; (3) the cell cytoplasm surrounding the nucleus; (4) other cells, and their positions relative to the target cell in functional clusters; and (5) the physiology of the organism beyond the cell cluster.

injury, and also a range of effects created by the individual. Horowitz (1990) has proposed a model for gene–environment interaction that expands on the notion of facilitativeness. Horowitz adds the concept of susceptibility, suggesting that a child has a set of vulnerabilities that influence their response to the environment (Gross, 2009). A resilient child with few vulnerabilities might develop well in poor environments, whereas children with many vulnerabilities might develop well in facilitative environments. However, susceptible children in non-facilitative environments will develop poorly. Both constitutional and environmental factors may protect children, suggesting that there isn't a simple link between early experiences and later developmental outcomes.

Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Kidd (2005) highlight an important implication of gene–environment interaction. Claims that a particular trait is largely genetically determined are usually taken to imply that the phenotype is unmodifiable. However, whether a trait is inherited or not is a separate issue to its modifiability. Height has a heritability level of above .90, but rises in average height over successive generations show that it is modifiable. Another example is PKU: modifying an individual's diet to be low in phenylalanine – an environmental change – reduces or eliminates the retardation. We can modify the way in which a gene is expressed by modifying the environment.

6.2 Beyond the Nature–Nurture Dichotomy

We saw in the previous section that genes and the environment interact. However, even in this interactionist view there's a tendency to treat nature and nurture as a dichotomy, two separate factors that influence the development of individuals (Rose, 2001). In this section we look at the limitations of this dichotomous view, examining some frequent assumptions and presenting some alternatives. We then look more closely at the differences between physiological and psychological phenotypes, and consider the extent to which psychological phenotypes are influenced by brain chemistry and brain plasticity.

6.2.1 The limitations of the nature–nurture dichotomy

Rose (2001) suggests that behaviour genetics relies on certain disputed assumptions. There is an assumption that a phenotypic trait exists and can be reliably measured. This is the case for physiological characteristics such as height, but as we have seen

in other chapters it is debatable for psychological traits such as intelligence. Another assumption is that methods such as heritability estimates can separate genetic and environmental contributions to a phenotype. The total variation in a trait in a population (V) is seen as being made up of a genetic component (G), an environmental component (E), and a small component reflecting the interaction between genes and the environment (G × E), giving the formula V = G + E + (G × E). However, this model fails if there is a large degree of interaction between genes and the environment, if genes interact with each other, or if the relationships are interactive rather than additive (Rose, 2001). Rose claims that most psychological traits are like this, and the fact that a significant heritable component has been found for attitudes to the death penalty and to royalty shows that heritability estimates are not valid.

McLafferty (2006) suggests that the standard model rests on three assumptions:

Exclusivity: The only influences on individual development are genetic inheritance and the environment.
Universality: The model applies for all human traits, both physiological and psychological.
Complementarity: Genetic inheritance and environment form a linear dichotomy.

This model is additive, and involves identifying separable effects of genetics, environment, and a small degree of interaction. In contrast, McLafferty suggests an alternative, multidimensional model. In this model, humans are seen as existing in three interrelated dimensions, which he terms the *soma*, the physical body; the *psyche*, comprising the emotions and intellect; and the *noëtic*, including free will, choice, and human agency. McLafferty claims that nature and nurture are different dimensions of human experience, rather than being complementary to each other. This reflects Hebb's (possibly apocryphal) suggestion that trying to ascribe human variance to nature or nurture is akin to trying to ascribe the area of a rectangle to either its width or its height. McLafferty goes on to suggest that the third dimension, the noëtic, is uniquely human, and is overlooked in most discussions of the nature–nurture debate, although it is included in explanations of human variance in terms of human agency (Rose, 2005) or human-created symbol systems such as language (Gardner, Hatch, & Torff, 1997).

Rose (2001) presents a similar view to McLafferty. He rejects the idea of a single "true" explanation for human psychology, and emphasises the need to adopt multiple perspectives to understand human complexity. He sees human development as an autopoietic process, wherein humans create themselves to some extent, particularly through developmental plasticity – our ability to respond to experiences. Central to this is the notion of life history: that the interplay between genetic inheritance and environment is a continuous process, changing as people make different choices and select, modify, and create new environments. For Rose, humans are always both 100% a product of their genetics, and 100% a product of their environments, and human nature can only be understood by taking a homeodynamic perspective that sees organisms in constant interaction with their environment – an individual can only be understood as a result of their life trajectory (Rose, 2006). This again suggests a multidimensional

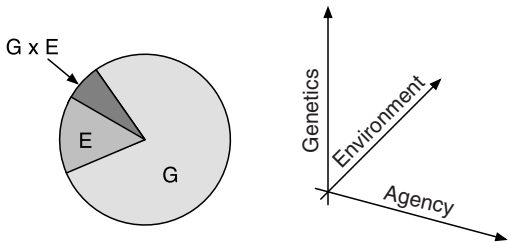

Figure 6.3 Models of phenotype variation. The standard view is that phenotype variation can be ascribed to complementary, separate components. Multidimensional models emphasise the interrelatedness of multiple dimensions of human variation.

model that sees phenotype variation as the result of an interaction between genetics, the environment, and human agency, and as changing over time (see Figure 6.3).

One consequence of the standard view, that there is a linear dichotomy between genetic inheritance and the environment, is that great importance is placed on heritability figures within behavioural genetics. The heritability figure for a particular trait is often presented as if it tells us the size of the slice of cake that corresponds to genetics. However, the meaningfulness of heritability figures is disputed. There are problems with the derivation of heritability estimates for psychological traits, due to issues with twin studies and problems in defining the psychological traits themselves. Heritability estimates for schizophrenia, for example, range from zero to 90 per cent (Gross, 2009). Even if heritability estimates can be made accurately, however, they describe variance in a particular population, in a particular environmental context, at a particular time. As Bell (2009) states, heritability estimates are not measures of individual risk, and change for different groups in different environments. We would, for example, expect to find different heritability estimates for schizophrenia in black British and black Caribbean populations, because of environmental differences. Owen et al. (2005) suggest that heritability figures have no straightforward meaning for individuals, and that they are a reflection of how the different dimensions of human variation are interrelated, rather than an explanation of what makes an individual the way they are.

6.2.2 Genotypes, phenotypes, and psychology

So far in this chapter we've considered the overall picture of the ways in which genes and environment interact in determining phenotypes. This view certainly obtains for physiological phenotypes, such as eye colour, but Jones (2008d) suggests that the situation is different for most psychological phenotypes. There are two main difficulties in attempting to explain the determination of psychological phenotypes. One arises from difficulties in defining, validating, and measuring these phenotypes. The other arises because we can expect that psychological phenotypes are mediated by brain operation.

We've already seen, in other chapters of the book, that the status of many psychological phenotypes is disputed. In the nature–nurture debate, the phenotypes investigated are usually intelligence, aspects of personality, and psychological disorders such as schizophrenia. Elsewhere in the book, we look at issues around definitions and measurement in each of these areas, and in chapter 1 we saw that psychology necessarily deals with hypothetical constructs. The definition and measurement of those constructs may only be reflections of particular sociohistorical contexts, and their measurement may lead to reification (Richards, 2010). Some of these issues are apparent in attempts to measure the heritability of schizophrenia. Claridge and Davis (2003) suggest that clinical diagnosis is an inaccurate phenotype,

and that instead work should focus on intermediate phenotypes, that is, behaviours that might underlie the clinical condition, such as smooth pursuit eye movement.

In cases where we are able to accurately define and measure psychological phenotypes, a further difficulty presents itself. Psychological states arise from the operation of the brain. To say that there's a genetic basis for a psychological phenotype implies that there's a genetic basis for particular brain operations or structures which lead to that phenotype. This is clearly the case for disorders such as PKU. However, for most psychological constructs there isn't such a simple unitary phenotype (Rose, 2001). For example, to say that there is a genetic basis for intelligence logically entails that there are particular forms of brain operation, structure, or function that make the possessor more intelligent than others; and that the possession of such optimal brain features is determined genetically. Two problems present themselves here. One is that we know very little about the brain mechanisms underlying mental events, including intelligent behaviour (Cacioppo & Decety, 2009). The other is that no genes have been conclusively linked to intelligence (Sternberg et al., 2005). A major project, the Allen Brain Map, is underway to map the expression of genes in different parts of the human brain. The goal is to understand how the brain is built by genes. However, the project is finding a significant difficulty – every individual's brain is unique, with large differences in gene expression at the micro level, and differences in gross anatomy at the macro level, including differently shaped cortices and different boundaries between anatomical regions.

The difficulty faced by the Allen Brain Map project reflects a particular feature of the brain, in comparison to other organs in the body: its ability to self-organise. Put simplistically, the brain is composed of individual processing cells termed *neurons*, each of which receives signals from other cells, performs a simple calculation on those inputs, and passes a signal to other cells to which it is connected. The human brain has up to 100 billion neurons, and each may have more than 10,000 connections, or synapses, to other neurons. Communication within the brain relies on electrical signals within the neuron, and chemical signals between neurons, through passing neurotransmitter chemicals such as serotonin across the synapse (Kolb & Whishaw, 2008). The processing power of the brain derives from the operation of very complex networks of cells, and relies on both the organisation of the network, particularly in terms of the synapses between cells, and the operation of neurotransmitters.

In terms of neurotransmitter operation, we can see that there may be a genetic basis for disorders such as depression if a particular genetic inheritance disposes one to, for example, reduced serotonin activation, because depression has been associated with reduced levels of serotonin activation. However, it is likely that biological, psychological, and social factors all play a role in the aetiology of depression in an individual. A commonly accepted view is the *diathesis stress model*, wherein individuals have a pre-existing vulnerability, or diathesis, to depression, which may be genetic or learned; and this vulnerability is made active in response to life stresses (Slavich, 2004). Lacasse and Leo (2005) suggest that explanations of depression in terms of serotonin overlook the importance of psychological and social factors, and overstate the role of serotonin. Indeed, they suggest that there

is direct evidence that there is no deficiency in serotonin in depressed individuals. Their emphasis on psychological factors explains why, for example, placebos have been found to be more effective in treating depressive symptoms than SSRI-based antidepressants which target serotonin levels (Lacasse & Leo, 2005), or why religion acts as a protective factor against the onset of depression (Dein, 2006). In this view, the onset of depression is a multiply determined psychological response to life events that results in changes to brain chemistry and operation.

We suggested previously that the organisation of the brain is important, and that to assert the existence of a genetic basis for psychological phenotypes would imply that particular brain organisations are genetically determined. This is certainly true in some cases, at varying levels of function. For example, we have a range of instinctual behaviours such as reflex responses that seem to be hard-wired in our neurological makeup, and regions of the brain specialised for particular tasks such as vision (Kolb & Whishaw, 2008). However, we've seen that there is no clear fixed brain mechanism for many distinctly human psychological functions, and there is phylogenic and ontogenic evidence to suggest that we shouldn't expect to find such mechanisms.

Phylogenesis refers to the evolution of a species over historical time. Evolution is a branching process wherein species diverge (speciation), merge, or become extinct. In speciation, new species emerge that are genotypically distinct from related species. For example, humans and other primates diverged from a common ancestor some 7 million years ago. In the course of such divergence, physiological structures may variously emerge, change function, or be eliminated. It is possible to trace the phylogenesis of the brain through the evolutionary age of different substructures within the brain. The brain develops at the end of the spinal cord, and can be divided into regions called the *hindbrain*, *midbrain*, and *forebrain*. The hindbrain is the oldest in evolutionary terms, and contains structures that are responsible for autonomic functions such as control of heart rate and breathing. Functions in the hindbrain are largely outside of our conscious control; for example, it's very difficult to suffocate yourself by holding your breath. The midbrain emerges later in evolutionary terms, reflecting the increasing complexity of the brain. Its functions include the coordination of visual and auditory information, and it drives instinctual responses to stimuli, such as a startle response on hearing a car backfiring. The forebrain is evolutionarily newest, and consists of a number of structures including the limbic system, responsible for emotional processing, and the cerebrum, which includes the most recent part of the brain, the neo-cortex. The neo-cortex, which is unique to mammals, is responsible for higher order functions such as spatial reasoning. Different mammalian species vary in the extent to which the neo-cortex is folded; the human cortex, for example, is deeply wrinkled, whereas rodents have smooth cortices. This folding allows a greater functional area of the cortex, and hence higher levels of processing. There is some specialisation of function in the neo-cortex, particularly in sensory and motor areas. However, much of the human neo-cortex consists of the associative cortex, which supports perceptual experiences, memory, and abstract thinking. The neo-cortex shows particular plasticity, in that it shows self-organisation to support learning –

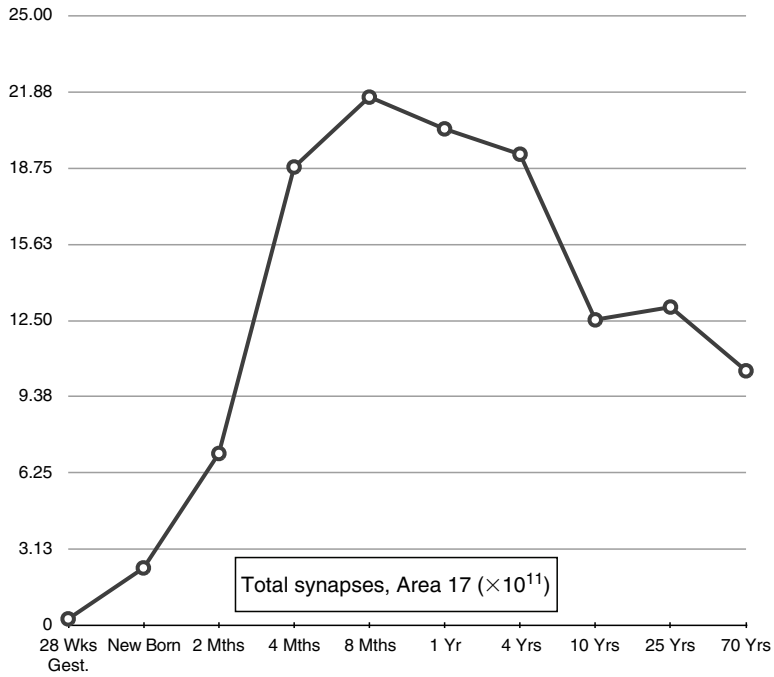

Figure 6.4 The Huttenlocher graph.
This graph shows the growth and decline in the number of synapses in one region of the visual cortex over the life span. Newborn children rapidly develop large numbers of synapses in response to experience, but then begin to prune synapses to a level that stays relatively even during adulthood (adapted from Huttenlocher, 1990).

long-term memories are formed through changes in connections between cortical cells. Phylogenetic evidence suggests that human evolution is characterised by the transfer of psychological functions away from strongly determined, hard-wired brain structures in the evolutionarily older parts of the brain; and towards flexible, self-organising structures in the evolutionarily newer parts of the brain. This process is termed *encephalisation*. For example, although the midbrain still retains some visual-processing functions, most visual processing in mammals is performed in the neo-cortex. This adaptation allows individuals to respond more flexibly to changing environments, and to make conscious choices of behaviour rather than responding to instincts. This is particularly pronounced in humans, who have evolved such a degree of encephalisation that it's not possible to accommodate complete brain growth during pregnancy. Rather, much human brain development is postnatal.

If humans have come to rely on the flexible, self-organising properties of the cerebral cortex, we'd expect to see this reflected in the development of the brains of individuals. The study of the development of individuals from fertilisation is termed *ontogeny*, and ontogenetic studies of brain development in humans show the extent to which brain complexity, measured in terms of the number of connections between neurons in the cortex, increases dramatically following birth (see Figure 6.4).

This brain development is dynamic and flexible, wherein the functions that emerge are shaped by the physical and social environments. Skoyles and Sagan (2002) argue that the brain also reshapes itself in response to its internal environment, generated through our own cognitions. They suggest that the plasticity of the neo-cortex allows humans to go beyond genetically programmed, instinctual behaviours, particularly by using abstract symbol systems such as language in conscious thought. Powell, Shennan, and Thomas (2009) support this in suggesting that demographic factors such as population density, rather than genetic changes, were the key influence in the emergence of modern human behaviour. Specific evidence for the flexibility of the brain, and particularly the extent to which the brain reorganises itself to accommodate new behaviours, comes from a study by Carreiras et al. (2009), who compared brain architectures between illiterate adults and adults who had recently learned to read. Their results suggest that learning to read involves significant changes to brain structure. The notion of the brain as a flexible processing device allows for the explanation of enculturation, the process wherein individuals learn the values and behaviours that are acceptable in a particular culture. This is supported by neuroanthropology, a newly emerging discipline that investigates the effects of culture on the brain (Domínguez Duque, Turner, Lewis, & Egan, 2009), which has found that there are differences in brain architecture and activity between individuals from different cultural groups. The implication of these findings is that the cognitive architecture of the brain is unpredictable from the genotype. The brain's development is shaped by genetic factors, for example in specifying an initial organisation of neurons and in influencing the ability of the brain to synthesise the proteins necessary to form synapses. However, the architecture of the brain also reflects environmental and psychological factors.

6.3 Genetic Explanations in Society

In the previous two sections, we've considered the nature–nurture debate in explaining individual differences from either nativist or empiricist perspectives. We've seen elsewhere in the book that the debate is a recurring one, if only implicitly, in discussions of for example gender and "racial" differences. Positions that suggest gender or "racial" differences exist typically do so from a view that there are biologically caused and fixed differences between groups of people on various psychological phenotypes. This is one example of genetic determinism, the claim that our genetic inheritance determines our psychology. Another example is evolutionary psychology. Space precludes a full discussion of this growing field, but whereas behavioural genetics attempts to explain individual differences in psychology through genetic inheritance, evolutionary psychology seeks to explain universal aspects of human nature in terms of genetics, assuming that certain behaviours are hard-wired and encoded by genes. For example, it has been suggested that behavioural differences between different social classes can be explained in evolutionary terms (Nettle, 2009). Such genetic determinist explanations are growing in popularity and influence, both within the discipline and in the

popular media (Rose, 2006). In this section, we look at some of the reasons for this popularity, and consider the impact of biological explanations in society.

6.3.1 The appeal of genetic determinism

There are numerous reasons why genetic deterministic explanations are appealing in psychology. Some of the reasons reflect the strengths of such biological approaches to psychology, while others reflect particular aspects of the social and political contexts within which psychological theories are presented and discussed. In this section, we look at both.

In practical terms, biological approaches to psychology have provided explanations of behaviour across a number of areas of psychology, and have led to treatments for a range of disorders, including depression, schizophrenia, and PKU (Jones, 2008a). Genetic approaches have been productive, generating novel, testable hypotheses of human behaviour (DeBruine, 2009). Jarvis (2000) suggests that the contributions of behavioural genetics and evolutionary psychology include the following:

- Demonstrating that there are biological constraints on our behaviours, and that some aspects of human nature and of individual differences are influenced by biology.
- Providing new perspectives for investigating psychology, increasing our understanding of, for example, infant behaviour.
- Informing practical interventions, such as screening for PKU.

There is clearly value in a genetic approach to psychology, as one of many ways of knowing about human psychology (Rose, 2001). However, there may be other reasons why genetic explanations are so popular, especially in everyday discourse. One possible reason is that genetic explanations provide a framework for engaging in reflexive discourse, helping us to understand ourselves and others. Richards (2010) suggests that people actively seek such a framework. This is appropriate if the limitations of such a framework are understood, but there is a tendency to adopt such explanations as the only explanation necessary, or at least as the overwhelmingly important explanation. We return to this issue in chapter 13.

Another possible reason for the appeal of biological explanations is that they may seem more scientific. Psychology is sometimes seen as a "soft" science, and biology as "harder", closer to the ideal of natural science and hence more respectable (Jarvis, 2000). There is evidence that people find explanations of psychological phenomena that contain neuroscientific terms more persuasive than purely psychological explanations, even when the explanations are both false inventions of researchers (Weisberg, Keil, Goodstein, Rawson, & Gray, 2008). In addition, deterministic explanations may be simpler and more easily understood than explanations based on complex interactions between heredity and environment (Jones, 2008d) – consider the differences between the two diagrams in Figure 6.3. This simplicity may explain the popularity of genetic explanations in the media, and particularly the enduring appeal of

the claim that phenotype X is "80 per cent genetic." Rose (2001) suggests that it's possible to produce a genetic explanation for any distribution of phenotypes in a population, giving an impression of explanatory power that is very appealing, although as Jarvis (2000) notes such explanations may involve a considerable degree of speculation.

Besides the theoretical, practical, and accessibility appeals listed above, it's been suggested that genetic explanations are especially appealing to some political orientations. Rose (2001) suggests that genetic determinism supports a particular view of human nature, and that reducing human nature to biology is a form of ideology. Lewontin (2001) suggests that biological explanations are an ideological weapon used to convince people that their position in society is fixed, in which social prejudices are thereby disguised as scientific facts. It sometimes seems as if biological explanations are used to blame the victim and justify inequalities in society (Gross, 2009), and that they are used to support pre-existing beliefs about differences between groups, particularly by "race" or gender (Jones, 2008d). From this point of view, modern genetic explanations are the latest instance of a long-running historical trend of using biological explanations to justify political beliefs. The beliefs, and the desire for justification of them, remain unchanged; it's only the theoretical framework used to present such justifications that changes (Cooper, 2005).

6.3.2 Concerns with genetic determinism

A number of concerns have been identified with strongly genetic determinist approaches to psychology, from both a theoretical perspective and a political one. In theoretical terms, it has been suggested that they are overly reductionist, in that they attempt to reduce psychological explanations to purely biological ones (Jones, 2008d). This concern relates to the discussion in section 6.2 that a genetic determinist view misrepresents the complexity of phenotypic variation. While a statement that schizophrenia is 80 per cent inherited is easily understood, the aetiology of schizophrenia seems to be somewhat more complex. Although behavioural genetics recognises that the environment is important as the context within which genetic inheritance is expressed, evolutionary explanations sometimes ignore the influence of the environment (Jarvis, 2000). For example, Miller and Kanazawa (2007) argue that mate selection can be explained in evolutionary terms, and that men desire women who look like Barbie – young, small wasted, large breasted, and with long blond hair and blue eyes. This is suggested as a universal feature of human nature, but Sear and Marlowe (2009) claim that mate choices are culturally dependent. Jarvis (2000) suggests that there is limited evidence for some evolutionary claims, while DeBruine (2009) concedes that evolutionary explanations are frequently "just-so stories" – unverifiable and unfalsifiable theories of specific behaviours generated post hoc. Jarvis (2000) warns that a mistaken overemphasis on genetic factors, and a consequent underplaying of the importance of the environment, may lead to caregivers neglecting the importance of providing a facilitative environment for their charges.

Rose (2001) suggests that genetic explanations are part of an increasing medicalisation of psychological phenomena, giving the example of greatly increased

diagnoses of ADHD, and greatly increased treatment with pharmaceuticals such as Ritalin. A similar concern can be seen in the treatment of depression, where an overemphasis on biological explanations for the condition may lead to increased use of SSRIs in treatment to the exclusion of other possibilities. Given the discussion in section 6.2, we can see that SSRI treatment may alleviate the symptoms of depression, but they cannot address causes that are social or psychological in origin. There is an increasing tendency to medicalisation in society, wherein psychological phenomena are treated as medical issues. Moynihan (2003) suggests that this constitutes corporate-sponsored disease creation, and analyses the role of pharmaceutical companies in driving the identification of a new medical disorder of female sexual dysfunction. In the medicalised view, lack of sexual desire in women is not due to life pressures or relationship problems, but rather to a chemical imbalance that can be corrected with the appropriate medication.

In the previous section, we presented claims that genetic determinist explanations may support a particular political orientation, either deliberately or inadvertently. This is a source of considerable concern for some, particular those from an alternative political orientation. Indeed, many of the most trenchant critics of genetic determinism, such as Rose and Lewontin, adopt an overt political stance (see e.g. Kamin, Lewontin, & Rose, 1985), although this does not necessarily invalidate their arguments: as we've seen elsewhere in this book, psychologists are often influenced by their political views, whether they admit to it or not. These political concerns reflect the charges levelled against genetic determinism in the previous section: that genetic claims may reinforce prejudice and serve to perpetuate inequality in society. To explain this, consider claims of "racial" differences. The mapping of the human genome showed that "race" is not a scientifically valid, biological construct. Despite this, "race" continues to be used as a meaningful biological category to explain inequality for social, historical, and political reasons (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Some, such as Rushton and Jensen (2005), have adopted a genetic determinist perspective to suggest public policy implications based on the claim of essential, fixed differences in IQ between "racial" groups. This is rejected by Sternberg (2005), who suggests that Rushton and Jensen's research does not support their claims, and that the suggested public policy implications are ideologically driven. In terms of prejudice, we shall see in chapter 13 that people's everyday views of human nature are influenced to some extent by psychological claims. As an example, Williams and Eberhardt (2008) found that when people believe "race" to be a biologically defined category, they become more accepting of inequality and less interested in engaging with members of other "racial" groups.

6.4 Chapter Summary

We began the chapter by considering the nature–nurture debate in psychology, one of the best known, and least resolvable, debates in the discipline. We saw that the debate is a long-running one that predates the modern understanding

of genetics. We also saw that the debate is associated with political disagreements about human nature, and disagreement within psychology about how psychology can intervene in society. We then went on to look at the two sides of the debate. We considered the meaning of "environment", and saw that the common understanding of the term, as the way in which children are raised, underplays the scope and pervasiveness of environmental effects. We characterised the environment as the set of experiences that impinge upon the organism from conception and throughout life. We then examined the meaning of "genetics", and saw that gene expression is very complex, and frequently involves the polygenic expression of many structural genes, controlled by other, regulator genes. The expression of the genotype as a phenotype is both complex and unpredictable. We ended the section by considering gene–environment interaction. We looked at levels within which genes and environment interact, from epigenesis at the level of the gene itself to the effects of facilitative environments on susceptible individuals.

In the second section, we looked at some of the limitations of characterising nature and nurture as a dichotomy. We described a standard model that suggests that genes and environment have separate, additive effects in determining the extent to which a particular phenotype varies between individuals; and contrasted this with an alternative, multidimensional model that sees human variation as the result of genetic, environmental, and psychological factors that interpenetrate each other. We then considered the specific case of psychological phenotypes, and particularly the way in which they differ from physiological phenotypes. Psychological phenomena arise from the operation of the brain, but the brain has evolved to favour flexible processing of information over instinctual responses, facilitated by its capacity for self-organisation. Self-organisation occurs from the earliest age in response to the individual's interactions with the physical and social environment, and to their own internal cognitions. This makes brain structure and operation unpredictable for a given genotype, suggesting further support for the multidimensional model of variation in psychological phenotypes.

In the final section, we looked at the social context of genetic explanations. We began by considering some of the reasons for the growing appeal of such approaches, in both disciplinary psychology and everyday discourses. Some of this appeal derives from positive features of the approach, including the success of interventions informed by it. However, other reasons for the acceptance of genetic explanations are less positive, including that they provide simplified theories of human complexity, promote the increasing medicalisation of psychological phenomena, and appeal to particular political viewpoints. We finished by presenting some concerns around genetic determinism, including the validity of theoretical claims and the political uses to which such claims might be put. The emphasis in this part of the chapter on political views suggests a reason for the failure to find a resolution to the nature–nurture debate, in that pre-existing views of human nature influence what people want to believe about psychology.

Self-test Questions

1. How do social and reform Darwinism relate to managerialist and interventionist views of psychology?
2. What does "the environment" consist of in determining human psychology?
3. What are monogenic and polygenic phenotypic traits?
4. How do the concepts of facilitativeness and susceptibility explain the relationship between genes and the environment?
5. What is the "standard" model of gene–environment interaction?
6. How do multidimensional models of gene–environment interaction improve on the standard model?
7. What are the limitations of explaining depression in terms of serotonin activation?
8. How does the brain's capacity for self-organisation limit the scope of genetics to determine human psychology?
9. Why are genetic explanations so appealing in contemporary society?
10. Why should we be concerned about the possible misuse of genetic explanations?

Thinking Points

1. How do political views influence the positions people adopt towards the nature–nurture debate?
2. If human nature can ultimately be explained in terms of genetics and brain function, do we really need a discipline of psychology?
3. How has the growth of genetic explanations influenced everyday views of human nature?

Further Reading

Buller, D. (2006). *Adapting minds: Evolutionary psychology and the persistent quest for human nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

A critique of evolutionary psychology (EP) as an approach. Evolutionary psychology is little discussed in the chapter, but this and Workman and Reader (2004) respectively provide coverage of arguments against and for EP.

Plotkin, H. (2004). *Evolutionary thought in psychology: A brief history*. Oxford: Blackwell.

A clear and well-written short history.

Ridley, M. (2004). *The agile gene: How nature turns on nurture*. New York: Harper Perennial.

A detailed account of the ways in which the environment influences genetic expression.

Rose, S. (2006). *The 21st-century brain: Explaining, mending and manipulating the mind*. London: Vintage.

A critical examination of the rise of neurogenetics and of attempts to apply such knowledge to changing people.

Rutter, M. (2006). *Genes and behaviour: Nature-nurture interplay explained*. Oxford: Blackwell.

A comprehensive and clear account of the ways in which genetics and environment interact in determining phenotypes.

Workman, L., & Reader, W. (2004). *Evolutionary psychology: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A thorough introduction to theories of evolutionary psychology.

7 Psychology in Service to the State

Philip Tyson

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand how psychologists, past and present, have utilised their professional expertise to advance the aims of the state within which they reside.
- Appreciate how psychologists have been, and continue to be, susceptible to the influence of political organisations.
- Understand how the state shapes psychological thought and action.
- Reflect on a number of explanations of why psychology serves the state.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

The involvement of psychologists, no matter how small the number, in the torture of detainees is reprehensible and casts a shadow over our entire profession.
American Psychological Association (APA), 18 June 2009

As the APA quote above indicates, psychologists have recently been involved in the torture of detainees. They have assessed individuals to ensure that they could withstand torture, they have advised on the suitability and effectiveness of different torture techniques, and they have taken a supervisory role when torture was being administered. How could such circumstances arise? The purpose of this chapter is to detail the relationship between psychology and the state within which it resides. We shall see that at times, psychologists have been willing servants of their state, and as such have often taken an active role in pursuing and promoting a specific political agenda. This has led to some disturbing instances in the history of the discipline. In addition, we will explore how the state has influenced the nature of psychology and the topics that are investigated. Particular focus will be on the relationship between Hitler's Germany and psychology, and the use of psychologists to serve the US military.

7.1 The Nazification of Psychology

7.1.1 The rise of Nazi psychology

Prior to 1933, when Hitler and the National Socialist government (the Nazis) came to power, psychology was a very minor discipline in Germany. Although psychologists were selectively assessing skills for the labour market with career guidance, diagnosing and treating brain damage following World War I, and holding isolated military and industrial posts, there were only an estimated 20 practicing psychologists in 1921 (Poppelreuter, 1921, cited in Geuter, 1992) and 30 in 1930 (Geuter, 1992). The situation was similar within academia, where psychology was seen as a poor relation to philosophy and the discipline was not well represented (or represented at all) in 11 of the 23 universities in the German Reich before Hitler came to power. Here, psychology was largely focused on experimental work and was yet to be considered as having potential benefit to industry and the military. However, with the Nazis in power, psychology underwent a number of dramatic changes, both in terms of the individuals who populated the profession and in the military, industrial, and research focus of the discipline.

In 1933 Hitler's government introduced the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, whereby civil servants, which included academics, who were not of Aryan ancestry were to be retired. This anti-Jewish action led to the loss of a third of the total number of psychology professors in Germany, as well as

many associate professors. Several of these academics managed to emigrate, but at least one was murdered in the genocide (Geuter, 1992). The effect of the Nazi policy towards Jewish psychologists had a profound personal and professional toll on the discipline. Leading lights in the profession, including two Jewish governing board members of the German Society for Psychology, were forced to give up their work, and in some institutions psychology never recovered. Furthermore, psychological concepts which were considered to have derived from Jewish intellectual thought were also singled out for criticism and rejection under Nazi ideals. Psychoanalysis was one such topic, and both the discipline and its founder, Sigmund Freud, were subject to criticism and ridicule. The emphasis on sexual drives in psychoanalysis was considered typical of primitive drives which only affected primitive people, such as Jews (Cocks, 1985). Aryan psychologists were described as being in a "struggle against the subversive theories of the Jewish dissolution of the soul, of psychoanalysis" (Sander, 1933, p.12, cited in Geuter, 1992), whilst others used the term "perverse Jewish psychoanalysis". Not surprisingly, in May 1933, Freud's works were being burned at universities across the country, and 15 Jewish psychoanalysts were eventually murdered in concentration camps (Cocks, 1985).

The response to the sackings and retirements from the remaining psychologists was conspicuous by its absence, with only one (Wolfgang Köhler) writing an article of protest whilst four members of the executive committee of the German Psychological Society tendered their resignations for political reasons. The remaining psychologists prepared themselves for a reorientation of their profession under the National Socialist government, and academic institutions all over Germany were affected. All university lectures were required to begin with a salute to Hitler in 1933, and student groups who supported the regime began to denounce staff and students whom they suspected of not being wholly supportive of the Nazi politics. New academics were chosen for their pro-Hitler stance, and aspiring academics were required to attend training camps where they were tutored in party ideology. International academic collaboration was almost exclusively forbidden, and articles submitted to international journals by German scholars had to be approved by the minister of education, as had requests to attend international conferences (Geuter, 1992).

Nevertheless, the opportunity for a reorientation of the disciple towards Nazi ideals and the war effort was not missed by the president of the German Society for Psychology, Felix Krueger, who met with the Reich Ministry for Science and other government departments in order to argue that psychology could play an important role in the new Germany under Hitler. The petition coincided with the reintroduction of conscription and Hitler's Four Year Plan of 1936, which was designed to prepare the arms industry for war. These events acted as the catalyst for a vast increase in the need for psychologists, primarily in the military and in industry. In the military, psychologists were employed, as they were in the United States, to perform psychological assessments of military personnel in order to identify their most suitable positions. Central to the placement of personnel to the different branches of the armed forces was a description of personality characteristics based

Focus Box 7.1 The Psychological Assessment of Officers for the Wehrmacht

The assessment of officers was considered a very important job for army psychologists in Hitler's Germany. Testing took two and a half days and involved four main stages. First was a biographical and genealogical investigation which considered school background, health, and whether the candidate was of Aryan descent. Second was an investigation into the soldier's expressions, which included those of the face, voice, body movements, and handwriting. Expressions were considered to be useful in determining an individual's inner character, and could easily be observed. For example, small handwriting indicated a lack of enthusiasm, a narrow gaze indicated an unwillingness to engage with the world, but tense muscles were viewed as a sign of dedication and focus (Lersch, 1932). For vocal investigations, the subject was given a speech which they had to repeat as if they were addressing a group of soldiers. For the investigation of facial expressions, subjects were secretly filmed using a chest expander, being given an electric shock, or preparing themselves for a photograph in a mirror. The third section involved an intellectual assessment, involving memory tests, arithmetic, essay writing, and picture tests. However, the mental testing also involved a battle game, where the candidate had to eliminate others in order to succeed, and a discussion group in which all the subjects partook. Topics here included morality and politics. The fourth stage was an assessment of the subjects whilst engaged in military-style tasks. These included tasks such as making a bridge with a plank of wood, conducting tasks on a moveable platform, and demonstrating leadership to others by briefing them on tasks. Psychologists observed all stages of testing (Kriepe, 1937).

on psychological reports. These were so detailed as to describe the ideal qualities of a tank driver – "a daredevil who did not make the 'mistake' of thinking about his own life" (Nass, 1938, cited in Geuter, 1992, p. 117); a radio operator, who needed to be calm, patient, and determined; and the tail gunners on bombers in the Luftwaffe, who needed to have an adventurous temperament. Placement was not solely based on personality assessment, however, but more traditional tests of reaction time, sensory, and motor skills as well as tests specific to each military specialism (Simoneit, 1938).

Such assessments were particularly extensive when assessing whether a candidate was suitable to be an officer in the military. These involved a genealogical investigation to ensure the Aryan ancestry of the individual, an analysis of expressions (facial, vocal, and kinesthetic), an intellectual assessment, and qualities whilst role-playing military games (see Focus Box 7.1). Between 1936 and 1939, 28,267 psychological tests were completed, and in the army and navy there were a total of 170 psychologists employed by 1938, increasing to about 500 by 1941 (Geuter, 1992).

Within the industrial sector, psychology took on the task of identifying individuals who were suitable to different types of work, methods of enhancing work performance, attitudes to work, and leadership in the workplace. In terms of identifying individuals who were suitable for different types of work, with increased reliance on technology and machinery in the twentieth century there

also came a need to focus on identifying the cognitive qualities needed by workers which were essential to machinery operation, such as attention and concentration. There was also an increasing attention paid to the personality traits of workers, termed *characterology*, and the concept of the *energy of the will* was deemed an important characteristic for some industrial psychologists during the Nazi era. Indeed, psychologists paid serious attention to "characterology" and the energy of the will in their theorizing and research (Renthe-Fink, 1941; Simoneit, 1942), indicating how Nazi ideology shaped the discipline. An emphasis on observation was also an important part of personality assessment for careers, and the observation was done not just by psychologists but also by parents, teachers, and Hitler Youth leaders as a means to provide a complete character evaluation. Methods of enhancing work performance were also introduced as part of the war effort by a combination of psychologists, industrial engineers, and the National Socialist Trade Union organization. These included a suggestion box system to allow workers to propose beneficial changes to work practice, the use of bonuses for good suggestions, and the introduction of psychological training in personnel management and leadership for those in charge. Here can be seen the important work that organisational psychology played in industrial society for the German war effort. Furthermore, when Germany began to invade neighbouring countries, psychologists were utilised to assess the skills of foreigners from occupied lands who were forced into labour. Language barriers made such assessments necessary, and a report in 1943 indicated that the main job of industrial psychologists was to assess the usefulness of foreigners, women, and invalids for different types of work in industry. In terms of the foreign workers, an estimated 400,000 individuals were tested for jobs in 1100 factories (Ansbacher, 1950, cited in Geuter, 1992, p.152).

Within academia, there became a need for military- and industrial-focused training for psychologists in university, and as a result psychology became a much stronger academic discipline. Indeed, during the Nazi era, psychology expanded (in terms of professorships created, psychologists appointed, research institutes created, and PhD students) in 13 out of the 23 Germany universities (Geuter, 1992). Part of this enhancement of psychology was at the expense of philosophy, which was seen as an anti-Nazi subject of little use to German society at war. Furthermore, with the occupation of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland came the opportunity for German psychologists to take positions in universities outside of the fatherland. It is clear, therefore, that Nazi militarization was a key factor in the expansion and professionalisation of psychology in Germany.

7.1.2 An ideological allegiance

One of the reasons that psychology was viewed with such positive regard by the Nazis, aside from its military and industrial usefulness, was because it adopted an ideological allegiance to Nazi doctrine and thought. Indeed, at their 1933 Congress, the German Psychological Association expressed the wish for German psychologists

to serve the National Socialist government through their work (Hartson, 1934). This suggestion was enthusiastically accepted by many within academia. For example, Professor Poppelreuter from the University of Bonn called Hitler a "great psychologist" (in Ash, 1995, p.342) and even used Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as a text in his lectures on political psychology. Psychologists began to search for "a psychology which expressed the genuine German spirit" (Watson, 1933, p.733), which included research into "characterology" and the energy of the will. They also began to propose the existence of a specific Germanic personality type, as distinct from the personality of the "enemy". The former was a synthesis of "the idealistic professor and the healthy peasant" (Watson, 1933, p.733), whilst the latter was "destructive … disintegrative, possessed by a tendency to stage play, to extreme liberalism, juvenalism … forever characterless" (p.733). The Jew and Parisian were considered prime examples of these personality types. At the 1934 German Psychological Society meeting, theoretical and empirical papers were presented which focused on racial characteristics, military leadership and army psychology, and "the rejection of the unfit at birth or puberty" (Hartson, 1934, p.612). Notably, at this conference the British psychologist Charles Spearman (the architect of the correlational technique which bears his name) presented a paper on hereditary characteristics. Spearman is indeed known for accepting ideas of racial differences in intelligence, consistent with the German National Socialists. The years following this meeting saw an expansion of research into these and related themes. The Department of Hereditary Psychology was set up in the University of Frankfurt in 1935, with the psychologist Kurt Gottschaldt at its head. Gottschaldt initiated an ambitious research program looking at hereditary versus environment which involved assessing 2606 experimental trials with dizygotic twins and 1470 with monozygotic twins. The children were assessed on dozens of verbal (e.g. vocabulary, and sentence completion) and practical (e.g. construction, and packing a suitcase) tests. Results found a greater concordance rate of performance between the monozygotic twins compared to the dizygotic twins, suggesting that many psychological characteristics were inherited (e.g. intelligence). Such research was used as a justification for the Nazi eugenic policies; in other words, if important psychological characteristics are inherited, and some racial groups have demonstrated an inferiority in these characteristics, then these people must be racially cleansed in order to stop the negative consequences of these characteristics on society (Ash, 1995). Furthermore, some German psychologists were successful in promoting their racial ideas with the psychological community abroad, and one of the most devoted Aryan psychologists, Erich Jaensch, had an essay published in the *American Journal of Psychology* (Jaensch, 1937) where he argued that psychology should be primarily concerned with investigating the differences between people and civilizations and assist in "adjusting the people to the differences found". The racial bias of Erich Jaensch can be seen clearly in one of his academic papers where he argues that Nordic chickens display a racial superiority over Mediterranean chickens. Apparently, Nordic chickens are better behaved and more efficient in feeding than Mediterranean chickens, and these differences parallel racial differences between humans. In the words of Jaensch, "The poultry-yard confutes the liberal-bolshevik claim that race

differences are really cultural differences, because race differences among chicks cannot be accounted for by culture" (1939). Other psychologists were successful in applying for grants to investigate issues of concern to Nazi policy, such as "The Psychology of Jewry" and "Racial Cores of the German Volk" (Geuter, 1984). Many more of similar ilk were proposed, indicating attempts to enhance the reputation of psychology and some psychologists themselves by choosing research consistent with Nazi ideology. Psychology was proving to be both ideologically useful and practically useful to Hitler's Germany.

Furthermore, aside from psychology pursuing the political and social agenda of the Nazis, it has also been suggested that Nazi military thought had a pervasive influence on more general psychological theory relating to personality in Germany at that time. According to Geuter (1992), psychologists were as much affected by the military concept of the individual as the military was affected by the psychological concept of the individual. Indeed, the qualities of a good leader were defined by the Wehrmacht in terms of willpower (strong, determined, and self-aware), intellect (logical, practical, and orientated), and emotion (warm, tactful, direct, and dedicated to the Nazi ideals) (Schimrigk, 1934). This construction of personality involving will, intellect, and emotion, in hierarchical order, corresponds to the structure suggested by the German psychology professor Philipp Lersch (1938). Furthermore, the expressions used in the psychological reports of potential officers conformed to the military conception of good character, with terms such as "firm", "tough", "strong", and "manly" being positive adjectives used (Geuter, 1992, p.106). The military influence on psychological assessment can also be seen in some of the issues selected to discuss during interview such as "The performance of the infantry during the Polish campaign" and "Why war against England?" In addition, questions used in intelligence tests incorporated German military history (e.g. the wars of Frederick the Great of Prussia) and matters relevant to current German military objectives (e.g. What are the countries bordering Greater Germany?). Such examples indicate the strong reciprocal link between psychological tools and military goals, and this relationship was essential for psychology to be seen as a useful discipline in the political climate of the time.

The dramatic expansion of psychology under Hitler's rule led to a recognition of the need for a unified professional qualification in psychology which would service the needs of academia, the military, and the National Trade Union Organisation (the Labor Front). Training requirements and examinations were devised leading to the introduction of the academic degree of diploma for psychology in 1941. This was the world's first professional certification for psychologists.

However, less than a year after the hard-fought establishment of professional training in psychology, the order came to cease psychological training for the army and Luftwaffe. The reasons for this dissolution have been suggested to be due to a combination of military factors (Geuter, 1992). The intense conflict during this time meant that many soldiers could be recruited for officer training on the basis of their battlefield performance. There was no need for psychological testing as their suitability for promotion could be observed in the real-life (or death) situation.

Furthermore, heavy losses meant that there was a shortage of officers, and increased numbers needed to be trained quickly, yet psychological assessments slowed this process. In addition, it was unhelpful for psychologists to "fail" potential candidates for officer training when the military was in drastic short supply. The rise of military psychology in Germany paralleled the military successes on the battlefield, and likewise, defeats on the battlefield led to a dissolution of psychological services for the military. The social environment was clearly a key determinant of the successes and failures of psychology in Germany at that time.

With the army and Luftwaffe psychological services being disbanded, the profession was dealt a severe blow. They employed by far the largest number of psychologists, many of whom had to find employment in other government posts, career guidance, or navy psychology (which was not disbanded). Some even joined the regular army and went into combat. In addition, one area of expansion of work for psychology was with the National Socialist Volunteers (NSV), a charity of the National Socialist German Workers Party with a focus on helping children, young people, and families. Psychologists were asked to play a role in educational counseling, assessing children with suspected special educational needs, and training youth workers. Furthermore, with the occupation of Poland, the NSV were tasked with relocating Polish children of Aryan appearance to Germany, and with the Germanisation of Polish children (Sosnowski, 1962). It is with this work that some psychologists were suspected to have actively partaken in Nazi criminality. Geuter (1992) has found evidence to suggest that NSV psychologists were involved in this Germanisation program, an activity which constitutes a crime against humanity. For a child to be considered suitable for Germanisation, they were assessed not only in terms of Aryan appearance but also in terms of health, character, and mental abilities. These last two aspects of the assessment were the remit of psychologists employed by the NSV. In June 1944, two thousand Polish children were assessed for their racial and psychological suitability for Germanisation. Four hundred of these children who were considered unsuitable were murdered. In this instance, the ultimate price was paid by these children for failing a psychological test.

Disturbing as such NSV work was, the organization also utilised psychologists for more ethically sound practices. Indeed, the NSV valued the part that psychologists played in educational counseling and working with difficult children. In addition, with the collapse of military psychology the German Psychological Society began considering other specialist training courses to supplement the psychology diploma. These were to be in the areas of educational psychology, occupational psychology (e.g. careers counseling), industrial psychology (e.g. effective leadership), and business psychology (e.g. sales and marketing). These training programs had longevity, continuing past the Nazi period. Therefore, despite the toll that the war was playing on the profession and the country in general, psychology was still able to make a modest contribution to the war effort and make plans for the future. Furthermore, there continued to be academic attempts to argue for the usefulness of theoretical and research approaches to the war effort. Indeed, a conference held in Weimar in 1943 addressed topics such as the "Psychology of Eastern People"

(i.e. those from German-occupied countries who needed to be psychologically profiled in order for population planning), leadership and performance in wartime, and animal psychology applied to wartime.

Not surprisingly, with the end of the war came the dissolution of many of the organizations that employed psychologists, namely, the NSV and the psychological institute of the Labor Front. Psychologists had to find new employment, and they did so in educational counseling centres and employment guidance companies. Also, when Germany was allowed to form a new army in the 1950s, some psychologists reverted to their old role of the assessment of military personnel. The profession of clinical psychology did not develop until much later. In terms of academic psychology, the advances made in universities under the Nazis were maintained. Many more positions for psychologists were created, and the discipline was recognized as one that is independent from philosophy. However, research interests remained entwined with those pursued under the Nazis, with topics such as characterology and the investigation of expressions still being popular.

7.2 Psychology in Service to the US Government

7.2.1 Torture

Waterboarding is a technique whereby the detainee is strapped, facing upwards, to a board which is inclined at a horizontal angle so that the head is slightly lower than the feet. A cloth is then placed over the face, and cold water poured on to the cloth which penetrates through to the nose and mouth. This technique gives the detainee the feeling that they are drowning and about to die. Waterboarding has been used as a torture technique in many world conflicts, and most recently it was used by the CIA in their interrogation of suspected al Qaeda operatives. What is notable for us, however, is that in these recent applications psychologists have played a role in the supervision of this procedure.

Documents released by the US Department of Justice in 2009 detail the role that CIA-trained psychologists (from their Office of Medical Services) had in assessing the psychological state of detainees to ensure that they would not "suffer any severe … mental pain or suffering as a result of interrogation" (Bybee, 2002, p.6), and psychologists had to state prior to interrogation that the "psychological state (is) strong enough that no severe psychological harm will result" (p.6).

Deeming that the detainee was in a fit enough psychological state for interrogation, various techniques were used under the observation of the psychologist. Aside from waterboarding, techniques such as the facial slap, abdominal slap, and walling (the detainee stands with his back to a wall, and is then pulled forward and then firmly pushed back into the wall) were used, and in all cases "psychological personnel are physically present or otherwise observing whenever (these) technique (s) (are) applied" (Bybee, 2002, p.10). The purpose of the observation was to watch for signs of "physical distress or mental harm so

significant as possibly to amount to the severe physical or mental pain or suffering that is prohibited" (Bybee, 2002, p.8).

Psychologists were also consulted about the use of sleep deprivation techniques on detainees, and of the exploitation of their phobias during interrogation. On page 3 of the memorandum for John Rizzo (Bybee, 2002), the exploitation of a detainee's fear of stinging insects is detailed: "You have informed us that he appears to have a fear of insects. In particular, you would like to tell (the detainee) that you intend to place a stinging insect into the box with him" (also quoted in Bradbury, 2005). Such information about phobias would have been derived from the initial reports conducted by psychologists, which clearly were used to identify psychological weak points to be used during interrogation.

These recent events are disturbing, and are an extreme example of what happens when psychologists feel an obligation to serve the needs of the state, despite these needs conflicting with professional or personal ethical codes (for discussion of the APA ethical stance on this issue, see Chapter 8).

7.2.2 Understanding the enemy

The use of psychologists to aid the US military is not a new phenomenon, and as early back as the First World War they were employed to assess soldiers for placement in the military, to treat those with mental health problems, and more generally in research to investigate topics considered of national importance. However, psychological involvement in the military took on a new impetus with the involvement of the United States in the Second World War. As Herman (1995) suggests, there was a perception that in order to beat the enemy, the Americans first had to understand the enemy, and psychologists were employed to build up a picture of the national characteristics of the Germans and Japanese. If the Americans could understand the culture and personality of the enemy, then they might be able to find their weak spots to exploit; for example, what strategies would be most likely to result in an enemy surrender? In the case of nations that were under occupation, what tactics could be used to persuade them to rise against their occupiers? Under the command of General Eisenhower, the Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force was tasked with attempting to understand the German military and civilian mind. The assumption of the time was that German culture was mentally disordered and was in the grip of a psychological disorder which affected rational thought (why else, it was thought, would Germany act with such military aggression and brutality?). However, even within a disordered culture, it was proposed that different personality types existed who could be delineated in terms of their attitudes towards Hitler and the Nazi regime. On the basis of such an assumption, a British psychiatrist, Henry Dicks, developed a questionnaire to use in the interrogations of German prisoners of war. Attitudes towards Hitler and the Nazi regime were obtained from the interrogations and data, generalized to the German population as a whole, and suggested that 40% of Germans were politically neutral, 25% supported the Nazis but with

reservations, 15% were passively against the Nazis, 10% were active anti-Nazis, whilst the remaining 10% were fanatical Nazi supporters (Dicks, 1950). These data were used to tailor the content of Allied propaganda and assess its potential effectiveness. The theoretical approach that a nation could be understood in terms of a particular set of personality characteristics which could be used to predict behaviour was considered a very positive advancement in the use of psychological theory in war (Herman, 1995). Indeed, General Eisenhower himself praised the work of the Psychological Warfare Division, although it is doubtful that their work had any significant impact on war policy.

The Japanese were also a target of attempts to delineate national characteristics to aid the war effort. This time, however, the project was led by the Foreign Morale Analysis Division (FMAD) of the Office of War Information, and stemmed directly from the research of the interned Japanese Americans. Conclusions about Japanese national character mirrored those about the Germans: they were prone to behave in a fanatical, irrational manner, and their aggression partly stemmed from the enforcement of strict obedience in school and the disapproval of competitiveness amongst peers. Within their national character, they also had very strong emotional ties to figures in authority, particularly their Emperor Hirohito (Benedict, 1946). Attempts to target Hirohito with propagandist attacks were considered unwise by the FMAD as they might have the opposite effect from that intended: instead of damaging morale, they might serve to rally the Japanese forces around their beloved figurehead. Indeed, the decision of the Allied forces to let Hirohito remain on the throne after the Japanese surrender has been considered to be a significant political success of behavioural scientists in the war (Herman, 1995). Nevertheless, despite the FMAD having evidence of Japanese morale decreasing in the latter stages of the war, they were unable to halt the atomic attacks on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. This was considered to be a failure by the head of FMAD, Alexander Leighton. According to their work, the Japanese would have surrendered soon anyway (Leighton, 1949). Despite this, generally the role of psychology in aiding the American war effort was considered very positive by some, particularly in the areas of morale manipulation, and to have actually shortened the war and saved American lives.

With the end of the war, however, the work of psychologists on government military projects was not over, and one substantial project sought to reflect on whether the tactic of aerial bombardment of German and Japanese cities had actually had the desired effect of damaging population morale. This project was conducted by a team of psychologists who had worked for the FMAD, led by Rensis Likert. Four thousand interviews were conducted in Germany, whilst three thousand were conducted in Japan. Devising a quantifiable Morale Index, findings from the survey indicated that aerial bombing had not had the desired detrimental effect on enemy morale.

Furthermore, soon after the end of the Second World War, the Cold War began and the United States was faced with a new enemy in the Soviet Republic. The zealous suspicion of all things communist, and the buildup of nuclear weapons which brought fear to the American people, resulted in the continued importance of the work of psychologists for the American military. Indeed, between 1945 and

1965 the major sponsors of psychological research in the United States were the military. Projects were led by different federal agencies and had a wide-ranging focus, for example developing effective methods of personnel assessment, understanding group behaviour (e.g. conformity and leadership), and human factors engineering. More covert research was done into "brainwashing" – sensory deprivation and techniques of ideological conversion, which stemmed from the Korean War when US prisoners of war underwent such techniques by Chinese Communists. The CIA in particular was focused on training their agents in the art of psychological manipulation, controlling, exploiting, or neutralizing individuals to suit their purposes. Nevertheless, the prominence of psychology in most aspects of American military and security thought and behaviour was criticized by some, and accusations were made of psychologists advancing their own professional interests by finding a military application for their work (Herman, 1995). In the anti-communist era, suspicions were also voiced that psychologists were a little too socialistic in their thinking, rather than being dedicated capitalists.

However, criticisms of the role of psychology were overshadowed by an increasing recognition of the importance of their role in international affairs. In an uncertain world, the US government was concerned about politically unstable countries in the third world and their potential to be influenced by communist ideology. A major factor in this instability was suggested to be a lack of economic development: countries which were underdeveloped were more likely to have internal conflicts, be influenced by the communists, and be a challenge to American capitalist thought. A very influential theory in this regard was proposed by the psychologist David McClelland, who had an interest in personality and motivation. He undertook a very large cross-cultural and historical study looking at parental styles and economic development and found there was a positive relationship between parental expectations of sons and the economic development and stability of the nation (McClelland, 1981). With such a suggested relationship there was the potential to predict patterns of economic development and even manipulate them with psychological training. It was suggested that US government aid needed to focus on the psychological development of such countries, rather than providing material assistance, an approach which would minimize the likelihood of a state becoming unstable and liable to communist influence (Herman, 1995).

Such work emphasized the role that psychologists played in US government foreign policy, and in addition, there was an explicit need for the work of psychologists to assist in methods of population control, predicting the likelihood of revolution, eradicating communist guerrilla movements, and exploiting populations using psychological knowledge of their vulnerabilities. Indeed, one such large-scale project was begun in 1963 by the Army Office of Research and Development, with a remit to understand, predict, and influence the social, psychological, and anthropological precursors of political change in third world countries. This endeavor was termed Project Camelot, and it involved the study of internal wars in countries based in Latin America, Asia, and Africa in order to gather data on predicting factors for revolutionary wars (Vallance, 1966). This information could

then be used by US military policy makers to identify potential conflicts and preemptively attempt to stop them happening. Indeed, at the time Project Camelot was being developed, American involvement in Vietnam was escalating and illustrated clearly to the military the importance of proactive interference in tinderbox countries to minimize the chances of full-scale US military engagement. US Marines had also recently been sent to the Dominican Republic to stop a communist-sponsored takeover.

However, the guise of the project to those countries involved was one of a social science research project, funded by the National Science Foundation. The military sponsorship and details of the interventionist goals of the project were not revealed until a Norwegian sociologist leaked these details to a group of Chilean academics. An international furore erupted, and the project was denounced in the Chilean Parliament as an attempt at espionage concealed within the guise of science. Protests were launched with the American government, and the project was cancelled (Solovey, 2010). However, there were no negative consequences of this failed project for the behavioural scientists involved. They were not considered complicit in the deception, and behavioural research in foreign lands was still considered a high priority by the US government, although general suspicion tended to meet all attempts at research by US academics. However, ethical questions did arise about the relationship between the state, politics, and research and about the social responsibility of behavioural scientists. Despite the failure of Project Camelot, similar projects were conducted and some met a degree of success in predicting insurgency and revolution. The use of social science by the American government has been likened to the use of a lamppost by a drunk: for support rather than illumination (Herman, 1995).

7.3 The Lessons to Be Learned

7.3.1 Why serve the state?

In the preceding two sections, we have seen that psychology has played an important role in serving the needs of the state, in these examples the Nazi state and the US state. We have also seen that in particular times of conflict (i.e. World War II and the Cold War), these states have found the services of psychologists particularly useful. Indeed, Richards (2002) suggests that war has been the most "universal psychological preoccupation of modern times" (p.323). Within Nazi Germany, psychology was tasked with providing the theoretical underpinning of Nazi racial policy, whilst assisting the German war effort in conducting assessments of troops, forced labourers, and children being considered for Germanisation. The US government's main uses for psychologists were in research to investigate the national characteristics of foreign states, and ways of manipulating these states to suit American political interests. We also considered how the recent US government sometimes used the services of individual psychologists, in this instance to assess

and monitor the interrogation of suspected al Qaeda operatives. We are left, however, with the challenge of attempting to understand the reasons why the discipline of psychology and individual psychologists themselves have been so willing to offer their services to the state, even in circumstances where there are serious ethical concerns with the nature of the service.

As we have argued in this book, psychology is a discipline which is firmly embedded within a particular societal context, and as such it shares the concerns of that society. Similarly, the aims of a particular state or dominant political institution are also borne of the societal context and therefore also reflect the concerns of that society. One macro-level explanation, therefore, of the engagement of psychology with the state is that both are borne of the society they dwell within and are intent on pursuing the same goals. Here, there need not be a conscious acceptance of state ideals to pursue; the ideals are engrained within the mind-set of psychologists as they are part of the culture within which the ideals are embedded. Examples of this are the German psychologists' anti-Semitic research and thought. This was encouraged by the Nazi government as it was consistent with their worldview, although at a wider level anti-Semitic thought was prevalent in German society (and across Europe) before the Nazis came to power.

However, the discipline of psychology and individual psychologists themselves have also made conscious decisions to serve the aims of the state rather than just being under the influence of the zeitgeist. We have seen several examples of this in this chapter. The German Psychological Society asked its members directly to serve the Nationalist Socialist government through their work, and there is no doubt that by serving the interests of the Nazi state, German psychology became a professional discipline which had applications in many areas of military, industrial, and civilian life. Here, part of the appeal of serving the state was to further the professional status of the discipline within Germany, and also further the careers of individual psychologists. This goal was achieved. In the United States, this situation was paralleled: psychologists who found military applications to their work had good opportunities for research grants and for professional enhancement. In both of these examples, serving the state provided a means of serving the interests of the discipline of psychology as well as the interests of individual psychologists themselves.

7.3.2 The dangers of serving the state

What has this chapter revealed about the dangers of serving the state? Primarily, we have seen that serving the state has resulted in psychologists engaging in unethical practices. We began this chapter with a quote from the American Psychological Association expressing reprehension at psychologists being involved in the torture of detainees who were suspected of being members of al Qaeda. Psychologists in Hitler's Germany demonstrated their ethical malleability in serving the interests of those in power. Here, most psychologists displayed an effusive acceptance of Nazi ideals – tailoring theories, developing research ideas, and meeting practical

demands placed on them to serve the state. There was little resistance or ethical reflection of their role in this regime. Why was this? Geuter (1992) was fortunate enough to interview some of the psychologists who worked in Hitler's regime and found that they used a number of different justifications for the work that they did. First, in working for the military they saw themselves as engaging in the scientific-based selection of personnel which was morally justified because they were identifying the best people for specific jobs. Recruits who were best suited to their jobs were in less danger than those who weren't. So they were working in the best interests of the individual. Second, many dissociated themselves from Nazi ideology and said that the work they did was ideologically independent. One of the psychologists who was suspected of being involved in the Germanisation of Polish children denied involvement. Across the board, there was no consideration of the role that psychology played in selecting soldiers to partake in brutal military aggression, which ultimately led to the downfall of Germany and the dissection of the country. In the Cold War, we have instances of psychologists working for the US military on methods of political intervention into foreign states. Again, such a practice is ethically dubious. We have evidence, therefore, of psychologists working for the state who have engaged in unethical practices and perhaps have felt that their obligation to the goals of their state took precedence over their individual and professional ethical standards.

Another problem we can see in serving the state is that psychologists have found themselves limited in the work that they do. They are tasked with pursuing the state's agenda to the exclusion of other areas of activity. Once serving the state, psychologists have found themselves under political and financial obligations to pursue the agenda that the state advises. In Nazi Germany we have seen research into race being a priority with the expected conclusions that some racial groups (i.e. those of Aryan descent) were superior to others. In the United States, we have seen the priority areas of work being in delineating the personalities of different populations to inform foreign policy. In both instances, psychologists who pursued the state's agenda were rewarded with grants and enhanced reputations, although at the expense of their intellectual freedom. Here, service to the state (the social context) shapes the very nature and subject matter of psychology in terms of the theorising, practice, and research that is conducted.

In addition, serving the state entails the danger of being focussed too much on short-term goals. State governments change, and with this there often comes a change in thought and priorities which can influence the work of psychologists. Much of the research and work pursued by German psychologists was, thankfully, stopped at the end of World War II. Changes in US governments and foreign policy have also resulted in a cessation of research into delineating and exploiting national characteristics for political ends. Furthermore, the current US administration under President Obama has stopped the use of torture on suspected al Qaeda detainees as outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Assisting in waterboarding is now not an option for any psychologist willing to serve the US state.

7.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have considered some historical and contemporary examples of psychologists serving the state. In some detail, we have talk about how the Nazi government utilised psychologists to further their own political ends, and also how the profession of psychology in Germany, and some individual psychologists, benefited from the Nazi regime. We have also considered how the US government employed psychologists to assist with an aggressive, interventionist foreign policy and how, more recently, psychologists in the United States have played a role in the torture of suspected al Qaeda militants. We have considered some of the reasons why psychology has been in service to the state, and these include the suggestion that both the state and psychology are aligned in terms of their cultural and political agendas. There are also individual reasons why psychologists might be tempted to pursue the aims of the state (e.g. funds, and professional status). We end the chapter with a consideration of the dangers of serving the state. These include the temptation to engage in unethical practices, the loss of intellectual freedom, and a focus on short-term governmental strategy rather than long-term psychological goals.

Self-test Questions

1. How did the rise of Hitler affect psychology in Germany?
2. What roles did psychologists take on within the Nazi regime?
3. Why did the Nazis have a positive opinion of psychology?
4. Describe some of the psychological research that was condoned by the Nazis.
5. What involvement did psychologists have in the torture of suspected al Qaeda operatives?
6. Why were psychological reports conducted on suspected al Qaeda operatives prior to interrogation?
7. What were the tasks given to psychologists working for the US government during the Second World War?
8. What role did psychologists play in US government foreign policy after the Second World War?
9. Why do psychologists serve the state?
10. Describe the dangers of serving the state.

Thinking Points

1. In 1939, Eric Jaensch conducted a study of the behaviour and feeding patterns of chickens in a farmyard. He reported that Nordic chickens were better behaved and more efficient in feeding than Mediterranean chickens. These results, he argued, indicated a superiority of Nordic chickens over Mediterranean chickens, which paralleled the superiority of Nordic races (e.g. Germans) over

other races. Discuss some of the reasons why Jaensch might have been mistaken in his conclusion.

2. What are some of the reasons why war has had such a significant influence on psychology as a profession?
3. Why does psychology serve the state? Use historical examples to illustrate your arguments.

Further Reading

Bybee, J. S. (2002, August 1). *Interrogation of al Qaeda Operative (memorandum for John Rizzo, acting general counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency)*.

This is an important document from Jay Bybee, assistant attorney general of the US Department of Justice, which details the involvement of psychologists in the torture of suspected al Qaeda operatives. It is available from several sources online under the US Freedom of Information Act.

Geuter, U. (1992). *The professionalization of psychology in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A detailed and comprehensive account of how psychology in Germany was changed by the Nazi regime, which illustrates the influences of the state on psychological thought and practice.

Herman, E. (1995). *The romance of American psychology: Political culture in the age of experts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The book covers the involvement of psychologists in service to the US state during and after the Second World War.

8 Ethical Standards in Psychology

Philip Tyson

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the historical origins of ethical standards in psychology.
- Appreciate how ethical standards in psychology have changed over time and are tied to particular social, cultural, and political climates.
- Reflect on the current and ongoing debate about the influence of American governmental agencies in the revision of American Psychological Association ethical standards.
- Consider the ethical issues involved when psychologists engage in research or in media work.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

The psychologist's ultimate allegiance is to society.
American Psychological Association (1953, p.2)

This opening quotation is from the first set of ethical principles devised by the American Psychological Association (APA) in order to promote the adoption of an agreed set of standards in practice by all psychologists within the APA. These guidelines were the precursors of all ethical standards for psychologists worldwide. Notable as they were, the assertion that psychologists have an allegiance to society above all else brings with it an important question: what happens if the society in which the psychologist resides is sexist, racist, or homophobic? Would the psychologist be justified in adopting these attitudes, and would such attitudes be sanctioned by the professional governing body of the psychologist, such as the APA? We have learnt in previous chapters how the discipline of psychology and the work and ideas of individual psychologists have reflected the social and political climate of the time. This is no less the case with establishing standards of professional practice. Ethical principles are as much a product of a particular place and time in society and a particular culture as are any other ideas within the profession. What was once considered ethical no longer is so, and what is considered ethical today may not be in future.

The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a general overview and discussion of ethics in psychology. Rather, its purpose is to consider the role which society and culture have played in ethical thought and practice within psychology. We will see how, like in other areas covered by this book, psychologists' views of ethical behaviour change over time and are culturally relative. There will be a particular focus on the ethical codes of the APA, since these codes were the first produced, and they also have undergone significant changes since their original development. Therefore, they are well placed to provide an illustration of how ethical standards in psychology have changed over time. Recently, the APA has attracted substantial criticism concerning the alleged involvement of American government agencies in a revision of their ethical standards. This episode will also be considered. In addition, this chapter will consider how ethical standards in research have changed over time and, particularly relevant today, ethical concerns about the involvement of psychologists in the media.

8.1 Historical Origins of Ethical Standards in Psychology

8.1.1 A foundation built from medical ethics

Ethical standards in psychology have their origins within medical ethics, and it was the ancient Greeks who first began to consider the conduct of physicians as they applied their medical skills (Jonsen, 2000). A medical treatise called *Epidemics 1*, written about

400 years BCE and attributed to Hippocrates, contains the guidance that a physician's role is "to do good or to do no harm". In modern parlance we can understand the statement as an obligation of the physician to consider the possibilities of harm caused during attempts to treat, or understand, the patient's illness. A later treatise called "Oath", also attributed to Hippocrates, is often considered to be the first extensive code of ethical practice for physicians. This lists six behaviours for physicians to adhere to, including one of particular relevance to psychologists, that of client confidentiality:

> Whatever I see or hear in the lives of my patients, whether in connection with my professional practice or not, which ought not to be spoken of outside, I will keep secret, as considering all such things to be private.

In Roman times, the physician Galen (130–200 CE) brought together all the Greek writings in the field of medicine, adding his own observations and writing many treatises on ethics where he emphasized that physicians must also be philosophers who adopted the highest ethical standards and must not be influenced by monetary gain (Jonsen, 2000).

During medieval times, the Graeco-Roman writings on ethics were replaced by ethical considerations derived from religious scholars in the Christian, Islamic, and Jewish traditions. Ethical guidance cautioned those practicing medicine from causing harm to patients through incompetence, exploiting them for personal gain, breaching confidentiality, and in essence doing anything which was interpreted as contravening religious scripture.

However, a resurgence of interest in the work of the Greek and Roman philosophers occurred in medieval Europe, and their medical writings, including those on the ethics of the physician, became integral to medical studies within early European universities. Furthermore, theoretical and practical interest in the ethical conduct of physicians continued to be influenced by the Catholic Church in Europe. An example of the published work on this theme is *The Sinning Physician* by Ahasverius Fritsch in 1684, which listed 23 sins which a physician might commit. These included prescribing medicine whilst drunk, prolonging treatment to gain a larger fee, and practicing without sufficient learning. Another influential text, *Medicus Politicus* (1614), written by Rodrigo à Castro, first broached the subject of deception in medical practice. Although Castro advises that it is always best to tell the truth, there may be occasions when an untruth can be told if it is not harmful. Furthermore, it is considered acceptable to withhold the truth or not disclose the full truth if this is in the patient's best interest. According to Castro, withholding the truth should be distinguished from telling a lie (Jonsen, 2000).

An important advancement in ethical thought and practice occurred in England in 1803, when the physician Thomas Percival published his book *Medical Ethics or a Code of Institutes and Precepts, adapted to the Professional interests of Physicians and Surgeons*. The need for such a guide was highlighted when surgeons at Manchester Royal Infirmary went on strike due to internal disagreements about methods of practicing medicine. The strike was so serious that patients were turned away from the hospital

during a typhus epidemic. Hospital trustees and Dr. Percival himself, who was a respected physician in the city, were concerned about the effect of the dispute on patient care. As a result, Dr. Percival was asked to compose a set of ethical guidelines which would apply to medics and allied professionals whether they worked in hospitals or private practice. The underlying theme of the book was of physicians as "gentlemen", who adopted the highest standards in behaviour when interacting with patients and colleagues. Courtesy, discretion, sensitivity, and confidentiality when dealing with patients were key to Percival's ethical treatise, as was respect for professional colleagues. Percival also considered the issue of deception, and, like Castro before him, argued that in some circumstances deception was necessary, and in addition there were some situations when revealing the truth, if distressing, could be injurious to the patient (Jonsen, 2000).

The twentieth century saw an influence of theological thought in ethical considerations with the writings of Charles Joseph Fletcher (1954), a professor of moral theology, who convincingly argued that in all medical matters, the opinions of the patients as to a particular course of action should supersede those of the physician. This was a revolutionary move away from the traditional paternalistic doctor–patient relationship to one where patients' rights (e.g. to know the truth about their condition) became paramount.

8.1.2 The Nuremberg code

The behaviour of Nazi doctors during the Second World War brought the issue of medical ethics and research ethics into stark and disturbing focus. As is widely known, the Nazis conducted medical experiments on Jews and other inmates in concentration camps, the barbarity of which can be seen with a few examples. Dr. Joseph Mengele was a physician in the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau who had a research interest in the hereditary nature of physical characteristics and abnormalities. He was known to select twins who arrived at the camp and keep them for experimentation. The experiments involved comparing the twins on a wide variety of characteristics, which also meant often killing them to compare parts of their body at autopsy. Mengele was particularly interested in hereditary factors in eye colour and used to collect the eyes of executed prisoners for research purposes. He also tried to change the eye colour of child prisoners to blue in order to make them appear more Aryan in appearance. He attempted this by injecting a chemical compound called methylene blue directly into the eye. At least one of these children died as a result of these injections, and needless to say their eye colour remained the same (Lifton, 1986).

Another Nazi doctor at Auschwitz, Dr. Johann Kremer, had a similar disregard for human life whilst conducting research. He had been interested in physiological changes in the body as a result of starvation, and whilst being interrogated by the allies about his activities, he described his research methods:

> The patient was put upon the dissecting table while he was still alive. I then approached the table and put several questions to the man as to such details which

> pertained to my research. For instance, I asked what his weight had been before the arrest, how much weight he had lost since then, whether he took any medicines etc. When I had collected my information the orderly approached the patient and killed him with an injection in the vicinity of the heart. (Kremer, 1947/1997, p.167)

Kremer would then begin to dissect the prisoner.

Following the war, 20 Nazi doctors and three medical administrators were charged with the murder and torture of human subjects in the name of medical science at the Nuremberg trials. Punishment for the defendants meant death by hanging or long imprisonment. As a result of the Nuremberg trials, a set of 10 basic principles to guide research with human participants was outlined in the hope of preventing future atrocities (Nuremberg Code, 1949). These principles emphasized the importance of the following:

- Obtaining voluntary consent
- Considering whether the study is for the good of society and unobtainable by methods other than human study
- Avoiding all unnecessary physical and mental suffering
- Preparations being made and facilities provided to ensure the protection of the participant
- The experimenters possessing appropriate qualifications
- The participants being able to stop the experiment if they feel unable to continue

Although this code of ethics has not prevented isolated instances of scientific cruelty occurring in the postwar years, it has served the purpose of clearly delineating the ethical or moral boundaries which scientists, including psychologists, need to work within. A breach of these guidelines provides a clear indication that the welfare of participants has been neglected, which, in turn, undermines the reliability and validity of any findings.

8.2 The American Psychological Association Ethical Standards

8.2.1 Changing standards in changing times

Within psychology, tentative attempts to develop a code of ethics for psychology began in the United States in 1938 with the formation of the American Psychological Society's Committee on Scientific and Professional Ethics. However, it was not until shortly after the Nuremberg trials that serious attention was paid to developing a set of guidelines pertaining to psychology. The impetus for such a development not only stemmed from a desire to prevent atrocities like those committed by the Nazis, but also came from other factors such as high-profile instances of problematic research and clinical practices (Kimmel, 2007).

The APA approach to developing their ethical guidelines was novel. Instead of setting up a working party and focus group, they asked their 7500 members to write in with examples of instances in their work where ethical concerns arose (APA, 1953). The 2000 responses they received were then categorised and used to derive a set of general principles which were published in 1953. Some of the case studies received were illustrative of the social and political climate of the postwar United States, where racism, homophobia, and paranoia about Communist influence were mainstream concerns (See Focus Box 8.1). Indeed, the political climate was dominated by the Cold War, and the fear of communism meant that thousands of Americans were subject to suspicion, questioning, the loss of jobs, or even imprisonment. Several case studies reported to the APA related to conflicts between academic freedom and the anti-communist fervour of the time, with some psychologists promoting an anti-communist stance, whilst others argued for political impartiality in their work. In addition, racial segregation was still practiced in the United States at the time of the survey, and several incidents reported to the APA related to psychologists actively promoting racial discrimination. Homosexuality was also considered unnatural (and a mental disorder) in American culture, and this attitude was reflected in the work of one psychologist who felt compelled to reveal his client's homosexuality to a potential employer. The ethical incidents related to racial and political discrimination prompted the APA to devise a guideline related to the right to freedom of speech and to caution against the support of racial discrimination. The issue relating to homophobia informed an ethical guideline adopting the stance that psychologists should primarily be concerned with social responsibility and the good of society. Homosexual practices were not considered commensurate with such a stance, although were not explicitly considered as part of the APA code.

The case studies which informed the first set of APA ethical guidelines provide a unique insight into the professional concerns of psychologists of the era, many of which reflected the discriminatory attitudes prevalent within American society.

This first set of guidelines was very lengthy (171 pages), containing 106 principles, and was general in nature, applicable to professional practice, teaching, and research. Areas considered included ones relating to clinical and counselling psychology (e.g. setting fees and safeguarding the welfare of clients), teaching of psychology (e.g. safeguarding student's rights and instructing in clinical techniques), research (e.g. protecting the welfare of subjects and reporting research results), writing and publishing (e.g. interpreting psychology to the public, and assigning credit in publications), and professional relationships (e.g. respecting the rights of colleagues as well as those of employers and employees).

This first set of guidelines was considered problematic and was not well received. The generality of the principles, their complexity, and their length were all not conducive to providing psychologists with pragmatic and detailed guidance in their work. The guidelines were also unenforceable by the APA.

Focus Box 8.1 Developing the American Psychological Association's First Ethical Standards

In 1948, the APA wrote to its members to ask for details of instances within their work which caused them ethical concern. The goal of this endeavour was to use the incidences to develop a code of ethics for the profession. The anecdotes reported provide a unique insight into the social and political climate of the time and how this impacted the work of early psychologists. Below are three of these anecdotes and the ethical standard which they contributed to.

1.

> A man preparing for the ministry came to a counselor on the staff of a seminary with the story of active and continued homosexuality. The counselor faced the problem of seeing the man graduate and being given the responsibility of a church, or of persuading the man to get therapy or change his professional plans, or of approaching administration regarding his graduation. The counselor first spoke to the man who still made no effort to get help or change his course. The counselor then told the story to the administration and the man was persuaded to leave the ministry. Was the counselor justified in violating the confidence of his client because of what he interpreted as being the welfare of the many? (APA, 1953, p.6)

This issue was categorised as being a problem involving divided allegiances and informed Principle 1.12-1, which states, "The psychologist's ultimate allegiance is to society, and his professional behaviour should demonstrate an awareness of his social responsibilities" (p.7). The implication here is that the counselor was right to talk to the administration about his client's homosexuality.

2.

> A psychologist working in a state institution lost his position because he was an active worker for a political party. The superintendent, a clinical psychologist, not only upheld the action of the director who did the firing but also told him that if he were ever requested for references he would have to mention this matter and indicate this as an area in which the psychologist (who was fired) had "no insight". Should a psychologist permit political differences to influence his actions on professional matters? (APA, 1953, p.9)

3.

> During the war a psychologist worked for a large manufacturing organization, developing and administering tests. He was also expected to call attention to glaring instances in which the employment department should have referred a person for testing but did not. In view of the tight labor market, the employment office wished to employ almost all white women applicants and eliminate a substantial number of Negro women applicants without, however, the danger of a charge of discrimination. It thus came about that most Negro women were referred for testing whereas a great many white women were not. The psychologist did not protest. He maintained that the situation was a management problem which did not involve the question of professional ethics. Was his position tenable from an ethical standpoint? (APA, 1953, p.9)

Examples 2 and 3 are taken from the section concerned with "Issues involving social values, such as racial or religious prejudice, freedom of speech, freedom of research". This section informed ethical principle 1.13.1:

> The psychologist should express … a firm commitment to those values which lie at the foundation of a democratic society, such as freedom of speech … and respect for the integrity of the individual …. The psychologist may not ethically refuse to serve a person because of race, religion or other considerations of similar nature, nor should he lend support to agencies which use such criteria to discriminate against individuals. (p.10).

Other limitations of this first code included a disproportionate focus on clinical psychology and the fact that many of the principles concerned "codifying common courtesies" (APA, 1958, p.266) rather than being focused on core ethical principles.

In order to address the limitations of this first document, the APA produced a much shorter, more focussed revised version in 1958 which contained a set of 18 principles. These were split into sections pertaining to different areas of psychological practice – Industrial, Counselling, Clinical, Research, and Publication – as well as some generic principles.

These guidelines were clearer and more pragmatic than earlier versions, but still they did not have as wide and pervasive an influence on psychological practice as the APA would have hoped. Furthermore, they were thought inadequate in preventing ethically questionable practices in research which were prevalent in the early 1960s, such as that of Berkun, Bialek, Kern, and Yagi (1962), who led soldiers to believe they were about to die in one of their projects (see section 8.3.1).

The ethical principles from the APA have undergone 10 revisions since 1953, with the two most recent being in 1992 and 2002. The constant updating and revising of these guidelines, with some items being excluded and new items included over the years, indicate the amorphous and changing nature of ideas of ethical practice within psychology. Although some changes have been made to aid clarity, provide more pragmatic guidance, and keep abreast of professional trends, some changes are related to changing thoughts about what is ethical and unethical behaviour. Such changes are borne of the culture, society, and political framework existent at the time. For example, the issue of sexual harassment was not addressed in early APA guidelines and indeed was not explicitly included until 1981 (Reese & Fremouw, 1984). Clearly, sexual exploitation in the psychological profession must have happened prior to 1981, but before that time it was not considered an issue of concern. Perhaps this was due to the male-dominated culture in the profession and in society in general. With the feminist movement in the 1960s, along with the civil rights movement, inequalities and the exploitation of minorities began to be identified, addressed, and legislated against. As a consequence, the issue of sexual harassment entered into ethical consciousness. Here, then, we have an example of ethical guidance being led by the concerns of society, and how guidance has changed in the light of political and social changes. We can understand this as a type of sociocultural acclimatisation, where individuals and groups (such as psychologists) change their ideas, thoughts, and behaviours so that they resonate with those which are most pervasive at the time.

Aside from ethical ideas within psychology resonating with the ethical values and concerns of society and culture, there has been a recent incidence of alleged governmental involvement in the revision of ethical standards, in an apparent attempt to facilitate government policy. This example, discussed below, indicates that ethical standards are not only susceptible to subtle yet pervasive cultural influences, but also susceptible to explicit intervention from governmental agencies and the bias of the committee involved in revising the standards.

The current APA Ethical Principles (2002) are split into two sections, one containing five general principles which are aspirational and unenforceable by the APA. The purpose of these general principles is to encourage psychologists to adopt the highest ethical standards in their work, but they are not rules of conduct and as such they could not form the basis of disciplinary action should they not be followed. These principles are Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, Fidelity and Responsibility, Integrity, Justice, and Respect for People's Rights and Dignity. The second section contains a set of 10 standards to which psychologists must adhere and which are enforceable by the APA (e.g. psychologists should work within their boundaries of competence and should guard against discriminatory practices).

Outside of the United States, ethical codes for psychologists have been produced in Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Scandinavia, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland (Kimmel, 2007). The British Psychological Society (BPS) Ethical Standards were first published in 1978 and underwent their latest revision in 2009 (BPS, 2009). This code is based on the four principles of Respect, Competence, Responsibility, and Integrity, with specific individual guidance subsumed under each section. For an international comparison of different ethical codes, see Kimmel (2007).

8.2.2 Standard 1.02: A justification for torture?

In our previous section, we have learnt about the social, cultural, and political influences on ethical standards in psychology. Such influences are regarded as subtle, implicit, and borne from psychology being "in tune" with the ideas and values of a society at a particular time. This section will consider a recent, highly controversial incident in the history of the APA, where it has been alleged that they changed their ethical standards for explicit political reasons, namely, that in order to facilitate the involvement of psychologists in the torture of detainees in Guantánamo Bay, ethical guidance had to change so that the psychologists involved would not be in breach of APA ethical standards. This issue concerns Standard 1.02, Relationship of Ethics and Law, which stated in the 1992 Principles, "If psychologists' ethical responsibilities conflict with law, psychologists make known their commitment to the Ethics Code and take steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner" (APA, 1992, p.1600).

Here, the ultimate responsibility for ethical decision making lies within the psychologist in tandem with their ethical code, and individual psychologists were accountable for their ethical decisions even when they were in conflict with the law.

However, the 2002 ethical code contains a revised Standard 1.02 (renamed Conflicts Between Ethics and Law, Regulations or other Governing Legal Authority) which states,

> If psychologists' ethical responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, or other governing legal authority, psychologists make known their commitment to the Ethics

> Code and take steps to resolve the conflict. If the conflict is unresolvable via such means, psychologists may adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing legal authority. (APA, 2002, p.1063)

The key issue here is that the governing legal authority now becomes the ultimate arbiter of what is considered ethical behaviour for psychologists, rather than the psychologists themselves, and the governing legal authority could be anyone with legal authority in a given situation, including a military commander, police officer, CIA agent, mayor, or any government official. In effect, this allows psychologists to defer their ethical responsibilities to any person with legal authority, and parallels have been drawn to the defence of health professionals complicit in the atrocities committed by the Nazis who stated that they were "just following orders" and as such did not bear any personal responsibility or accountability for their actions. Such a defence was not accepted at the Nuremberg trials.

Pope and Gutheil (2009) argue that the change to the ethics code was a direct consequence of the al Qaeda attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, which served the purpose of enabling psychologists to engage in the interrogations of suspected al Qaeda operatives without breaching their ethical code. The role of psychologists in detainee interrogations included the assessment of the psychological state of the individual to see how they would cope with interrogation and also to identify "weak spots", such as phobias, which could be exploited during interrogation (Bradbury, 2005). Psychologists were also present during techniques such as water-boarding and facial slapping in order to monitor the mental harm that the detainee underwent (Bybee, 2002: see chapter 7 for more details). The crucial point with the revised ethical code is that if such techniques were permitted by the legal framework in operation (in this case, their military commander), then the psychologist was not in breach of their ethical code and could assist with such interrogations with ethical impunity.

Nevertheless, the APA responded to such allegations by saying that the rationale for changing the ethics code was to address issues where there was a conflict between patient confidentiality and a legal requirement for patient information to be available to courts, particularly in custody disputes (Behnke, Gutheil, & Pope, 2008). However, this assertion was contested since the APA guidance already addresses this issue in their code 4.05b: "Psychologists disclose confidential information without the consent of the individual only as mandated by law, or where permitted by law" (Pope & Gutheil, 2009).

As a result of the controversy surrounding the role of psychologists in detainee interrogations and ethical concerns, the APA set up a task force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS) to consider whether psychologists involved in national security–related activities (such as the interrogation of prisoners) were consistent with the APA ethics code. The subsequent PENS report, published in June 2005, concluded that the involvement of psychologists in national security–related work was consistent with the ethics code (APA, 2005). However, controversy surrounded this conclusion since it subsequently emerged that six out of the nine voting members

from this committee had direct connections to the military and intelligence services who conducted the interrogations (Arrigo & Thomas, 2007). With such a biased membership, it was unlikely that the committee would conclude that the activity of psychologists in the military was *inconsistent* with the ethics code.

The debate about the ethics of psychologists playing a role in military interrogations and the ethical governance of the APA is ongoing, although several documents relating to these events are no longer available from the APA website. In protest at the APA's stance, some psychologists have publicly resigned from the organisation (e.g. Pope, 2008), and there have been calls that the APA's ties to the Pentagon be investigated in the light of the PENS report (Kaye, 2008). Indeed, it is also important to note that the two other major professional health care organisations in the United States, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association, adopted new policies discouraging their members from participation in detainee interrogations. They questioned the ethics of health care professionals assisting in such interrogations. The APA was therefore out of step with similar professional organisations involved in health care.

In terms of the psychologists who participated in the interrogations, several are under investigation by a Senate committee for their involvement in torture. However, none of these have been investigated by the APA (Davis et al., 2009). Revisions to Standard 1.02 are still under discussion, with one suggestion being the amendment of the code to read,

> If psychologists' ethical responsibilities conflict with law, regulations, or other governing legal authority, psychologists make known their commitment to this Ethics Code and take steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner. If the conflict is unresolvable via such means, psychologists adhere to the ethics code. (Davis et al., 2009)

The allegation that the APA changed its ethical guidance to permit psychologists to assist in the torture of detainees is a serious one, and although unproven, evidence suggests that this interpretation holds considerable credence. Certainly the case illustrates that governmental authorities can influence professional organisations, in this case the APA, and that ethical guidelines can be amenable to explicit interventions from governing legal authorities. Ethical codes are influenced not only by the current zeitgeist, but also by individuals and organisations pursuing their own political agenda.

8.3 Contemporary Debates

8.3.1 Ethical issues in research

The early ethical codes produced by the APA were not taken seriously by researchers. They were considered too general, too complex, too focussed on clinical psychology, and of little practical value to researchers (Vinacke, 1954). The issue of deception was one that was of particular concern in the profession,

but the early guidance simply stated that researchers should not mislead subjects unless "in his judgement this is clearly required by the problem being investigated" (APA, 1953, pp.12, 13). This gave researchers a carte blanche for the use of experimental deception since they could all argue that misleading subjects was necessary for their investigation.

Deception was widespread in the 1960s and 1970s, and one survey of its prevalence reported that 19% of published studies in four journals contained some element of deception (Stricker, 1967). This mainly involved giving participants false information about psychological and physiological equipment, such as in the study by Bramel (1962), which attracted the concern of the APA. The study was investigating the phenomenon that when individuals are given negative information about themselves which contradicts their self-concept, they are likely to attribute the unwelcome characteristics to other people. The methodology involved heterosexual male participants being led to believe that they had homosexual tendencies. This was achieved by wiring them up to a machine to measure "psychogalvanic skin response", which would indicate their level of arousal to pictures of undressed men by the movements of a needle on a dial. The further the needle moved, the stronger the homosexual tendencies were. What subjects did not know was that the machine was a mock-up, and the movements of the dial were controlled by the experimenter who wanted to convince some of the participants that they had homosexual urges. After the study participants were debriefed, according to Bramel (p.320), "all available evidence indicates that the subjects considered the experience interesting and worth their while".

Other studies involving deception have had even more serious ethical concerns, such as the study by Berkun et al. (1962). The purpose of this work was to investigate how stressful events impacted the performance of soldiers. Participants were young conscripts who had no idea that they were participating in research. In one study, these soldiers were led to believe that the aircraft they were flying in had serious mechanical problems and was about to crash land. The deception was convincing because one of the propellers was switched off, over the intercom the soldiers heard the pilot discussing other serious malfunctions with the control tower (a mock conversation), and ambulances and fire engines were present on the landing strip. Whilst this was going on, the soldiers were given questionnaires to complete. One was deliberately complicated and asked them about what to do with their personal belongings if they died in the "crash". Another form tested their knowledge of emergency procedures, and once completed the soldiers were told that the forms would be put in a waterproof container and ejected from the aircraft to ensure their preservation. Of course the plane didn't crash, and subjects were informed that they had taken part in a research project. Unsurprisingly, the soldiers revealed afterwards that the exercise provoked severe anxiety.

Other instances of deception involved misleading subjects about the identity and/or performance of others involved in the study, such as in the infamous obedience research conducted by Stanley Milgram (1963).

Research such as that described attracted professional and public condemnation, and brought into stark focus the ethics of using deception in psychological research. In addition, there was a trend, born of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, that research subjects be afforded more rights and respected more than they previously were (Kelman, 1996). This led to the development by the APA of a set of ethical guidelines concerned solely with research with human subjects which was published in 1973. Based on 10 research principles, the guidance considered seven key areas; an a priori consideration of the ethics of the research, informed consent, the right of the participant to decline or withdraw, protection from physical or mental harm, debriefing, anonymity, and confidentiality. A novel factor with these guidelines was that they were the first to replace the term *subjects* with *participants*. The term *subjects* inferred a subservient and passive role to the "experimenter" and was thought to be no longer appropriate in the context of a more egalitarian society where those participating in the research process were now considered an active and important part of any psychological investigation (Kimmel, 2007).

Despite such positive aspects to these guidelines, they did attract criticism, particularly for their lack of absolute prohibitive statements (i.e. they did not contain any *should not* statements). Rather, they stated that the researcher "has an obligation to" or "has a special responsibility to". In addition, some guiding principles even allowed for exceptions to be made. This is exemplified in the principle relating to informed consent, whereby the investigator should inform "the participants of all aspects of the research", but that "failure to make full disclosures prior to obtaining informed consent *requires additional safeguards*". Therefore, although it was recommended that fully informed consent be obtained, there was an allowance of exceptions. The investigator was the one to make this decision. Such an approach was criticised since it was the investigators themselves who decided whether they needed to adhere to the guidelines, and therefore the rights of participants could be violated at the discretion of the investigator. A clear conflict of interest arises in these circumstances.

Later guidelines addressed this ambiguity by providing clearer statements about ethical principles and by clearly delineating the situations where exceptions might be justified. The most recent APA code, from 2002, exemplified this by describing the circumstances where informed consent is not required in standard 8.05 (Dispensing with Informed Consent for Research). Such circumstances include the use of "anonymous questionnaires, naturalistic observations, or archival research … where confidentiality is protected" and "the study of normal educational practices, curricula, or classroom management methods conducted in educational settings".

There is little doubt that the APA ethical guidelines for researchers in psychology have improved since their inception in 1953. From the starting point of advisory guidelines, which researchers largely ignored, there has been a gradual shift towards prescriptive guidelines with clearly delineated regulations for research. The new guidelines also represent a more participant-focussed agenda, with investigators and participants now being seen more as partners in the research process.

8.3.2 Ethical issues in the media

After the death of Michael Jackson, the *Star* newspaper reported a professor of psychology's unique insight into the pop star's mind. Part of this insight stated, "He was kept in the childhood of his life by the internal demons that had always plagued him and never allowed him to emotionally evolve to the next stage of his life". The subsequent custody battle over Jackson's children "could damage them forever", according to another psychologist as reported in the *Mirror* newspaper. The memorial service also attracted comments from a child psychologist, who said that the Jackson family showed "bad judgement" in allowing Michael's daughter to give a speech. "To be thrust into the limelight as Paris was is potentially very traumatic".

As well as proffering opinions on celebrities in newspapers and magazines, psychologists are also represented in the media in reality shows, talk shows, documentaries, and news programs. They might be asked to give opinions on the mental state and behaviour of housemates in a *Big Brother* household, give explanations of research, or comment on events or individuals in the news. The question that must be asked, however, is what are the ethical concerns with the engagement of psychologists in the media?

Interestingly, the first APA Ethical Principles from 1953 explicitly stated that it was "unethical to employ psychological techniques for the purpose of public entertainment or of individual diagnosis, treatment, or advertisement by means of public lectures, or demonstrations, newspaper or magazine articles, radio or television programs, or similar media" (Principle 2a). According to this principle, then, many of the current practices of psychologists in the media would have been consider unethical in 1953. However, perhaps related to the birth of the television age in the 1950s and the realisation that psychology had captured the popular imagination, subsequent guidelines were amended in line with social trends.

The revised guidelines, published in 1958, stated that

> psychological services for the purpose of individual diagnosis, treatment or advice are provided only in the context of a professional relationship, and are not given by means of public lectures or demonstrations, newspaper or magazine articles, radio or television programs, direct mail, or similar media. (Principle 9)

The explicit caution against using psychological techniques for entertainment purposes had been omitted and has not appeared in subsequent ethical guidelines since. The 1958 guidance on this issue remained unchanged until a revision in 1981 which stated,

> Individual diagnostic and therapeutic services are provided only in the context of a professional psychological relationship. When personal advice is given by means of public lectures or demonstrations, newspaper or magazine articles, radio or television

> programs, mail, or similar media, the psychologist utilizes the most current relevant data and exercises the highest level of professional judgement. (Principle 4-k)

Klonoff (1983) noted that the 1981 guidance distinguishes between therapeutic services and advice, unlike previous guidance, but these terms are not adequately defined and therefore provide only limited ethical guidance. Furthermore, the terms *most current relevant data* and *highest level of professional judgement* are very subjective. Using this guidance, psychologists are free to say anything for which they have supporting data, even if the data are not supported by other sources. A psychologist can also argue that they have exercised the "highest level of professional judgement" in any of their actions, even those with negative consequences.

The changes observed in the ethical guidance for psychologists working in the media indicates the professional recognition of the important role that the media can play in educating the public about psychological issues and also in enhancing the image and status of the profession. Using psychological services for "entertainment purposes" is no longer forbidden, but care must be taken when working in the media that other ethical guidance is not breached. It is clear from the examples of comments made about Michael Jackson (and numerous others about celebrities) that issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, and competence have been breached by psychologists working for the media.

For all psychologists working in the media, it is important that they are familiar with the most recent ethical guidance of their governing body. For example, the APA (2002) has several general principles relating to media work as outlined by McGarrah, Alvord, Martin, and Haldeman (2009). Principle A, Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, states that psychologists must "guard against personal, financial, social, organizational or political factors that might lead to misuse of their influence". This misuse can occur during media work, where comments can be taken out of context to add a popularist spin on a particular story or celebrity. Principle B, Fidelity and Responsibility, suggests that psychologists should "uphold professional standards of conduct, clarify roles and obligations, accept appropriate responsibility for their behaviour, and seek to manage conflicts of interest that could lead to exploitation and harm". The key issue here is the clarification of roles and obligations, which should be done with journalists and reporters so that they are aware of the ethical obligations of psychologists not to discuss individual cases or comment on issues outside of their competence. The exploitation and harm could be done with psychologists commenting on individuals in the media, such as in the examples with Michael Jackson and his family discussed above. Principle C, Integrity, prompts psychologists to "seek to promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfullness in the science, teaching and practice of psychology". It is questionable whether this standard could be upheld when the final version of published or presented material is in the hands of the media editor. Quotations could be taken out of context, opinion applied to circumstances or people other than those originally intended, or important pieces of information or cautions ignored.

McGarrah et al. (2009) present several examples of ethical dilemmas involving psychologists in the media and consider the APA 2002 standards in relation to these dilemmas. Two of these are considered here:

1.

> A psychologist is interviewed for a story about addiction, which is one of his areas of expertise. During the interview, the reporter asks questions about the effects of drugs and alcohol use and abuse on children when it is a factor in divorce. The psychologist does not treat children and does not know the literature. (McGarrah et al., 2009, p.174)

The issue here concerns boundaries of competence, and the APA guidance (2.01a) states, "Psychologists provide services … in areas only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, consultation, study or professional experience". In addition, standard 5.04 states that "when psychologists provide public advice or comment … they take precautions to ensure statements … are based on their professional knowledge, training or experience in accord with appropriate psychological literature and practice". McGarrah et al. (2009) suggest that in the vignette described, the psychologist may be qualified to comment after a review of literature in the area, but nevertheless may still decide that a referral to another psychologist with more appropriate expertise is needed.

2.

> A psychologist is interviewed by a reporter about students with school phobia. In the course of the interview, the reporter asks for examples from the psychologist's practice, which is part of a university counselling center. The reporter states that the message would be much more powerful if the viewers could see an example of a student who has benefited from the therapy this psychologist provides. (McGarrah et al., 2009, p.174)

Informed consent is the issue here. The APA guidance from 2002 states that in section 10.01, Informed Consent to Therapy, psychologists should inform clients as early as is feasible in the therapeutic relationship about the "nature and anticipated course of therapy … involvement of third parties, and limits of confidentiality". The third party in this example would be the media. Therefore, providing the student consented to their case being used as an example, then ethical standards are not breached. However, it might also be necessary in this instance for the psychologist to get clearance from the university to be able to speak to the media.

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that ethical guidance of working with the media has evolved over time in line with social and technological changes and in order to enhance the status of the profession and public understanding.

Despite detailed recent guidance about the ethical standards which must be upheld when working with the media, these standards are sometimes breached, particularly in instances where psychologists are asked to comment on celebrities in the popular media. However, it should also be stressed that the media can play an important role in educating the public about psychology and enhancing our profession. Therefore, engagement in media work should not be pervasively discouraged, but should only be undertaken with great care and in accord with the requisite ethical guidelines.

8.4 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to provide an overview of the historical development of ethical standards in psychology and, with the use of examples, examine the links between ethical standards and the wider social, political, and cultural contexts in which they arose. We have learnt that ethical standards for psychologists have their roots in medical ethics, and that the atrocities committed by the Nazis in the name of research resulted in the Nuremberg Code, which inspired the American Psychological Association to develop its first ethics code in 1953. We considered the process behind the development of this code, and we explored some of the socioethical concerns of the time, such as political freedom and racial integration, which informed its content. We learnt that the APA ethical guidelines have undergone regular revisions since their inception, reflecting changes in ethical thinking in American society. In detail we considered a recent controversy regarding alleged governmental involvement in the revision of APA Ethical Standard 1.02. The purpose of this was, it was alleged, to facilitate the involvement of psychologists in the abusive interrogations of suspected al Qaeda operatives. This episode illustrates that ethical guidelines in psychology can not only be informed by the subtle yet pervasive influence of social and cultural norms, but also be influenced explicitly by organisations pursuing a political agenda. Section 8.3 considered how ethical standards in research have changed over time, with deception being a particular concern in research in the 1950s and 1960s. The lack of clear, pragmatic guidance in research, as well as a lack of respect for experimental "subjects", was also a criticism of early ethical standards. More recent guidelines have attempted to address these issues, and the word *subject* has been replaced by *participant* in order to redefine, in egalitarian terms, the relationship between the experimenter and the individual taking part in the investigation. This section also discussed several of the ethical issues involved in contemporary media work, such as the concerns arising when psychologists are asked to comment on celebrities in the media. We learnt that issues of confidentiality, informed consent, and competence can be breached in such circumstances.

Self-test Questions

1. What were the key historical origins of ethical standards in psychology?
2. How were ethical standards influenced by the behaviour of the Nazi doctors?
3. What are the key principles of the Nuremberg Code in terms of research with human participants?
4. What methodology did the APA use to devise its first set of ethical standards?
5. Describe some of the ethical dilemmas which informed the first APA guidelines.
6. Why was there controversy surrounding changes to Standard 1.02?
7. Why is the use of deception a particular concern in psychological research?
8. Describe the controversial study by Berkun et al. (1962).
9. Why might the term *participant* be preferred to *subject* to describe those taking part in research?
10. Describe some of the potential ethical issues associated with psychologists working in the media.

Thinking Points

1. "The psychologist's ultimate allegiance is to society" (APA, 1953, p.2). Discuss this statement from a critical perspective, using examples to illustrate your arguments.
2. Think about some of the reasons why ethical guidelines for psychologists should be independent of governmental interference.
3. Consider the role of American society in shaping the Ethical Standards of the APA.

Further Reading

Kimmel, A. J. (2007). *Ethical issues in behavioural research: Basic and applied perspectives*. Oxford: Blackwell.

This book provides a very comprehensive consideration of ethical standards in research within psychology and behavioural research in general. It covers the historical origins and social influences on ethical standards and compares ethical standards for psychologists across the world.

McGarrah, N. A., Alvord, M. K., Martin, J. N., & Haldeman, D. C. (2009). In the public eye: The ethical practice of media psychology. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *40*(2), 172–180.

This article considers the ethical issues which arise when psychologists are engaged in media work, and helpfully provides guidance on how to avoid the many potential pitfalls associated with this type of work.

Psychologists for an Ethical American Psychological Association (APA). Retrieved 20 November 2010 from http://www.ethicalapa.com

This website contains a detailed summary of the debate about changes to Standard 1.02 and links to relevant documentation.

It is also recommended that students consult the current ethical guidance for their country. For the American Psychological Association (APA), visit http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx; for the BPS, visit http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct_home.cfm.

9 Personality and Personality Tests

Jonathan Elcock

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Gain introductory knowledge about the origins of personality testing.
- Understand the scope and range of personality tests.
- Appreciate how modern personality tests are validated.
- Gain insights into the criticisms of personality testing.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

In this chapter, we will be using insights from critical history to understand both personality as an academic area within psychology and the use of personality tests developed most often by psychologists. The first part of the chapter will begin with discussion of three topics: first we will discuss the rise of the personality test in "industrial psychology", the work of Gordon Allport in creating a particular view of the academic area which still has resonance today. We will then turn to some of the underlying problems of measurement that remain with personality testing before finally considering the role of personality psychology in providing a framework of meaning for people. (See Activity Box 9.1.)

Although it is true that for many centuries, philosophers and theologians have attempted to characterise both what people should do and what they actually do, it is not our intent to write about a long past and a short history with personality and personality tests. Instead, the intention is to examine the cluster of cultural forces and contingencies that led to the rise of the personality testing movement and later the theoretical work that attempted to underpin this enterprise with an acceptably scientific language.

However, the enterprise to attempt to measure peoples' temperament and character in a way that was scientific at the time certainly was apparent sometime before this. Physiognomy, the idea that inner qualities would be revealed from the appearance of the face, began a revival in the late eighteenth century following the writings of Johann Kaspar Lavater (1772). The popularity of the notion can perhaps be understood by noting the physiognomic descriptions of characters in novels by Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, and Edgar Allen Poe, for example. Phrenology, which used measurements of the skull with the belief that this would indicate different formations of the brain, was developed by Franz Joseph Gall (in lectures he gave in Vienna in 1796), and again had some popularity in the nineteenth century, although it was treated with caution in mainstream academic circles.

Sir Francis Galton, with his own concerns about heredity and intellect, did ask in the survey he sent to eminent scholars to rate their own temperament along the

Activity Box 9.1 Tests and Popular Psychology

Which of these have you filled out in the last six months?

- An online personality test
- A social-networking site "fun test" of the type of person you are
- A test in a magazine promising to reveal insights into who you are

How would you hope that these tests would differ from the types of test used by academic and professional psychologists?

lines suggested by Galen in the second century, so they were asked if they were distinctly nervous, sanguine, bilious, or lymphatic. At this time, according to Danziger (1997), the temperament of a person was very much linked with their intellect; an idea that seems far removed from our current conceptions.

Much of the action in terms of the genesis of this area happened in the years between the First and Second World Wars, and much of it is centred upon the United States. That the applications to industry and mental health to some extent proceeded independently of the theoretical work should perhaps not be surprising, nor perhaps should the way that at least in this period Freud is not mentioned as a possible inspiration for personality theorising.

The chapter will begin by investigating the rise of personality testing in the interwar periods. Unconstrained by theoretical developments, these tests were developed for pragmatic reasons for the marketplaces of industry, careers guidance, and psychiatry. We will then move on to consider why the term *personality* emerged as the term, rather than *character* or *temperament*, which may have been equally possible. In this section we examine Nicholson's (2006) work, along with the work of Allport and McDougal, to understand just what personality was meant to be under scientific scrutiny.

Problems of measurement, drawing on the work of Richards, Danziger, and Cohen, form the next section of the chapter. Cohen's scathing critique of research using measuring instruments where we cannot say what they are measuring, Danziger's work exploring the problems inherent in using what amount to trait checklists, and Richard's work on the cultural specificity of some personality psychology notions form the final major section.

9.1 The Rise of Personality Testing

It almost seems too outrageous to be true, but the first objective personality test used in an industrial setting was first developed in order to screen out those at risk of developing shellshock for the American military during World War I.

What became the Woodworth Personal Data Sheet was developed by Robert S. Woodworth with the intention of identifying for the US Army those recruits who might not be emotionally stable (Gibby & Zickar, 2008). The assumption was that it was the emotionally unstable who would be more at risk of shellshock. By the end of the First World War, it is estimated that 800,000 British Empire troops, 800,000 French troops, and 15,000 American Expeditionary troops had suffered from shellshock. Their symptoms included nausea, uncontrollable weeping, night shakes, heart palpitations, and amnesia, and even before the entry of the United States into the war it was a recognised condition.

Woodworth, with colleagues, began the development of the test by investigating the case studies of patients with diagnoses of neuroticism; they also interviewed psychiatrists who had treated such patients (Gibby & Zickar, 2008). According to

Brysbaert and Rastle (2009), from their analysis of this source material, they devised a test consisting of 116 questions, including:

Does the sight of blood make you sick or dizzy?
Are you happy most of the time?
Do you sometimes wish you had never been born?
Do you drink whisky every day?
Do you wet the bed at night?

Woodworth did attempt to validate the test by administering it to 1000 recruits and a much smaller sample of patients who had attracted a diagnosis of neuroticism. Gibby and Zickar (2008) detail how the surgeon general agreed to use the test on recruits, with those who were identified as at risk by use of the questionnaire being subject to a psychiatric interview to establish whether or not they would be fit for military service. The test was, however, developed too late to be used during World War I.

Woodworth adapted the test and gave it the anodyne name, for use as a general occupational screening device in the early 1920s; the test now consisted of 75 true-or-false items. The utility of the test was to screen out those candidates for jobs who might be maladjusted, although of course Woodworth's initial concern was with identifying potential shellshock victims.

According to Gibby and Zickar (2008), this set a precedent for occupational psychology testing in the interwar years.

> Nearly all of the popular personality inventories prior to the 1950s focused on the negative and maladaptive aspects of personality (e.g. X-O Tests for Investigating the Emotions, Pressey & Pressey, 1919; the Colgate Tests of Emotional Outlets, Laird, 1925; the Mental Hygiene Inventory, House, 1927; and the Personality Schedule, Thurstone, 1930). In the summaries of the tests, writers described maladaptive aspects of personality as involving "lack of emotional control" and "emotional instability" (Pressey & Pressey, 1919) and used clinical sounding terms such as psychasthenoid, neurasthenoid, and hysteroid (Laird, 1925). (p.167)

What Gibby and Zickar (2008) describe as an obsession with adjustment came from the management theories then in vogue, such as those propagated by Elton Mayo, where the potential problems in the workplace, such as workers organizing into trade unions, absenteeism, and poor productivity, could be laid at the floor of poor emotional adjustment. Screening tests were not the only outcome of this idea; there was also the opportunity for introducing counseling and therapy into the workplace, leading to a small number of corporations employing *industrial psychiatrists* (Gibby & Zickar, 2008). This interest in screening for mental maladjustment continues with the use of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (in both its original and revised forms) as a screening tool for a variety of occupations.

This time period is also when psychology began grappling with issues of reliability and validity for its tests. While it is clear that Woodworth designed his test so

that it would have *face validity*, and during the test development phase did attempt to ensure that it would distinguish between people with a diagnosis of emotional instability and people without such a diagnosis, he was not, however, in a position to ensure that it would correctly identify people at risk of shellshock. Woodworth also assumed that people would answer the questions in an honest and fair way (Brysbaert & Rastle, 2009) and so did not attempt to deal with the issue that we now call *social desirability*.

Face validity is the notion that a questionnaire asks questions that appear to test the concept being measured. To be fair to Woodworth, he was also concerned with developing theoretical validity through the study of case notes and interviewing psychiatrists. However, this theoretical validity may have foundered if shellshock was not associated with emotional stability. In the climate of interwar management theory, the test would appear to have theoretical validity, within the boundaries of what was understood at the time.

By the time of the development of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, the problem that people might fake their results was recognised. The MMPI included scales that it was hoped would be able to identify people who deliberately faked good and those who faked bad. One scale included items that relate to minor flaws that almost everyone has (I sometimes lose control of myself); while another included items that almost no one admits to (I am aware of a special presence that others cannot perceive).

The review by Allport and Vernon (1930) of the area of personality psychology shows how sophisticated psychologists had become in terms of testing for reliability and validity. Inter-item correlations to test the internal consistency of scales and factor analysis were also being used. Allport and Vernon (1930) report on the use of validity studies by applying the tests to people who should show a difference on the hypothesised construct. Allport and Vernon (1930) also report on attempts at what would now be called *triangulation*: assessing personality tests against other, more qualitative techniques. They call upon psychologists to use more of these techniques rather than those based on the ubiquitous correlation coefficient.

When the masculinity-femininity scale was developed by Terman and Miles in 1936, one of the things that they did was provide tables of average scores for men and women across various occupations. This idea of providing *norms* has continued with occupational tests into the twenty-first century. By the end of this short period, the applied use of personality tests had become well established in the United States, and psychologists seemed to be aware of the issues of validity and reliability that remain important today.

9.2 Creating Personality Psychology

One of the questions here is why *personality*, rather than *character* or *temperament*, became the accepted term. The argument drawing on the historical scholarship of Nicholson (2006) will show how an amalgamation of social trends, contingencies,

and the way that personality psychologists wanted to be understood as scientists led to a particular form of personality psychology. The contributions of William McDougall and Gordon Allport are important to this, especially the work of Allport in finding solutions to the problem of making personality psychology suitably scientific. The solutions which he proposed also resonated with what an American public would find to be scientific, and made respectable what by then was the commonplace of using paper-and-pencil tests as a measurement of personality.

McDougall (1932), writing the first article for a new journal, considered why *personality* was a better word to use in English rather than *character*. After noting how in German language psychology, the word *Charakter* does fit well, and reviewing work by a variety of German psychologists, he then considers the word *character*. He describes how British psychologists have used the term *character*, and then turns to the United States: "In America the situation is peculiar. Undoubtedly the moralists and the educators and popular speech use the word 'character' in the English sense. But the psychologists have hardly begun to attempt a theory of character" (McDougall, 1932, p.13).

To some extent, McDougall is reflecting a general movement in US psychology away from the term *character* and toward the term *personality*. Nicholson (2006) describes this general moving away from a term that had come to be strongly associated with moral evaluations towards a term without that particular baggage. Nicholson (2006) argues that the term also allowed Allport a certain leeway in his own concerns with maintaining a romantic and individualised account of personality and a term that fitted with the scientific concerns both within the departments of psychology in which he worked and in psychology more generally. As we will discuss in the next section, there is much in Allport's writing to suggest that he was not satisfied with a psychology of personality that only revolved around the collecting together of inter-individual differences across a set of traits. However, Allport is lionised by the modern personality psychologists who do just that. It is to this contribution that we will now turn.

In 1936, Allport and Odbert published a list of 4504 "trait-names" which they hoped would be of use to psychologists who were devising personality scales. Block (1995) describes how starting from the unabridged, 400,000-word edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary*, they first identified all of the single-word descriptor terms that could be used to distinguish between one person and another. This left them with 17,953 single-word descriptor terms. They then applied the definition of *trait* for which Allport is well known, "generalized and personalized determining tendencies – consistent and stable modes of an individual's adjustment to his [*sic*] environment" (Allport & Odbert, 1936, p.26). From this, they were left with their final list of terms, which they believed were also nonjudgemental (Block, 1995).

These terms were then used by Cattell, a proponent of what has become known as the *lexical hypothesis*, which we will return to when we consider some of the limitations of the trait-measuring approach below. In keeping with modern proponents of the lexical hypothesis, Cattell proposed that all of the terms of interest that could be of importance or utility had already become recorded in language.

Taking this list of terms produced by Allport and Odbert as his starting point, Cattell then added terms based upon the clinical and theoretical descriptions of psychologists. According to Block (1995),

> Thus, he made sure that terms reflecting aspects of personality he deemed to be important – introversion/extraversion, emotional maturity, his construct of cyclothymia/schizothymia (the essence of the agreeableness factor, according to French, 1953, p.222), ascendance/submission, Thurstone's radicalism/conservatism variable, McDougall's "temper" variables, and many more – were included in his starting list. (p.192)

Taking this list of traits, which can no longer be said to reflect what has been encoded in the language, Cattell reduced further to 35 bipolar variables. Cattell also proposed that 12 factors could be found that underpin personality. The 12 factors suggested by Cattell have not survived into the twenty-first century; however, Block argues that the 35 bipolar variables have and are foundational to modern personality psychology. Block goes on to describe the steps that led to the Five Factor Approach (FFA) to personality description which now dominates the field. In doing so, Block (1995) is clearly pointing out that the supposed lexical hypothesis might have less to do with the terms being used than the theoretical assumptions that Cattell brought into the field. At the least, it is clear that Allport and Odbert's labour-intensive but pragmatic project, which is often used as a mythical starting point for the FFA, was less important than the reworking of it done by Cattell. By introducing technical terms, Cattell may have, ironically, subverted the very idea that underpins one of the arguments used by FFA advocates.

9.2.1 Idiographic and nomothetic

In this section, we consider the distinction between idiographic and nomothetic approaches. This debate is often characterised as being between a scientific psychology, which considers many individuals being measured on some dispositions, and a depth psychology, which by its nature cannot be scientific.

Idiographic approaches are characterised by the belief that every person is unique, and in order to understand the personality of a person, it is important to understand the life trajectory of the individual. This approach has commonalities with historical approaches and, to use the analogy that G. Allport introduced, with diagnosis and therapy within medicine.

Nomothetic approaches are characterised by the belief that it is possible to find generalisations about people as a whole; at the time that Allport was writing, before the impact of Popperian ideas on psychology as science, this was expressed in terms of finding general laws of behaviour. In more recent times, the nomothetic approach has come to be associated with measuring personality traits in general and with the factor analytical style of research characterising much of this work.

The idea that this distinction was introduced into the discourse of US psychology by Allport with the publication of *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (1937) has common currency within psychology. Hurlbert and Knapp (2006) argue convincingly that this is not the case. Allport has also come to be seen as a strong supporter of the idiographic approach, which would be ironic given the work he did on establishing the trait approach as the centre of personality research in psychology.

The historical work by Nicholson (2000, 2006) strongly suggests that for Allport, it was important to retain a romantic conception of the self: "This was a self of mystery, dignity, and timeless authenticity. For the younger, phenomenologically minded Allport, 'personality' was an identity to be encountered and experienced intuitively rather than an object to be calculated and explained" (Nicholson, 2000, pp.468–469).

Nicholson (2006) also makes it clear that it was important for Allport to establish personality psychology as scientific. While that might be seen as paradoxical, it is not if we move away from the dichotomising impulse which currently dominates the debate. Using the work of Hurlbert and Knapp (2006), it is possible to give a more nuanced and contextualised account of the nomothetic-idiographic debate.

Hurlbert and Knapp demonstrate how Münsterberg (1899) introduced the terms into American psychology.

> [It] is a well-known fact that this logical separation of history and psychology is, indeed, the demand of some of the best students of logic. They claim that the scientific interest in the facts can and must take two absolutely different directions: we are interested either in the single fact as such or in the laws under which it stands, and thus we have two groups of sciences which have nothing to do with each other, sciences which describe the isolated facts and sciences which seek their laws. A leading logician baptizes the first, therefore, idiographic sciences, the latter, nomothetic sciences; idiographic is history; nomothetic are physics and psychology. Psychology gives general facts which are always true, but concerning which it has not to ask whether they are realized anywhere or at any time; history refers to the special single fact only, without any relation to general facts. (pp.230–231)

Allport might have learnt of these terms directly from Münsterberg, who taught him at Harvard, and whose textbook of psychology discusses at length the distinction between psychology and history (Hulbert & Knapp, 2006). However, it is also possible that Allport was influenced by William Stern, who writes in his autobiographical sketch how he was influenced by German philosophers, including Münsterberg and Windelband.

What Allport did do, however, is introduce the terms in the context of personality psychology (Hulbert & Knapp, 2006). This was not, however, as a simple opposition, although Allport is often quoted as if he did favour the idiographic over the nomothetic.

> The philosopher Windelband, for example, proposed to separate the nomothetic from the idiographic disciplines. The former, he held, seek only general laws and employ only those procedures admitted by the exact sciences. Psychology in the main has been striving to make of itself a completely nomothetic discipline. The

> idiographic sciences, such as history, biography, and literature, on the other hand, endeavor to understand some particular event in nature or in society. A psychology of individuality would be essentially idiographic. (Allport, 1937, p.22)

As Nicholson (2000) demonstrates, there is little doubt that individuality is an important concept for Allport.

> The piling of law upon law does not in the slightest degree account for the pattern of individuality which each human being enfolds. The person who is a unique and never-repeated phenomenon evades the traditional scientific approach at every step. (Allport, 1937, pp.4–5)

Allport was not, however, calling for an abandonment of the nomothetic approach,

> The dichotomy [between nomothetic and idiographic], however, is too sharp: it requires a psychology divided against itself .... It is more helpful to regard the two methods as overlapping and as contributing to one another. In the field of medicine, diagnosis and therapy are idiographic procedures, but both rest intimately upon knowledge of the common factors in disease determined by the nomothetic sciences of bacteriology and biochemistry. Likewise, biography is clearly idiographic, and yet in the best biographies one fines an artful blend of generalization with individual portraiture. A complete study of the individual will embrace both approaches. (Allport, 1937, p.22)

Thus, although individualism was important to Allport, it was also possible and useful to find the common factors determined by nomothetic methods. It might be helpful for personality psychologists to decompose the dichotomy in their work.

While our sympathies might at first appear to be towards the idiographic it would be better to see our position as lying outside of the dichotomy as it is currently set up. With the idea that psychology must be studied in its historical and cultural location, that does not preclude the use of methods which through systematic and careful scholarship are analogous to nomothetic methods. While understanding specific cases needs methods analogous to idiographic methods, it is not the methods that are important, but rather the analytics applied and the location of knowledge as local with regard to time and culture.

None of this precludes sharp criticism of the current methods to measure "personality", to which we turn next.

9.3 Problems of Measurement

Writing in 1969, Tukey contended,

> Given two perfectly meaningless variables, one is reminded of their meaninglessness when a regression coefficient is given, since one wonders how to interpret its value .... Being so uninterested in our variables that we do not care about their units can hardly be desirable. (p.89)

In this section, we consider three problems of measurement that dog personality scales. The first is the problem that Tukey refers to above; although both academic and commercial test manufacturers can give some evidence of reliability and validity of their measures, these indicators are often not enough to know precisely what the measurement means. The second is the problem of concealed values, discussed by both Danziger (1997) and Richards (2002). The final problem, also discussed by Danziger (1997) and in a different context by Edwards (1997), is the use of the English language as if it were the canonical scientific language.

9.3.1 What do personality scale scores mean?

Different well-known personality scales use different forms of scaling techniques, and their scores are used in different ways. Three examples of these different ways will be explained.

First are tests that are used to categorise people into types. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBRI) is an example of a scale that has been developed in order to categorise people into types, in this case into one of two types across four dimensions which Myers and Briggs believed were dichotomies that were either specified in or implied by Jungian theory. The final output from a MBTI gives an indication to the test of which of 16 possible personality types an individual may have. In a similar way, the Bem Sex Role inventory leads to one of four possible categorisations depending upon how a person scores on its two scales: they can be feminine or masculine gender typed, androgynous, or undifferentiated.

Second are tests that are used as indicators during the diagnosis. The original version of the MMPI was developed in the early 1940s to enable clinical diagnosis of mental health problems. The items were selected so that for each item, there was evidence that a member of a population with a particular diagnosis was more likely to answer in one direction, and a person without a diagnosis was more likely to answer in another direction. With each of the subscales within the inventory, cutoff points were developed for use by clinicians as part of the diagnostic process (Hathaway & McKinley, 1940, 1942; McKinley & Hathaway, 1940, 1942, 1944). While not a personality scale, a similar logic underlies the use of the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), often used as a screening test for dementia. Often used by general practitioners, the MMSE consists of a series of factual questions that a person without dementia would be expected to get right. A cutoff point has been developed so that if a patient gets less than that number of questions right, then the GP uses that information as indicative of a health problem like dementia. They then use information from a clinical interview in order to offer a preliminary diagnosis.

Third are tests where the derived score is meant to indicate a quantitative amount of whatever trait is being measured. Sometimes the exact derivation of that score is based on a standardising procedure similar to that used in IQ testing; sometimes the raw score itself is used, because the procedures that were used during test construction are meant to lead to an interval scale. Examples include the revision to the MMPI and Likert-type attitude scales.

With these different types of measuring instruments, the numeric values derived have different meanings. Arguably for those scales developed to categorise people, and those scales developed as indicative of a diagnostic category, the numeric values are not the important attribute. However, even scales that do not have the psychometric properties to be treated as equal interval scales are treated in that way in research papers. The problems of doing that should be obvious, but it is difficult to understand what so mesmerises psychologists with numeric scales that they feel it is appropriate to use parametric statistics even with data that meet only the assumptions for nominal data.

The problem that Tukey (1969) pointed out over 40 years ago is a problem for those measuring instruments which purport to be equal interval scales. The problem is what a unit of measurement means.

There are two components to the problem. The first is that there is no generally agreed unit for personality variables such as Openness, Conscientiousness, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (the so-called Big Five personality traits), and this applies equally for the various specific traits that are often seen as contributing towards the Big Five.

Cohen (1994) points out how destructive this lack of agreement on the units is on developing the ability to make science-like causal predictions about more than just the fact that two measurements may correlate, or two groups may differ from each other on a trait. Drawing an analogy with the physical sciences, Cohen asks us to consider what sort of physics we would have if physicists did not have agreed upon measurement scales.

This lack of agreed upon measurement scales means that psychologists have had a tendency to ignore those parts of the regression equation that tell us something about how much of an effect a predictor variable may be having upon the dependent variable, instead concentrating on whether a given predictor is statistically significant, and sometimes the amount of variance explained by the predictor variables. We thus have a diminished set of findings that tell us little or nothing about the amount of the effect, and know only the direction of it.

If physicists had such little regard for their units, then, according to Cohen (1994) rather than developing equations that can be applied to materials in order to calculate their elasticity, we would be left with the information that a material, when you pull on it, gets longer.

> To work constructively with "raw" regression coefficients and confidence intervals, psychologists have to start respecting the units they work with, or develop measurement units they can respect enough so that researchers in a given field or subfield can agree to use them. In this way, there can be hope that researchers' knowledge can be cumulative. (Cohen, 1994, p.1001)

Cohen strongly suggests that the agreed upon measuring units do not have to be necessarily interval scales in order to allow for such an accumulation of knowledge. The hope would be that with time, it may be possible to develop such measuring instruments, but that knowledge could be more easily accumulated in the meantime.

This hope seems, at the moment, somewhat forlorn. Personality test publishers compete with each other to supply tests to the marketplace of certified test users, and there appears no pressure upon them to agree upon a measuring scale.

The next aspect of this problem is what a unit on a personality test could possibly mean. For scales using a series of true-and-false questions to aid clinical diagnosis, it is possible for two respondents to agree to a different set of items and end up with the same score. This is not unsurprising given that the definitions of mental health problems are themselves heterogeneous.

> Many psychopathological phenomena appear to be heterogeneous as to etiology and symptomatology. The various forms of subtyping of schizophrenia, the frequent distinction between primary and secondary subtypes of such pathologies as antisocial personality and Capgras syndrome, and the evident heterogeneity of the neuropsychological findings in seemingly homogeneous disorders make it clear that the probability is low that any one personality pattern will predict a currently defined psychopathological syndrome. (Maher & Maher, 1994, p.72)

As long as such instruments are only part of diagnostic process, and the users of them are aware of the issue, this may not be problematic in that usage. It does, however, mean that their use as interval scales in research settings becomes problematic.

It is the construction of Likert-type scales meant to be used with a more general population, either for research purposes or for applications in industry, where the problem becomes more acute. Imagine a scale of extroversion, with raw scores of 10–50, where 50 represents *very extrovert*. If a person were to score 25, how many parties will they go to in a given year? If another person were to score 26, how many more parties will they go to?

Questions about parties are often found in scales of extroversion, yet the person who scores 25 could enthusiastically endorse those, but the person who scores 26 could enthusiastically endorse other items while being neutral or even disagreeing with the party items.

The defence to this is the idea that in a given population, we are only able to talk about general trends, but that is part of the problem of not being able to say what our units mean. Of course, there are other problems when our measuring instruments ask people about going to parties when part of the definition of extroversion is enjoying being at parties, which we will deal with in due course.

9.3.2 Moral assumptions

Would you prefer to be described as *open minded* or *close minded*; would you prefer to be described as *strong willed* or *weak willed*? Is it good to believe that you are in charge of your own destiny (internal locus of control) or that you think highly of yourself (high in self-esteem)?

Danziger (1997) argues that psychological categories cannot be neutral descriptions of natural objects. As we have tried to illustrate above, these categories are

infused with a set of cultural values that to some extent depend upon the psychologist(s) creating them and the culture from which they draw their own sense of identity.

Danziger (1997) and Gergen (1993), amongst others, have argued that very often these cultural values and assumptions are often unnoticed by those using them because they have come to be seen as an inevitable description of a natural phenomenon. We argue that, as well as drawing upon these descriptions available as cultural resources, psychology can help to establish their apparent naturalness. Danziger (1997) argues that this means that almost all psychology descriptions of how people are and should be have a political edge, because these descriptions "often provide a resource for justifying particular social arrangements and legitimizing social practices" (p.185).

Precisely which traits are valorised depends upon cultural and historical location (Richards, 2002). The concept of the "authoritarian personality" was developed, along with the F (for fascism) scale, as a response to understanding Nazi anti-Semitism. The notion was that a particular set of traits might lead to authoritarianism, which was described in opposition to the democratic ideal. Richards points out how in the 1930s a Nazi psychologist, Jaensch, had developed a scale with similar ideas; however, the ideal type was "strong willed", had "clear unmuddled ideas", and was "disciplined", which is a set of traits very close to the "rigid", "close minded", and "intolerant of ambiguity" traits of the authoritarian. Richards also describes how, with fears of communist brainwashing during the Korean War, psychologists came up with a scale to measure "resistance to persuasion" as its positive dimension. Thus, in the same time period in the United States, two scales were available: one which measure "close minded" as an undesirable trait, while another measured "resistant to persuasion" as a positive trait.

These moral assumptions become more difficult to notice the more that the psychological phenomena being described came to be seen as natural. The quantification of these qualities adds to this illusion of naturalism. The assumption that the extent of these qualities falls on a normal distribution curve, and the subsequent use of standardised scores based on that assumption, just push the political work that these scales do further into the background.

Part of this is the assumption that the English language provides a scientific definition of the phenomena around personality, and it is that assumption that we tackle next.

9.3.3 Problems of language

Over the last two decades, the Big Five approach to personality factors has become dominant in the field. Its supporters make claims that the empirical grounding for this approach is secure, and that the five factors are "are both necessary and reasonably sufficient for describing at a global level the major features of personality" (McCrae & Costa, 1986, p.1001).

There is still some contestation of these factors, both from cross-cultural work finding different numbers of stable factors (De Raad et al., 2010) and from arguments about what the Big Five factors mean (Block, 1995). The model itself continues to lend personality tests considerable flexibility as there is not, yet, general agreement about the names and functions of "mid-level" traits, which have greater specificity than the Big Five but which lack the empirical support that proponents of the model claim for the larger factors.

We have already discussed the work of Allport and Cattell with regard to the establishment of what has come to be known as the *lexical hypothesis*, the idea that natural language is sufficient to underpin a scientific terminology for personality. One version of the lexical hypothesis is as follows:

> Those individual differences that are the most significant in the daily transactions of persons with each other will eventually become encoded into their language. The more important such a difference is, the more people will notice it and wish to talk of it, with the result that eventually they will invent a word for it. (Goldberg, 1982, p.204)

Block (1995) cautions that it may be a mistake to use lay psychological categories as if they were necessary and sufficient for a scientific language, especially when those lay psychological categories contain a single word.

This point is strongly contested by supporters of the lexical hypothesis, who point out the empirical evidence in favour of their position (e.g. Costa & McCrae, 1995). There is, however, a deeper set of problems with this position, at least from a position that does not take the same position on the straightforward relationship between language and reality.

Danziger (1995), in his analysis of how the psychological object of "personality" was worked into existence, explains the problematics of this position. According to Danziger, the assumption behind the idea that "personality" is a natural object, independent of anyone's description in that it can be unproblematically investigated most often through the use of adjective checklists, is that language *represents* reality and clearly *reflects* the contours of the natural world. That language changes across time, perversely, is taken as evidence in favour of this proposition, with successive changes in language being seen as improving the description of a timeless and enduring "human nature".

Obviously, the perspective we have adopted across this book is that language is part of the construction of meaning, and construction is an active process that takes place at several levels, including interaction between people as meanings shift and are negotiated, and within cultures where some meanings are promoted while others are derogated.

In consequence, we take a different perspective on what happens as language changes and would agree with those who argue that there is a clear problem when items are changed in response to both linguistic change and the change in cultures that results in a change in the meaning of items. This is because changing the test

items to reflect linguistic trends may lead to a change in the concept itself (Danziger, 1997; Jones & Elcock, 2001; Richards, 2002).

If personality tests are understood as a cultural product, then they may have a utility for the culture within which they have been developed. This pragmatic usefulness does not necessarily imply a deeper understanding of what has come to be known as *personality*. As we have already discussed in the section on the historical rise of personality tests, even then their use has to be tempered with some caution.

9.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have briefly reviewed the history of the personality test movement and aspects of the history of personality psychology, then we discussed some of the difficult problems of measurement.

Throughout the writing of this chapter, there has been a tension between *personality theories* and *personality measurement* which has to some extent been managed through the work of Gordon Allport and has led to the *lexical hypothesis* and the Big Five personality factors. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of that approach, there is something less than satisfying about tests designed to measure inter-individual differences of traits when it comes to explaining the self.

In the section on idiographic and nomothetic approaches to personality, we have explored a part of that tension. In the section on the use of femininity and masculinity as a personality construct, we have discussed the appeal of explaining people's identity in terms of their gender. In this section, we will consider some of the more general issues around how psychology can provide a framework of meaning for people in understanding their own and others' identities.

One of the reasons why Freudian approaches to the self became so popular outside of psychology is that they give people a way to make meaning of their own experiences (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Although that may still be true for some people, and it is undoubtedly true that Freud has continued to have an impact on the language we use about our own psychological experiences, Freudian approaches seem to have lost their general popularity in providing a framework for meaning.

This should provide an opportunity for personality psychologists to provide an alternative framework for the twenty-first century. There is also an opportunity for conversation analysts and other social constructionist psychologists to move on from the work on implicit personality theories and their relationship to the Big Five (e.g. Beer & Watson, 2008) towards something more like the discursive action model (Edwards & Potter, 1993). Some understanding of how and when people employ "personality" and actually use the words that make up trait lists would be more interesting than finding out that one technique to produce a factor structure for lists of adjectives produces a similar structure to another technique to provide a factor structure for adjectives. For Big Five theorists, however, this finding is interpreted as personality and has a similar structure to the way that people describe personality in language, and is taken as adding validity to the concept.

Overall we are left with the impression that as long as there is a marketplace for the technologies produced by this branch of psychology, then despite its limitations it will remain an important part of the discipline. Or, in other words, as long as the benefits of personality testing, for the psychologists and publishers involved in test construction and testing, far outweigh the negatives, in terms of lack of success in reliably and validly predicting anything of note about psychology, they will remain highly visible parts of the discipline.

Self-test Questions

1. What was the first occupational personality inventory originally developed to do?
2. What does *validity* mean in the context of personality tests?
3. What does *reliability* mean in the context of personality tests?
4. What does the nomothetic approach to personality attempt to do?
5. What does the idiographic approach to personality attempt to do?
6. Why is it important to know what a *unit* means in personality test scoring?
7. Why is it important to revalidate personality tests across time?
8. What are the Big Five personality factors?
9. What different scaling methods can be used for personality inventories?
10. Which is the most popular scaling method?

Thinking Points

1. Why might there be a tension between idiographic and nomothetic approaches to personality?
2. Why is the problem of circulatory definitions interesting to those critical of psychometric approaches to personality?
3. Discuss why it is so difficult to validate a personality test.

Further Reading

Danziger, K. (1997). *Naming the mind: How psychology found its language*. London: Sage.

This book strongly puts forward the argument that the language of psychology, while clearly an invention of the academic discipline, draws from the cultural contexts in which it is based.

Nicholson, I. A. M. (2003). *Inventing personality: Gordon Allport and the science of selfhood*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

This biography of Gordon Allport also investigates the local and wider cultural contexts within which Allport worked to give a thorough understanding of how he created a particular type of personality psychology, with some intriguing possibilities about why he did that.

Richards, G. (2010). *Putting psychology in its place: Critical historical perspectives* (3rd edn). London: Routledge.

Richards' approach to psychology and the role played by language is written about in an accessible and entertaining way. The chapter discussing problems of measurement, in particular, had some influence on aspects of this chapter.

10 Psychology and Mental Health

Philip Tyson

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand how perceptions and treatment of mental health problems have changed throughout history.
- Appreciate how the understanding of mental health problems has been, and continues to be, tied to the cultural context.
- Reflect on how a multitude of social, economic, political, and individual factors influence classification systems such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

In 1851, a Louisiana physician called Dr. Samuel Cartwright first described a condition called *drapetomania*. It was a very unusual disease because it only affected a certain group of people who found themselves in very unfortunate cultural and economic circumstances. The people who suffered from this disease were black slaves working on the plantations in the southern states of the United States, and the condition drapetomania was used to describe a tendency to try to escape from captivity. Dr Cartwright described the *disease* as such: "the cause, in the most cases, that induces the negro to run away from service, is as much a disease of the mind as any other species of mental alienation, and much more curable". In order to prevent slaves from escaping, Dr Cartwright advocated keeping them in a position of submission to the white man, and in the words of Cartwright himself, "by trying to make the negro anything else than '*the submissive kneebender*', which the Almighty declared he should be … the negro will run away" (Cartwright, 1851; emphasis in original). The case study of drapetomania is illustrative of the thinking of the medical profession in the nineteenth-century United States and Europe. Perceptions of what constituted mental illness were inextricably linked to cultural and racial ideologies of that time. It was thought that the natural order of humanity, as dictated by God, meant that the Negro should be in servitude to the white man and would be content in this position. If the Negro was not happy as a slave to the white man, then this must mean that he was mentally ill. No mentally healthy Negro would consider escaping because they recognised that they were in their appropriate position (Bynum, 2000). It is easy with the benefit of hindsight and reflection to see how mistaken such assumptions were from the perspective of an "enlightened" medical profession operating at the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, the question must be asked: if perceptions of mental illness are linked to the social world existent at that time, then could it not be the case that our current perceptions of mental illness are also inextricably linked to social, cultural, racial, and economic factors which affect our judgement today? This question will be explored in the following chapter in addition to a consideration of how Western society's ideas of mental illness have changed over time. A consideration of historical ideas is fundamental to our understanding of the social and cultural framework within which contemporary ideas operate. We will also consider the issue of classification systems for mental disorders and explore their link to the wider cultural context.

10.1 Mental Health in History

10.1.1 From pre-history to the Graeco-Roman Era

Since the earliest times, communities have noticed that a certain proportion of their number behaved, thought, or spoke in an unusual way which was probably attributed to spirit possession or sorcery. Such individuals may have been killed if

they caused a burden to the community (Zilboorg, 1941), or they may have been subjected to trepanning, where a hole is made in the skull in order to let spirits escape the body. Evidence for this practice comes from skulls found with holes in them which have been dated as early as 10,000 years BCE in Europe, South America, and North Africa. There are several references to madness in the Old Testament, and in Deuteronomy, Moses is reported to have issued a warning to his people that if they "will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to obey all his commandments … the Lord will smite you with madness and confusion of mind" (cited in Rosen, 1968). There are also several descriptions of behaviour in the bible which might be considered indicative of mental health problems; the three most notable ones involve, first, Saul, the first king of Israel; second, King Nebuchadnezzar II, ruler of Babylon; and, third, the prophet Ezekiel. King Saul was said to be plagued by an evil spirit which left him with homicidal impulses and depression which eventually led to suicide. King Nebuchadnezzar II was said to have been humbled by God, which resulted in him living like a wild animal in the countryside – "he was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle". After seven years, he recovered and assumed his place on the throne again. The prophet Ezekiel experienced trances, visions, and the voice of God commanding him to do unusual things such as to eat bread made with "the dung that cometh out of the man", and to lie down on his left side for 390 days, and his right side for 40 days (Conrad & Schneider, 1992). The case of Ezekiel illustrates the similarity between the behaviour indicative of a prophet and that indicative of madness. Indeed, both types of behaviour were attributed to an act of god; in the case of a prophet this was divine inspiration, yet in the case of the madman this was divine retribution. Such accounts from the Bible indicate that perceptions of mental illness were very much tied into the religious thought of the time. Extreme behaviours, such as those exhibited by Ezekiel and King Nebuchadnezzar II, could only be understood in the social and cultural paradigm of religion and spirituality.

Classical Greek society is credited with adopting, at least partially, a rational view of humanity which extended to their understanding of mental health problems (Conrad & Schneider, 1992). Many in Greek society rejected the previously popular notion that mental illness was inflicted by gods or spirits. Indeed, the Greek philosopher Plato was the first recognised individual to adopt a systematic approach to the understanding of psychopathology, and suggested the existence of different forms of madness: melancholia (sadness), mania (mental excitement), and dementia. Plato also conceived the notion of humans possessing both a rational and irrational soul which were constantly in conflict, and when the irrational soul became prominent, then mental health problems might result (Zilboorg, 1941). As methods of controlling the irrational soul, Plato suggested restraint, persuasion, and rewards for appropriate behaviour. Other Greek philosophers also conjectured about the causes of mental health problems; for example, Plato's student Aristotle suggested that vapours emanating from the heart caused nervous problems. However, it was the physician Hippocrates who promoted existing ideas of the role of the brain in mental disorder, and he integrated knowledge from anatomy,

physiology, and temperament in explaining such problems. A pervasive idea of the time was that a healthy body and mind were dependent on a balance between four "humours" which were thought to be bodily fluids present in different quantities in the body (Rosen, 1968). These humours were considered equivalent to the four elements, and consisted of blood, yellow bile, phlegm, and black bile. The humours were responsible for physical health and the temperament of an individual, which comprised the basis for mental health or mental ill health. Someone with personality characteristics such as generosity or extreme happiness was considered to have an excess of the blood humour; anxious, violent, or vengeful people had too much yellow bile; dull and cowardly people had a preponderance of phlegm; whilst black bile was associated with depression, gluttony, and laziness. Hippocrates advocated these ideas and also suggested that fears (such as those in phobias), shame, grief, pleasure, and passion were also due to varying levels of different humours. Notably, Hippocrates also described the mental health problems which arise in women after they had given birth, now named *puerperal psychosis*. In terms of treatment, Hippocrates advocated letting an illness take its natural course, rather than implementing any treatment. This approach differed from that of Epicurus, who focussed on the needs of the individual who was suffering from a mental health problem, and who advocated the use of talking therapy, either with mild argument and suggestion or, if this failed to work, with more harsh remarks to stop the individual from engaging in destructive thoughts or actions. Following the work of Epicurus, in the first century CE Asclepiades also advocated a patient-centred approach to treatment whereby soothing music or relaxing baths could be suggested as therapies. He also was the first physician to distinguish between hallucinations and delusions (Zilboorg, 1941).

At the beginning of the Christian era, the Greek philosopher Celsus noted that the seasons influenced the flow of the humours. In spring there was an increase in the flow of the humours, and as a consequence of this insanity and melancholy were more prevalent at this time of year. A black bile disease could also be caused by a prolonged period of sadness, sleeplessness, and fearfulness. Therapy for such conditions, according to Celsus, could involve soft music for melancholy or in extreme cases induced vomiting. Other harsh treatments such as phlebotomy (taking "bad" blood out of the body) and enemas were also suggested, and, even more extreme, Celsus wrote that "if it is the mind that deceives the madman, he is best treated by certain tortures … by starvation, fetters (leg irons), and flogging" (cited in Zilboorg, 1941). A little later, another Greek physician, Aretaeus of Cappadocia, began to favour a personality-based explanation of certain problems in preference to humoural theory, for example in describing manic individuals as being "irritable, violent and given to joy". With centuries of Greek thought about the nature, cause, and treatment of mental health problems, and with the added knowledge of the Roman physicians, the understanding of mental health problems had become quite complex, and a lot of the terminology which arose then remains to the present day. Excited or irritable states were called "mania", depressed states were termed "melancholia", irrationality and madness was termed "vesania",

mental deficits present from birth were termed "amentia", whilst "dementia" was used to describe those who once had, but now had lost, mental abilities.

10.1.2 The medieval period

With the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, there was a resurgence of a supernatural approach to madness. Explanations based on demonic possession or witchcraft were favoured by the Church, and theological doctrine superseded medical explanations of mental illness (Conrad & Schneider, 1992). As with all disease and misfortune, madness was largely seen as God's punishment for sin, a test of faith, or a warning that the individual needed to repent their sins. However, the dominance of the Church turned to tyranny in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when a combination of social factors led to the beginning of the witch hunts where thousands of individuals were burnt at the stake, hung, or drowned (Rosen, 1968). According to the manual for witch hunters, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches), published in 1487, mad people and deviants were witches who had made a pact with the devil and needed to be dealt with accordingly. Women were particularly victimised as the treatise explained witchcraft as being due to women's insatiable carnal lust (Zilboorg, 1941). There were, however, detractors from this standpoint, and a Dutch physician named Johann Weyer argued that, although witchcraft did exist, many of those accused of witchcraft were actually mentally sick. He collected a wealth of data over 12 years to support his case, which included interviewing the accused and accuser, and published a book called *The Deception of Demons* in 1563. This work has been considered the starting point for a resurgence of interest in natural causes of madness (Conrad & Schneider, 1992).

With the Renaissance came a rediscovery of the scientific writings of the Greeks and Romans, and physicians returned to the humoural theory of mental illness. Now that the mentally ill were not at risk of being persecuted as witches, they were often left to their own devises and looked after by families or the local community. Only the most obviously disturbed or dangerous were excluded from the community or put in confinement in one of the asylums that started to spring up all over Europe during the Middle Ages (Conrad & Schneider, 1992). This trend for segregation, however, was largely for social and economic reasons where the mad would not be able to trouble communities, and some would be used as cheap labour. Treatment was not usually a reason for confinement, and physicians did not play a role in decisions for either confinement or treatment, until 1774 in England where a physician's certificate became necessary for confinement in a madhouse. It has been argued that with this change began the medicalisation of mental illness, where physicians, although still utilising ancient treatments such as starvation and fear, were considered the primary source of knowledge and expertise in the identification and treatment of mental health problems (Conrad & Schneider, 1992). At around the same time, Philippe Pinel, who some regard as the father of modern psychiatry, was pioneering a different perspective in the treatment

of madness. As well as speculating on hereditary, psychological, and social factors which contributed to the development of madness, he adopted a sympathetic and humanitarian approach to treatment. Chains were not to be used as restraints; physicians instead should use kindness, coercion, and work therapy, and in addition should study the patient's personality in order to understand aspects of their condition. Pinel's ideas and practice were very influential across Europe, and the subsequent prominence of physicians and the medical profession in the (supposed) understanding and treatment of madness had the effect of securing madness within the medical domain (Conrad & Schnieder, 1992). Governments were persuaded that physicians had the necessary understanding and skills to identify mental illness and appropriate treatment, and madhouses legally became the domain of those in the medical profession within the first half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, an important milestone in physiological explanations of insanity was reached when it was found that the disorder *general paresis*, which was characterised by grandiose delusions, was caused by the syphilis bacteria. Post mortems on those who suffered from the condition identified degenerated cortical regions, and later, microbiological studies identified the presence of the bacteria in patients' brains. Here was clear evidence that a type of madness had physiological origins, and if one type of madness had physiological origins, then surely they all had? Physiological explanations of insanity at this time were found to be very compelling, and this discovery was in the same era as other major advances in bacteriology and general medicine (Rosen, 1968). The medicalisation of mental disorders was the dominant paradigm of the time, until Freud began to consider the role of the mind in mental disorder.

10.2 The Emergence of Modern Views of Mental Illness

10.2.1 Freudian psychoanalysis and biological explanations

The French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot is widely recognised as being the inspiration behind Freud's ideas (Fancher, 1990). Charcot encountered patients who, superficially, appeared to have neurological problems; however, no neurological basis for such problems could be found. Indeed, the pattern of behavioural disturbances was uncharacteristic of ordinary neurological disease; for example, some patients presented with a paralysis of parts of the body which did not fit in with anatomical knowledge. Charcot adopted the Greek term *hysteria* to describe such symptoms. Heavily influenced by Charcot, Freud set up a private practice in Vienna, where he saw patients who presented with hysteric symptoms. Over the course of two decades, Freud developed his own theory of the mind and mental disorders which revolved around competing drives within an individual's personality which stemmed from childhood experiences. Individuals have unconscious desires (e.g. sex and aggression) which seek fulfilment but were in conflict with sociocultural forces (e.g. the social convention was to remain a virgin until marriage).

Freud thought that this conflict was the cause of hysteria, and he was not concerned with speculations about brain disease or hereditary weakness as being contributing factors towards mental disorders. The treatment for hysteria, Freud said, was in helping the individual gain a realisation of their unconscious desires, and once this occurred, the conflict and the expression of the conflict through hysteric symptoms would dissipate (Fancher, 1990). This is the basis of psychoanalysis. With the founding of the discipline of psychoanalysis, Freud had made a transition from an organic and physiologically determined conception of mental illness to a psychological one, with treatment involving individualistic talking therapy, rather than any of the more physical-based treatments that were being experimented with within institutions. However, Freud's psychoanalysis was not suited to every type of madness. In order to gain an understanding of their internal conflicts, and in order to be susceptible to talking therapy, patients had to have a certain degree of rationality, intellect, and insight. Psychoanalysis therefore was not suited to severely disturbed patients who were delusional, hallucinating, and lacked insight, such as those with schizophrenia. Freud and his initial followers therefore had a focus on hysteria, as well as obsessions, compulsions, and phobias.

Psychoanalysis had an enormous impact on American psychiatry, and after the first psychoanalytic institute was set up in New York in 1931, dozens followed. Psychoanalytic theory became a firmly entrenched part of mainstream psychiatry, and the profession at last had a theoretical framework which not only explained the psychological basis of a wide range of disorders but also suggested appropriate treatment. This was a refreshing contrast to the very limited physiological explanations of mental disorder existent at that time.

However, the ideas of Freud were not supported by all psychiatrists, and in the 1930s there was a resurgence of interest in biological explanations and treatments for those with mental health disorders (Conrad & Schnieder, 1992). One of the starting points of this resurgence came in 1929, when a Berlin-based physician called Manfred Sakel accidentally induced a convulsion and temporary coma in a patient after administering an overdose of insulin. On regaining consciousness, Sakel noted that the patient's psychological symptoms had diminished, and so set about trying this "insulin shock therapy" on a wide variety of disorders, particularly schizophrenia. Despite the inherent dangers of this technique, it became a very popular treatment and became the inspiration for Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT), which was first tried on humans by two Italian physicians, Ugo Cerletti and Lucio Bini, in 1938. This technique of passing an electric current through the brain was found to have beneficial results in disorders such as schizophrenia and depression, and it eventually superceded insulin shock therapy. ECT is still used today in treatment-resistant depression (UK ECT Review Group, 2003).

Another technique, which was pioneered in the 1930s by Portuguese neurologist Egas Moniz, was "psychosurgery" or "prefrontal lobotomy" (Kotowicz, 2005). Moniz believed that recurring depressive or obsessional thoughts reflected reverberating circuits, or abnormal cellular connections, in the frontal parts of the brain. If the abnormal cellular connections or circuits could be damaged, then the disturbing

Figure 10.1 Performing a Lobotomy.
Dr. Walter Freeman performs a lobotomy by piercing the skull above the eye socket, inserting an ice pick–shaped device into the frontal lobe which is then rotated to damage brain tissue.

thoughts could be halted. Moniz initially used a technique whereby holes would be drilled in patients' heads and alcohol was injected in order to destroy the brain tissue. However, dissatisfied with the results he next utilised a technique of making incisions into the cortex, with a special cutting device inserted through holes in the skull. Patients with schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety appeared to benefit from the procedure, so much so that Moniz was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1949 (Conrad & Schnieder, 1992). An enthusiastic advocate of lobotomy was Walter Freeman, an American physician who refined the procedure so that the frontal lobe of the brain could be reached through the tear ducts. Here, a sharp instrument which looks like an ice pick is forced through the thin layer of skull above the eye socket into the brain, and then wiggled to damage the frontal lobe. Freeman argued that this technique was so simple, "safe," and quick that it did not need to be conducted in an operating theatre but could be performed in a doctor's office. He also championed the use of these lobotomies for people with even mild psychological symptoms, claiming that the procedure would one day be as common as dental work. (See Figure 10.1.)

However, despite its popularity within the medical community, critics argued that in some cases patients were left with severe problems in terms of intellect and personality (Hoffman, 1949). Some patients were even left in an infantile state, unable to care for themselves after the procedure (e.g. Rosemary Kennedy, the

sister of President John. F. Kennedy). However, physicians maintained that it was a very useful procedure to manage the extreme emotion demonstrated by some, and an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 individuals had undergone the procedure up until the 1950s (Conrad & Schneider, 1992).

During the 1950s, the two dominant competing paradigms within mental health were those that adopted a physiological approach to madness, typified by the popular use of ECT and lobotomy, and those who adopted a psychotherapeutic approach, based on Freudian principles. However, a revolution in mental health was about to occur which would dramatically change the face of mental health treatment.

Attempting to find a find a way of reducing shock during surgery, a French surgeon, Henry Laborit, began experimenting with antihistamines. These compounds were known to be useful at alleviating allergies, but they also appeared to have sedative effects. One of these drugs, chlorpromazine, when given in high doses, appeared to calm patients and make them indifferent to their impending surgery. The psychiatrist, Pierre Deniker, heard about the sedative effects of chlorpromazine and tried it out on some of his most disturbed patients. Dramatic improvements in thought and behaviour were observed, and the drugs enabled most patients to function adequately. In addition, the drug allowed for a distinction to be made between the patient and their illness, which tended to be inseparable in the most severe cases (Stone, 1998). The compound had a massive impact on psychiatric care in Europe and the United States, and was described as a miracle drug in the media.

Chlorpromazine and other "antipsychotic" drugs were also welcomed by some psychotherapists because there was optimism that their use could enable the most severely ill patients to become well enough to benefit from psychotherapy. However, such optimism was short lived as these drugs largely became the sole type of treatment for most patients, rather than being used in combination with psychotherapy with the severely mentally ill. Critics of drug treatment argued that symptoms were being treated, rather than causes, or that they were being used as a pharmaceutical method of social control – a biological solution for a social problem. Nevertheless, the undisputed success of antipsychotics began to reduce the need for large psychiatric hospitals, as most patients could now function adequately within the community (Conrad & Schnieder, 1992). Furthermore, the care of those with mental illness was now firmly consolidated within the medical conception of mental illness, with psychiatrists now being able to prescribe medications, like any other physician treating any other illness.

There have been several dissenting voices with regard to the role of the medical model and the medical establishment in the understanding and treatment of those with mental health problems. One of the most prominent was the psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1960). He argued that mental illness is a myth and should be better described as problems in living. If mental illness were a true disease, then it should be open to pathological observation and testing, much like any other disease process. Bodily disease can be explained by symptoms referable to certain parts of the body. However, the odd beliefs or behaviours that some people have cannot be located within the body, and therefore should not fall under the remit of a medical

illness. Instead, the definition of what constitutes mental illness is determined by a committee of psychiatrists (see section 10.3.1). Furthermore, Szasz argues that psychiatry, like religion in the past, has become an agent of social control. Those individuals who do not strictly adhere to social convention need to be forced to undergo psychiatric treatment.

10.2.2 A brief history of Clinical Psychology

Lightner Witmer is often credited with being the founder of Clinical Psychology. A psychology graduate from the University of Pennsylvania in 1888, he achieved his doctorate under Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig. On returning to Pennsylvania, he taught child psychology to teachers. One of the pupils of a student was brought to his attention because they had apparently no intellectual problems; however, they had a language deficiency which affected both oral and written communication. Conducting a detailed assessment of the child's capabilities, Witmer discovered that the boy had a verbal deafness; he could not distinguish between some word sounds, such as those that distinguish between the singular and plural (*grasp – grasps*). Both his spoken language and written language appeared to be a faithful replication of the sounds he was hearing due to his deafness (Witmer, 1907). Witmer tutored this pupil in articulation and written language, and improvements were observed. This report is considered to be the first case study in Clinical Psychology; it led to an increasing number of referrals, and on its basis Witmer set up the first psychological clinic in March 1896. Witmer termed this new aspect of applied psychology *Clinical Psychology*, as he felt it was very closely related to medicine in the methods that it employs (i.e. in the examination of an individual in order to find the locus of a problem and to devise an appropriate treatment). Witmer also set up the first Clinical Psychology journal called *The Psychological Clinic* in 1907. Inspired by Witmer's work, dozens of psychological clinics were set up in the United States (and later in the United Kingdom). However, the new profession of Clinical Psychology was having trouble gaining credibility and influence within the wider discipline, which was dominated by academic psychologists trained in the experimental tradition who wanted psychology to be considered solely a scientific discipline, rather than an applied one (Brysbaert & Rastle, 2009). Furthermore, the growth of Clinical Psychology was watched with unease by neurologists and psychiatrists who considered it a threat to their respective domains. Indeed, psychiatrists had particular concern about clinical psychologists attempting to perform a diagnostic function.

With the advent of World War I came the opportunity for Clinical Psychology to play an important and publicly recognised role in the assessment and identification of recruits for different roles within the military (see chapter 3). In addition, with World War I came the recognition of a new phenomenon that impaired soldiers from performing their duties after being involved in battlefield conflict. Shellshock, an acute anxiety response, was one of the first disorders to be

investigated and treated by clinical psychologists. Learning a lesson on the dramatic effect of modern military warfare on many servicemen and women from World War I, military and civilian authorities began to pay attention to the mental well-being of service personnel. However, the mental health services provided were constrained by the small numbers of psychiatrists available. Clinical psychologists were therefore called in to fill the gap, offering psychotherapy as well as the dissemination of psychological knowledge to assist individuals in helping themselves (Brysbaert & Rastle, 2009). University-based Clinical Psychology training programs were set up in earnest after World War II in order to help the psychological needs of servicemen returning from the Second World War, and the Veterans Association (VA) became the principal employer of clinical psychologists. The work of the VA in providing training and jobs for clinical psychologists acted as a catalyst for the American Psychological Association, who finally set about establishing professional standards for Clinical Psychology training and defining the role of the clinical psychologist in practice. One of the challenges they faced was to devise an identity and practice which could be distinguished from that of psychiatry. The model adopted was that of scientist-practitioner. Trainees were going to be taught to be scientists first, undergoing extensive training in empirical research, and practitioners second. This allowed clinical psychologists an identity distinct from psychiatrists, whilst also ensuring high standards of scholarly and clinical training. In addition, it also satisfied the goals of the APA in promoting psychology primarily as a science. This scientist-practitioner model was sanctioned at a conference in Boulder in 1949, and since then has become the model adopted all over the world in Clinical Psychology training (Baker & Benjamin, 2000).

In the preceding history of mental illness in society, we have noted how perceptions of the causes of and treatments for mental health problems have been shaped by social consensus. In a world preoccupied by religious fervour, then the devil was considered to cause insanity. In a world dominated by a biological and reductionist perspective on human phenomena, then mental illness is considered to be caused by biological malfunction (e.g. genes), and is treated with biological methods (antipsychotics, ECT). In the next section, we will bring the debate up to date with a consideration of contemporary factors which affect current perceptions of mental illness.

10.3 Diagnosing Mental Illness: A Critical Analysis

10.3.1 The DSM and homosexuality

One of the main tenets of the social constructionist approach is that truth and perceived reality are arrived at by social consensus (Jones & Elcock, 2001). This assertion is particularly apparent in the area of mental health, where perceptions of what constitutes a mental illness have changed over time, and been influenced by social, cultural, religious, and individual factors (see Focus Box 10.1). However,

Focus Box 10.1 Five Historic Mental Illnesses

	Symptoms	*Explanation*	*Treatment*
Drapetomania (1851)	First described in 1851, this illness only affected slaves working on plantations owned by white men. The only symptom was a desire and/or attempt to run away from captivity.	It was the will of god that the Negro serves the white man. Negroes themselves are only suited to be in servitude. Therefore, any attempt to escape from their natural position in life must be a sign of mental illness.	Extract "awe and reverence" from them. Treat them kindly, do not overwork them, and allow them to live in families. Don't allow them alcohol. If they still abscond, whip them and make sure they fall into the submissive state.
Nostalgia (1688)	Conceptualized first in 1688, this illness was prevalent amongst young soldiers and sailors in service in foreign places during wartime. Symptoms included extreme longing for home, exaggerated thoughts about how great home was, sleeplessness, and anxiety.	A number of causes were suggested, including idleness, masturbation, and being exposed to cold and humid climates.	Aside from travelling home, it was suggested that hard work would prevent soldiers dwelling on nostalgic thoughts.
Onanism (1710 and later)	An anonymous pamphlet produced in 1710 called *Onania, or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution* was the first written attempt to describe the harmful consequences of masturbation. These included epilepsy, consumption, pale faces, and thin legs. In 1812, the father of American psychiatry, Benjamin Rush, suggested symptoms to include memory problems, dimness of sight, and death.	According to Rush in 1812, causes included excessive eating, alcohol, and idleness.	Many cures have been suggested, including marriage, eating as a distraction to the urge, and avoidance of the female sex. Surgery was also tried in Victorian times, including circumcision, castration, and, for women, clitoridectomy.
Tarantism (Middle Ages)	Centred around the Taranto region in Italy was a belief that being bitten by a tarantula spider caused a number of adverse effects, including an urge to dance until exhaustion.	Symptoms were caused by a reaction to the spider venom.	Hearing music and dancing were considered to be the only cure, and during summer months musicians made a living by travelling from village to village aiding the afflicted.

Focus Box 10.1 Cont'd

	Symptoms	*Explanation*	*Treatment*
Homosexuality (1800s and later)	One of the earliest accounts of homosexuality being described as a mental illness came from a Berlin psychiatrist, Karl Von Westphal, in 1869, who described the case of a young woman who confessed strong physical and emotional attraction towards other women. He termed this "contrary sexual feelings". In the modern era, the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1952) included homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder.	In 1886, the German physician-psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing published an influential book on sexual abnormalities, of which homosexuality was one. He offered a twofold explanation of the condition, suggesting it was caused both by a genetic weakness in the nervous system and by sexual excesses.	Homosexuality was considered untreatable, and in some instances institutionalisation was considered the only option.

Source: See Bynum (2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2002).

although it is clear to see the explicit influence of such factors when looking at particular aspects of history (e.g. the medieval conception of mental illness as an expression of demonic possession), it is less easy to see the influences operating in contemporary times. This is because it is difficult for individuals to remove themselves from the culture within which they are embedded, in order to see the "wider picture" and to appreciate external influences which operate usually at a subtle level. Nevertheless, our ideas of what constitutes a mental illness today are as much shaped by wider cultural ideas as they ever were. To illustrate this, we will take a critical perspective on the way in which diagnostic criteria are used within mental health.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), currently in its fourth edition with a text revision (APA, 2000), is the compendium of diagnostic categories used within the mental health system in the United States. The European equivalent is the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). Both systems are used to describe and categorise

the spectrum of mental health problems which an individual may have. These manuals will be used by a clinician to tell you whether you have a psychiatric disorder, and if so, which particular disorder, and what your symptoms and prognosis should be. However, their influence extends far beyond the clinician's office, affecting governmental and private decisions on resources and budgeting, decisions made by the judiciary, employment prospects, stigmatisation within society, and the psychological state of the individual sufferer (Kutchins & Kirk, 1997). With such widespread influence, we might expect the DSM and ICD to be compendiums of scientific knowledge on mental illness types. This may be partly true, but it is essential to note that their content is also a mixture of cultural values, political agenda, personal interest, and scientific data which, combined, are far from the objective sources of knowledge they are sometimes perceived to be. The DSM was first published in 1952, and then contained 198 categories of mental disorder (APA, 1952). The second edition, in 1968, had 221 categories (APA, 1968); the DSM-III in 1980 had 265 categories (APA, 1980); and the latest edition (DSM-IV), first published in 1994, contains 340 categories (APA, 2000). What are we to make of this 58% increase in diagnostic categories over 42 years? Clearly this indicates that ideas of what constitutes a mental illness are not stable and change over time, and the categories of mental disorders included in these texts are included or removed as a result of numerous external factors. A key example of this is homosexuality, which will be discussed in some detail.

In the first DSM, homosexuality was categorised as one of a number of sexual deviations without being mentioned by name. Any sexual interest in something or someone other than a member of the opposite sex with a view to coitus was considered a sexual deviation, and homosexuality fell into this category. In DSM-II, homosexuality was mentioned by name as the first of 10 sexual deviations, but then it was excluded from DSM-III. There are several purported reasons for this change as detailed by Kutchins and Kirk (1997), which are illustrative of the relationship between society, politics, self-interest, and psychiatric diagnoses. First, research on the sexual habits of ordinary Americans, published in the Kinsey report, indicated that there was no clear dividing line between homosexuality and heterosexuality, but that many people who considered themselves heterosexual also engaged in homosexual acts (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948). Second, there arose an increasingly vocal and militant gay liberation movement. Another important influencing factor was a change in the perception of causes of homosexuality: the psychoanalytic interpretation, which saw the cause as stemming from a reaction to an overprotective mother and an emotionally distant and rejecting father, was becoming unfavourable. In addition, therapists who had tried to help gay men become heterosexual using psychoanalytic methods had had little success, undermining the psychoanalytic interpretation of homosexuality.

Much of the debate about the inclusion of homosexuality in the DSM occurred at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association between 1970 and 1973, where gay activists clashed with the psychiatric profession and demanded a withdrawal of homosexuality from the DSM. One of the key events during that

period was when a talk was given by a psychiatrist in disguise, called at the time Dr. Anonymous. He was in disguise because he risked losing his licence to practice psychiatry if he was identified, because at that time no psychiatrist with a mental health disorder was allowed to practice, and, as we know, homosexuality was considered a mental disorder then. He began his speech with the words "I am a homosexual. I am a psychiatrist", and he told the audience that there were over 200 gay psychiatrists who were members of the American Psychiatric Association. With his talk, he dismissed the idea that homosexuality was a mental disorder, arguing that you had to be mentally healthier to be a homosexual psychiatrist than a heterosexual one because of the added challenges that they faced. Several meetings and petitions later, the psychiatrist who was to head the team on the revision of the DSM, Robert Spitzer, proposed that homosexuality should be removed as a diagnostic category. However, he still sanctioned the inclusion of a category of disorder for those individuals who were troubled by their sexual interests (which could include homosexuals) – sexual orientation disturbance (Kutchins & Kirk, 1997). This was perceived to be a compromise as homosexuality was no longer viewed as a disorder per se, but those who were distressed at their homosexuality could still be considered to have a disorder. Although some within the American Psychiatric Association were unhappy with the decision, the proposal was accepted by the board of trustees. However, Spitzer himself was not entirely happy with the terminology of *sexual orientation disturbance*, and in a revision of the DSM-III the term *ego-dystonic homosexuality* (EDH) was used to describe the disorder of those who were troubled by their homosexuality. This change was initiated and implemented by Spitzer, with little consultation with the scientific, psychiatric, or gay community. It illustrates how individuals in positions of power are able to yield immense influence with far-reaching consequences for society and, in this instance, determine psychiatric diagnoses.

In the current edition of the DSM (DSM-IV), homosexuality is not explicitly mentioned, although someone who visits a psychiatrist and is troubled by their homosexuality could be diagnosed as having a *sexual disorder not otherwise specified*, defined as "Persistent and marked distress about sexual orientation". The story, however, may not end there. Kutchins and Kirk (1997) argue that there remains a danger of homosexuality being re-pathologised from two sources. First, there remains an opinion within influential psychoanalytical organisations that homosexuality is a disorder, born of childhood conflict, which is amenable to treatment. Some religious organisations also promote the idea of treating homosexuality. Second, much effort has been spent in finding genes or other biological determinants of homosexuality. If successful, these "biological" markers may, on the one hand, indicate that sexual preference is predetermined and therefore not an acquired "disorder", but on the other hand findings may be used to argue that homosexuals have a biological disorder, which might foster prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, if either the psychoanalytical or biological interpretation of homosexuality achieves considerable support within psychiatry (and the wider society), then we may see it being reinstated in future versions of the DSM.

Our consideration of homosexuality within the DSM reveals two important things with regard to the classification of mental disorders. First, that what constitutes abnormality can be determined by the social context, individuals who have high status or are in positions of power, individuals with vested interests, politics, and pressure groups. Scientific evidence has little part to play. Second, perceptions of abnormality are susceptible to change over time, and our understanding of mental illness is not a progression towards enlightenment. Indeed, rather than there being a gradual illumination of our understanding of mental health problems culminating in the pinnacle of understanding today, there has been a constant shifting and revision of perceptions of mental health problems which have reflected the society and culture which prevailed at that time.

10.3.2 Future disorders: The development of the DSM-V

At the time of writing this chapter, the DSM-V is being developed by the American Psychiatric Association, due for publication in 2012, and already it is being surrounded by controversy. Questions about the role of the pharmaceutical industry in its development have been asked, stemming from a report that 56% of APA members who contributed to the diagnostic criteria within the DSM-IV had ties to companies who manufacture psychiatric medication (e.g. Cosgrove, Krimsky, Vijayaraghavan, & Schneider, 2006), with a similar figure in the development team for the DSM-V (Kaplan, 2009). Clearly there is the potential for a conflict of interest here, with a concern that new diagnoses may be included as a pretext for prescribing new drugs which would be profitable for the pharmaceutical industry. The process has also been criticised for secrecy (Kaplan, 2009).

Nevertheless, the APA has put in place a set of principles which members of the DSM-V taskforce should adhere to, including the need for disclosures of links to the pharmaceutical industry and transparency of the process by which new diagnoses, and changes to existing diagnoses, are considered (Kaplan, 2009). Furthermore, it has been argued that the authors who criticise the DSM are doing so because of their bias towards a psychodynamic interpretation of psychiatric disorders, which is not represented (anymore) within the pages of the DSM (Kupfer & Regier, 2009). An accusation of bias and vested interests, therefore, could be levelled at both sides of the argument.

With the development of the DSM-V comes the opportunity for a revision of structure and content. Suggestions for including sections devoted to patients' subjective experiences of disorders have been made, together with the inclusions of new diagnoses to reflect issues which are of concern to today's society. Internet addiction (Block, 2008), compulsive buying (Koran, Faber, Aboujaoude, Large, & Serpe, 2006), and obesity (Devlin, 2007) are some of the behaviours considered for inclusion, again indicating the inextricable link between issues in society and perceptions of abnormality.

10.4 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to provide an overview of how perceptions of mental disorders have changed over time and been intrinsically linked to particular social and cultural influences. Early thought was that a mental disorder was the consequence of demonic possession or an act of God, and this perception was prevalent during the Middle Ages. Graeco-Roman thought about mental illness adopted a more rational approach, and attempts were made here to understand and classify different types of mental disorders and also to introduce therapies. The Renaissance period saw the building of large scale asylums across Europe, designed to contain individuals with mental health problems. Biological explanations of mental disorders were in favour until Freud developed his psychoanalytic explanation, where psychological conflicts were to blame for disorders. However, a resurgence of interest in biological explanations occurred when techniques such as lobotomy and ECT appeared to have beneficial effects on some patients, despite some severe side effects. The arrival of antipsychotic medication was seen as a very significant development in treatment, allowing many patients to be treated successfully in the community. However, some critics argue that biological-based treatments are more about social control rather than treating the disorder. The discipline of Clinical Psychology emerged in the late 1800s and played a very important role in the assessment and treatment of military personnel in the First and Second World Wars. Perceptions of what constitutes a mental illness are sociocultural in origin and influenced by a multitude of factors. Today, clinicians use diagnostic manuals (i.e. the DSM and ICD) to categorise and describe different types of mental disorders, but these too are tied to the cultural context and are not objective sources of scientific knowledge. The case study of homosexuality illustrates how perceptions of mental illness change over time and social circumstance: homosexuality was originally classified as a psychiatric illness in early editions of the DSM, but later was taken out due to a number of political, theoretical, social, and individual influences. The next edition of the DSM is currently in preparation, and the inclusion of disorders representing current cultural concerns, such as compulsive buying and internet addiction, is being considered. Again, this indicates the sociocultural malleability of perceptions of mental illness.

Self-test Questions

1. Can drapetomania be considered a mental illness?
2. How was mental illness recognized in the bible?
3. What did the ancient Greeks consider to be a primary cause of mental illness?
4. What contribution did Freud make to the understanding of mental illness?
5. Consider the use of ECT to treat depression.
6. Why might lobotomies be considered dangerous?

7. Describe the origin of the discipline of Clinical Psychology.
8. How does the social constructionist approach explain mental illness?
9. Why was homosexuality excluded from the DSM-III?
10. Consider whether compulsive buying, obesity, and internet addiction should be included in DSM-V.

Thinking Points

1. "Our understanding of mental illness is not a gradual path towards enlightenment". Evaluate this statement using examples from history.
2. Discuss the factors which influence society's perception of abnormality.
3. What can we learn about the classification systems used to define abnormality from the case example of homosexuality?

Further Reading

Conrad, P., & Schneider, J. W. (1992). *Deviance and medicalization: From badness to sickness*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

This influential book considers in detail the medicalization of mental illness; drawing extensively on the sociohistorical origins of the medical perspective, it considers the contemporary implications of this approach.

Kutchins, H., & Kirk, S. A. (1997). *Making us crazy: DSM – the psychiatric bible and the creation of mental disorders*. London: Constable.

This book provides a lively and informative critical consideration of the DSM and, more generally, how perceptions of mental illness have been shaped by cultural, social, and individual factors.

11 Freud and Psychology

Jonathan Elcock

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Gain introductory knowledge about psychoanalysis in its own terms.
- Understand how psychoanalysis may be affected by the societies within which it is practised.
- Appreciate how psychoanalysis has influenced academic psychology.
- Gain insights into the continuing relationships between psychoanalysis and psychology.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

"Varieties of Historical Imagination: Imagining Life without Freud" by Graham Richards (2000b) is a paper about the need for historians of psychology to undertake some kind of imaginative hermeneutic effort in order to more fully explain the history of the discipline. It points out the difficulty of imagining a world without Freud.

> [A] world in which nobody repressed or projected anything, nobody regressed to childhood, nobody suffered from an Oedipal complex or an inferiority complex, a slip of the tongue was just that, and the anally retentive character was (despite the popularity of proprietary laxatives!) as yet unknown. (Richards, 2000b, p.110)

Thus psychoanalysis created a new framework of meaning for "everyday life", and while some of the elements pre-existed Freud and others in the psychoanalytic movement, psychoanalysis took this miscellaneous repertoire of psychological ideas and integrated them into what seemed like a scientific theory.

The relationship between psychoanalysis and psychology is a complex one. At times the two have been identified as one discipline, but at other times the two have been treated as distinct, most often when comparing the experimental part of the discipline with psychoanalysis. Today the picture is confusing, with it being a psychological fact that many people, sometimes within but mainly outside of the discipline, identify Freud as a psychologist. Others view psychoanalysis as nothing to do with psychology, and yet others see the two as perhaps competing disciplines which cover some of the same subject matter but aim towards different ends.

It is perhaps the last formulation that best describes our view, but the boundaries between the disciplines may be more porous than many psychologists would wish to admit. All attempts to police boundaries between disciplines have something to say about the way a particular discipline identifies itself. In this respect, popular conceptions of psychology and the way that practitioners

Activity Box 11.1 How Freudian are you?

Which of these concepts do you recognise and perhaps use about yourself or others.

Dreams as revealing something about your personality.
Having subconscious desires.
Slips of the tongue revealing something about your motives.
Intentional forgetting
Defense Mechanisms.
Early Childhood experiences being foundational to your adult character and motivations.

of psychology see themselves may differ. The boundary seems to be of far more importance to us as psychologists, than it is to people in general (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Psychoanalysis continues to have a relationship with psychology: first in the way that Freud is used as an antagonist, with his methods and his theorising attacked; second, in the continuing interest in Freud and psychoanalysis, with the interest by, for example, feminist writers and some critical discourse analysts in using psychoanalytic concepts; and, finally, insofar that psychology takes as its object of study the everyday psychologising of people, the continuing influence of Freud on that everyday psychology. If after behaviourism most of the discipline's practitioners became, at least, methodological behaviourists, then after over a century of influence most of the participants in our studies are lay psychoanalysts (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

The intention of this chapter is not to give yet another way to attack Freudian psychoanalysis; instead, it is to look at the reasons why suspicion has grown up between psychology and psychoanalysis. Neither is it our intention to act as apologists for Freud. Insofar as we do, it is as part of an internal argument within a discipline that has too readily dismissed psychoanalytic approaches, while at the same time co-opted some of the ideas from psychoanalysis to ensure that psychology retains a "market appeal".

In this chapter, after a brief introduction to psychoanalysis, we will consider what happened to psychoanalysis as it became assimilated within the United States, away from the very different cultures in which it first flourished. Then we examine different outcomes between the intersection between psychology and psychoanalysis, an example of how psychology co-opted and changed ideas from psychoanalysis, and finally an example of competition between psychoanalysis and psychology.

Perhaps one important first consideration is that there is not a monolithic response to psychoanalysis from within psychology. While it is tempting to understand the history of psychology as competition between competing schools of thought, very often the individual psychologists were open to a range of disciplinary influences. For example, Overskeid (2007) argues that the work of Skinner was influenced by Freud, who throughout his works was the most cited author.

Overskeid (2007) also shows that with the earlier generations of behaviourism, there was also an appreciation of Freud's work, with J. B. Watson writing, "I have been for some years an earnest student of Freud (and other psychoanalysts)", and "I am convinced of the truth of Freud's work" (Watson, 1916, pp.589–590). Of course Watson did not leave things there and proceeded to redefine psychoanalytic concepts in other terms because of his belief that the time had "come for describing 'mental diseases' wholly in terms of twisted habits" (Watson, 1916, p.594). Watson's hope of the early twentieth century may have come true in the rise of popularity in cognitive behavioural therapies where just such a thing has been done.

11.1 A Brief Introduction to Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a large and complex project, encompassing an attempt to understand human psychology which is linked to therapeutic change and which has been developed into a social theory. There are a multitude of current approaches to psychoanalysis: in some, such as the work of Erikson, the role of the Ego is expanded; whereas in others such as Jungian psychoanalysis, the nature of the subconscious is different to Freud's approach. However, all of them have at their root Freud's work (Jones & Elcock, 2001), and given constraints of space this introduction will concentrate on that.

While the psychoanalytic movement has diversified considerably since his time and his writing, and there are now schools of thought that have rejected some of Freud's ideas, all of these psychoanalytic theories have their roots in Freud's work. It is also necessary, given that this is one chapter and this topic could easily encompass a book, to limit our focus. We hope that the analysis we develop below is at least extendable to other forms of psychoanalysis.

The first and most important of these ideas is that of a dynamic unconsciousness (Frosh, 1999). By this it is meant an area of the mind not normally open to conscious awareness that can influence, or direct, the conscious mind and that is in turn influenced or directed by the physical and social environment of which the person is a part. The exact structure of this unconscious arena of mental life is an area of debate between psychoanalysts, and its role in Freud's theory underwent modification as he wrote. For most psychoanalysts, it is made up of the residue of infantile experiences and, for many, operates alongside biological instincts or drives, particularly sexual ones. Early childhood experience, primarily one's experiences with their parents up to about age 4 and 5, are seen as being of crucial importance, and while details differ on the exact development process for children, there is a commonality in the notion that children progress through stages. These lead to the structures of the unconscious that adults have, and once fully formed these become difficult to change (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

The basic approach to unearthing this unconscious dynamic mental structure in an adult is through the intense examination of cultural phenomena, from slips of the tongue, dreams, works of arts, and the contents of neurosis. For most psychoanalysts the place where this most easily happens is the therapeutic encounter. It is evidence from these encounters that allows for theorising about processes across peoples as well as being the site at which psychoanalysts can attempt to alter, or ameliorate the effects of, the unconscious dynamics for a particular individual (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Much more than most approaches in psychology, the approaches in psychoanalysis are explicitly attempting to create a framework of understanding for human experience. In common with other theories of human nature, there is a degree of "self-fulfilling prophecy" about psychoanalysis, as terms, concepts, and ideas have become integrated into our cultural common sense. Our awareness of psychoanalysis has to some extent changed at a

fundamental level our psychology, and in this psychoanalysis has been much more successful than any approach within psychology to date (Richards, 2010).

The institutionalisation of psychoanalysis is also worth commenting upon, especially as it follows a different course in Great Britain and the United States. Within the United States, psychoanalysis was for a long time the exclusive province of medically trained psychiatrists, who received their psychoanalytic training following their medical training. Within the United Kingdom, while that route is also available for psychiatrists, it is also possible for clinical psychologists to become psychoanalysts. Also within the United Kingdom, it is possible for other professionals, such as social workers or mental health nurses, to receive additional training in therapeutic interventions based on, amongst a range of alternatives, psychoanalysis. As counselling and counselling psychology have proliferated, it is also possible for people to become qualified counsellors, or practising counselling psychologists, who have at least some background in psychoanalysis.

One aspect of the training of people who become psychoanalysts that is replicated in the counselling approaches is the need for the trainee analyst to themselves undergo psychoanalysis. This has led to some critics of psychoanalysts calling psychoanalysis a cult, and for some criticisms of psychoanalysis to be dismissed as worthless because the authors of those criticisms have not themselves undergone analysis. The cult rhetoric, while appealing in terms of its power to undermine another's position, fails when some account is made of the notion that within all professional training, and to some extent academic study, there is a socialisation process. This socialisation process has at its root the need for the trainee, or student, to learn to use the discourses that are professed. At worst, that process is a little more explicit in psychoanalytic training than in other areas of psychological practice.

Finally, this chapter is open to the attack that it is worthless because neither of the authors have been psychoanalysed. The best that can be said in our own defence is that we are not, as has become common in some strands of "Freud criticism", going to use ad hominem attacks and can only hope that the same convention will apply to our writing.

11.2 Early Points of Departure between Psychology and Psychoanalysis

One of the main arguments that is made later is that as the psychology of peoples was altered by the use of discourses from psychoanalysis, so psychology needed to change in order to remain relevant to both its undergraduates and the other consumers of its products. There are, however, some early points of difference between psychology and psychoanalysis that are worth noting before the later dynamic is explored in any depth.

There are differences between Freud's scientific project and Wundt's scientific project to understand psychology. Wundt, as outlined in chapter 1, limited his

natural science project, and Freud, showing a sensitivity towards this, called his project a "meta-psychology". Freud was interested in much more than the immediate contents of the conscious mind, and while he still pursued the notion of a scientific discipline, it was not to be a science based on the model of physics. Rather, it was to be more akin to then current biology based upon systematic observations of the phenomena of interest.

The investigative practice used within psychoanalysis also differed from those available to psychologists. Psychology has at its roots three quite distinct nineteenth-century methodological practices: laboratory studies, where trained observers reported on the contents of consciousness; the clinical experiment, where physicians intervened in patients' psychological processes with hypnosis; and the psychological survey, which used data from a group, or groups, within a population to make claims about individual psychological functioning (Danziger, 1997).

For psychoanalysis, the nineteenth-century medical model of clinical interview and clinical experiment was the method of investigative practice (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Thus, just like in general medicine, an analysand presents with a set of symptoms; the analyst checks these symptoms, using psychological techniques such as free association and dream interpretation rather than physical techniques, and then intervenes. That the domain of the psychoanalyst's office was the centre of both treatment and "data gathering" was again based on the prevailing medical model.

Psychology, especially in the United States, rapidly became a discipline investigating behaviour rather than mind, a development that began before the advent of behaviourism as investigative practices moved away from the Wundtian laboratory (Danziger, 1997). Psychoanalysis retained, and still retains, its focus on the mind. This may be in part why psychoanalysis continues to inform the discourses that people use about the ways that their minds operate in a way that is much more comprehensive than much of psychology.

Ironically, given the use of aggregate data within psychology, its main thrust became a much more individualised discipline than the main thrust of psychoanalysis (Jones & Elcock, 2001). To understand minds, it is necessary to understand minds as cultural products. While psychoanalysis, especially under the sway of its own Americanisation and some aspects of the psychiatric approach in medicine, also suffered from an individualising influence, to a large extent it retained an awareness of the cultural setting, at least when practised in the United States and Europe. Psychoanalysis, like psychology, was not immune to cultural imperialism and (broadly European) ethnocentricity when making claims about people from other cultures. In part due to the continued awareness that minds are products of social and cultural environments, psychoanalysis always had more of a potential for cultural critique than psychology, especially those aspects of psychology that relied on technological control rather than conceptual understanding to validate knowledge claims (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

11.3 Psychoanalysis in the United States

Psychoanalysis itself is, of course, a cultural product, and it is worth examining what happened to psychoanalysis in the United States as a way of examining the relationship between cultures and psychological knowledge. There is a second consideration: it may be that within the United States, with the developing ban on psychoanalysis outside of medicine, there may have been more separation between the disciplines than within Europe, which had a tradition of "lay psychoanalysis".

Freud's writing continued across decades, and while some aspects of his work underwent little revision, the Freud that we are used to was very different from the Freud that gave a series of lectures at Clark University. At this point, he had not formulated his ideas around narcissism or the death instinct, nor had he fully developed his ideas around sexuality. While contemporary reports of his lectures suggest that he was warmly welcomed, there were lacunas; contemporary newspapers that had been following his lectures did not, for example, report on his fourth lecture, when Freud addressed the question of infant sexuality.

There were medical professionals and academics, including psychologists, in the audience, but these were public lectures and the majority of the audience were members of the general public. According to Schirmeister (2004), there were elements of what Freud talked about that would have had resonance with an American audience; one is the notion that every act has sense, and even though that sense, the product of the mind, might be hidden or obscure, it could be made apparent through the process of analysis. Freud in all of his lectures clearly talked from his experience, and this can be seen as deeply resonant with American philosophical traditions in which epistemology is grounded in experience. At the same time, even with these aspects of Freud's early work, there is clear demarcation between Freud's formulations and those found in American cultural products. Within Freudian work experience is just a starting point, and in the third lecture he makes the claim that only those who have practised psychoanalytic techniques can understand it, and therefore understand the experiences of which he was talking. While the idea that products of the mind are meaningful, the exegesis of those products involved an historical process that they may not have been so comfortable with.

In the decades following the lectures, Freud's theories were developed in the cultural context of the upheavals in both Austria and Germany following the First World War. In the United States, the cultural context was different, and psychoanalysis took a different path (Schirmeister, 2004). In the 1920s, the New York Psychoanalytic Society had banned psychoanalysts who were not trained physicians; and by 1938, the American Psychoanalytic Association passed a regulation that membership was to be denied to "lay analysts", and only non-physicians who had trained before that date were to be accepted as members. In the 1930s, with the Great Depression causing loss of income for physicians, some states, for

example California, passed legislation that psychoanalysis was a medical practise and only licensed physicians could practise it. At the same time, in a move designed to lessen the competition of foreigners, the legislature required that to become a licensed physician, one had to not only pass an examination but also complete a year's unpaid internship. This lessened the impact on US psychoanalysis of those who had come to the United States as trained psychoanalysts who were fleeing Nazi Germany.

Strategically, there may have been good reasons for the alliance of psychoanalysis with medicine; in the interwar and immediate post–World War II years, it may well have increased the acceptability of psychoanalysis. Bringing psychoanalysis into the legalistic framework of medicine may also have helped control some quackery and wild analysis. However, as Hale (2001) argues, this militant medicalisation of psychoanalysis was a particularly American phenomenon.

Hale suggests a number of other differences between the United States and Europe, in terms of family structure, with American families being much more centred around the mothers' emotional relations with children, whereas in Germany and Austria the paternalistic tradition with a strong role for the father was much more central. This difference in family structure led at least some of the analysts to suggest that there was a need for understanding American symptomology differently from that of European analysands.

In the United States, psychoanalysis became associated with Hollywood and the broader American media in two ways. Some analysts became like gurus to their more famous clients. In films one might see a portrayal of the psychoanalyst as a hero or villain, with the simplification of the analytic process necessary to fit it into the boundaries of film. In terms of its cultural impact, and therefore its impact on psychology, it is this that possibly had the most profound impact. There were also many popularisations of psychoanalysis in print, reflected in the weariness of some of the reviews of popular psychology of the time.

That Freud had some influence on psychology because of the changes to psychological language appears certain, but his influence on the discipline of psychology is multilayered. Writing shortly after Freud's death, Heidbreder (1940) said that it is in the creation of a terminology and a mythology of mind that Freud influenced psychology, and she suggests,

> It is this obscure relevance to common knowledge that made Freud's teachings credible, though not always acceptable, to the man in the street; and it is in his role as man in the street, not on the basis of his special knowledge, that a psychologist pays attention to Freud. (p.192)

One angle to try to understand the changing influence of Freud is by surveying what introductory textbooks have said about his body of work. Early in the 1900s, Freud's work was barely mentioned. Angell (1908) reacted with scepticism about the way that the popularisation of the concept of unconsciousness had a negative effect. Judd (1917) did not mention Freud, and Bresse (1917) made only two very

brief mentions of Freud. By the 1920s Freud was mentioned more often, but the work, according to Buys (1976), was exceptionally critical of Freud, with regard to not only its scientific standing but also its reliance on notions of the unconsciousness and the sex drive.

By the 1930s treatments of Freud were longer, perhaps reflecting the growing recognition of Freud, and so his theories were dealt with in more depth, although very often the result was a rebuttal of his potions.

While there were a limited number of textbooks in the 1940s, the pattern seems to have been set: an overview of Freud's professional career, an outline of his theoretical work, followed by the now familiar call for a scientific approach to be applied to his observations.

While the 1950s were the decade when what were to become standard critiques of Freud from the work of Skinner (1954), Eysenck (1957), and Dollard and Miller (1950) were established, these did not really impact the textbooks of this decade. However, the treatment of Freud in textbooks continued along the well-established lines that Freud was not scientific and his theories were based on too narrow a perspective. Brown and Gilhousen (1950) claimed that Freudian psychoanalysis was like a mystical cult, in addition having the dangers that psychoanalysis treated abnormal cases to speculate about normal psychological functioning, and that because of its overreliance on theories of the unconsciousness it forgets to treat people as whole human beings, unlike psychology. Some textbooks, however, did praise Freud's "theory of personality" as a separate thing to psychoanalysis, something which continues into the present day.

By the 1960s, lack of scientific rigour became the main focus of attacks on Freud, with some books praising him for being innovative and having an impact, but little else. Kimble and Garmexy (1963) attacked him for basing his theories upon a small collection of neurotic Viennese upper-middle-class women, something that has become almost a mantra of Freud dismissal. Armed now with data from Eysenck (1969), critical commentary could now attack psychoanalysis for its "failure rate" in therapy, while his theoretical speculations could be attacked for not confirming with the Popperian view of science.

Over the intervening decades, the criticisms of Freud have become a little less strident, and there is both a softening of the criticisms of Freud from a scientific perspective and attempts being made to more fully praise his contributions. Gross (2005), on the largest section about Freud in the textbook, on personality, reminds the reader that Freud has been discussed in eight other chapters and then presents an extensive section providing an overview of Freudian psychodynamic theory. In the evaluation section the criticisms are slightly softened by noting that Freud's theory is a complex structure, and while some parts may be rejected or modified other parts may be accepted following hypothesis testing.

There then follows an extensive criticism of Freud's use of case studies, noting how they are often a reconstruction from memory of what happened, and that case studies are generally the "least scientific" of empirical methods used by psychologists. Then, following a discussion of lack of representativeness, the section

ends on a positive note, praising both the hermeneutic strength of his theory and the tremendous impact that Freud had both within and beyond psychology.

Complete Psychology, edited by Graham Davey (2004), has a number of chapters about different areas of psychology written by different authors. Freud is covered in similar depth in two of these chapters, one on historical and conceptual issues by Jones, and the personality chapter by Moore.

Jones, unsurprisingly, talks about the relationship between psychology and psychoanalysis, and in his evaluation of it begins with the idea that psychoanalysis has given many people a way of understanding their own tools for meaning making about their own lives. While Jones does write about why psychoanalysis is seen as unscientific, he ends by noting the difficulties of testing complex theories about complex phenomena.

Moore's evaluation begins by praising Freud for producing the first comprehensive personality theory. The main charge he makes against it is that it was a theory for its time and culture, using a restricted sample of people of that time and culture. He ends, though, with the criticism that Freud's theories are not open to Popperian refutation.

Finally, in Cervone and Pervin (2008), an introductory personality textbook, Freud's work occupies two out of 15 chapters. They state, "Whatever the limits of his work, psychology has benefited from the contributions of Freud whose genius in observing human behavior has rarely been equalled" (p.158), although they do also point out that the theory suffers from poorly defined concepts and problems in testing specific hypotheses.

It may be that psychology, at least as represented by introductory textbooks, has become a little more relaxed about Freud and his legacy; however, the consensus of the treatment appears to be that while some of his ideas were worthwhile, the lack of "scientific validity" remains a problem. This appears to be a recurring motif in how psychology deals with Freud, and in order to further examine this, we will now turn to three case studies of specific instances of how psychology has coped with Freud. Of course, individual authors write about the Freud that best fits with their conception of the academic discipline, whether it is praise or condemnation.

11.4 Psychology Co-opting Psychoanalysis

Outside of the narrow focus of Wundt's natural science, in psychology there had been an interest in the "energy" that lies at the root of human behaviour in the work of William James. In the interwar period, as the focus of academic psychology changed in the United States with the rise of the technology of behaviourism, the discipline lost the vocabulary to talk about these internal forces. At the same time, perhaps paradoxically, in the continuing struggle to be a useful discipline, attention was turning to problems of the management of organisations (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

At the same time there was a surge of interest in psychoanalysis, some of it in the form of "new psychology" in fields such as education and religious studies, and some of it because of the popular accounts of psychoanalysis being written. As today, some of the undergraduates coming to study psychology came with an expectation that the academic discipline would provide material consonant with popular understandings of the discipline. At the same time, the popular framework for understanding psychology became influenced by psychoanalytic discourses, and in order to give an understandable account of human action it became necessary to adopt some of the notions within everyday understandings of psychology (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Psychoanalytic theories were always more than just a theory of motivation, although the way that psychoanalysis would be re-presented within psychology would be just that. With the development of a psychology of motivation, and later a psychology of personality, the discipline could begin to answer some of the questions that it had been neglecting in its focus on the "hows" rather than the "whys" of human psychology (Danziger, 1997). While psychoanalysis undoubtedly has some influence on this change within psychology, it is not the only influence. Within the field of intelligence testing, there had been a growing recognition that intelligence in itself did not provide all of the answers that had been hoped for. Intelligence had become a much narrower concept in the early twentieth century than the terms that had preceded it. Indeed Galton (1869/1962), for example, more systematically used the term "natural ability" rather than intelligence, defined in these terms:

> By natural ability I mean those qualities of intellect and disposition, which urge and qualify a man to perform acts that lead to reputation. I do not mean capacity without zeal, nor zeal without capacity, nor even a combination of both of them, without an adequate power of doing a great deal of very laborious work. (p.77)

Whatever the understanding of intelligence underlying the work of the intelligence tester, it did not include the notions of zeal or of the adequate power to do laborious work. Just as in the case of intelligence, one of the forces driving an interest in a psychology of motivation was education. In business management, the problems of how to motivate staff were being introduced, and so too in the psychology of "salesmanship". While the psychology of motivation has overlapping marketplaces, and is probably multiply determined, the differences and similarities between it and a psychoanalytical framework are instructive (Danziger, 1997).

Throughout the book, we have taken the approach that psychological categories are not natural categories of the types that sciences such as physics investigate. By concentrating on motivation within this chapter, we hope that the notion that psychologists help to create the psychological categories that we use in our everyday reasoning about our own and others' behaviour can be illustrated (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Following Danziger's analysis, it is worth considering the word *motive* itself. While the term has a long history, concentrating upon a single act, the abstract form of motive, *motivation*, and the verb form, *to motivate*, are strikingly absent from the English language prior to the late nineteenth century. Even then, they were not used in the modern sense; according to Danziger (1997), the only references are to the motivation of a turn of events in a novel. Thus, much like *attitude*, the term *motivation* is used to describe an aspect of a work of art rather than something about human beings.

In the twentieth century, there is an explosion in the usage of these two terms, with the notion that all acts are motivated, and that different people have different, general levels of motivation. In less than a century, motivation has changed from an unused category to a part of our cultural commonsense, and motivation is now treated as a natural concept. It is possible to obtain scales that measure an individual's general level of motivation, as well as ask questions about the motivation for a specific event. Questions on "how to motivate" appear only to be asking for a technical description of what qualities are needed to affect individuals, whereas it is only from the 1920s onwards that this question has even been possible. Such a dramatic change in usage needs an explanation. Psychology plays a major role in that explanation. To even study motivation would not have occurred to Wundt – his was not a psychology of everyday experience. By 1936 Young was claiming, "All behavior is motivated." Motivation is one of two categories (personality being the other) that allow psychology as a discipline to claim special and privileged knowledge about the entire range of human behaviour.

In 1928, Troland published the first general textbook with the word *motivation* in the main title. The term became a key word for abstracting services, meaning that interested scholars could find papers on motivation. Introductory psychology textbooks then began adding a chapter on the topic, and as the concept became more common so courses were offered on motivation in undergraduate degrees. Thus in 1936 Young could claim that he modeled his textbook on an undergraduate course, and that such courses were popular at the undergraduate level (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Behind this growth lay several factors. People attracted to the discipline were often drawn by an interest in motives, an interest perhaps fuelled by the popularisation of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic theories of this time did not use the abstract or verb terms of motive, although they did contain a lot of work on the (unconscious) motives that lay behind behaviours. Ironically, given the marketing reasons to potential students behind the move to studying motivation, Freud is only mentioned as a motivational theorist in order that his claims can be dismissed as unscientific (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Having a psychological category of motivation enabled psychology to extend its dominion to topics that otherwise psychoanalysis would have dominated (Danziger, 1997). This, in part, explains the reasons why psychology wants to set itself up as the arbiter of what counts as "proper" (i.e. scientific) psychological explanation. Psychoanalysis and psychology are two disciplines with an obvious boundary dis-

pute. By relying on the rhetoric of science (again, a modernist move), psychology dismisses much of psychoanalysis. However, given the huge cultural impact of psychoanalysis, many of the terms from that discipline have been incorporated (after appropriate gerrymandering) into psychological discourse (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

The expansion and rationalisation of the education system led to the need for a category beyond intelligence to explain differential performance. Despite the early hopes of intelligence testers, there was much that IQ couldn't explain, for example why two people with the same IQ would perform differently. It is no great shock that children do not always want to learn, but with a technology of tests of "motivation" and a group of experts who can help people become "motivated" (or help teachers to motivate pupils), a new market opportunity was created for psychology.

Within the "applied" field of vocational guidance, Folsom called, in 1917, for psychologists to rely less on tests of intellect and more on the psychology of "interests, motives and character". Psychologists were not the only people giving vocational guidance, and psychology was not necessarily a discipline that careers advisors studied. However, a growing interest in the "psychology of salesmanship", with motivation as a category open to psychologists, made it possible to talk about motivating customers to buy specific products. Within industry there were calls (e.g. by Frost in 1920), prompted by high labour turnover, for psychological input to questions of "unwillingness to work" and work satisfaction. One other factor that is worthy of note is the desire for a technology of "social control". In 1923 Perrin made an argument for a psychology of motivation to fill this gap.

There were terms in use before *motivation* that carried at least some of its meanings. For example, the term *conation* was used during the nineteenth century. However, conation suffered from the company it kept, having been invented by an earlier generation of moral and mental philosophers (e.g. Hamilton, 1863). In the 1920s conation was used by McDougall (1920), whose insistence on an instinctive basis won the term no friends within the in-vogue behaviouristic zeitgeist. One of the odder histories to plot is whether naturist or environmental causation is in vogue, as at times both are in vogue in different parts of psychology. However, in the 1920s when psychology was pushing itself as a marketable discipline, behaviouristic environmental causation was posited, so that psychologists could intervene in aspects of human nature.

Conation referred to things (e.g. will and desire) that had in common objects of inner experience. In contrast, motivation abstracted something (e.g. wants and motives) that had commonalities insofar as they were potential objects of manipulation and influence. Of course, psychoanalysis based much of its program on being able to adjust individuals' motives and wants, to help adjust their identity. However, in using the category of motivation, psychology had to bridge the dichotomy between inner experience and what could be measured. Again this can be seen as a direct response to a number of pressures, particularly the need for a meaningful (to clients) vocabulary, the need to displace psychoanalysis, and the need to remain scientific.

The initial resource for this was the metaphor of energy (e.g. James, 1906). The term *drive*, apparently invented by Woodworth (1918), with some links to the neurophysiological studies of Sherrington (1906), was eventually what provided the unifying concept in studies of motivation. By 1954, there was even talk of innate drives responsible for cognitive processes. This is an example of the return to a belief in naturist explanations, coinciding somewhat with the beginning of the end of behaviourism. There is a level of circularity inherent in such explanations – the facts that these drives explain are identical with the facts provided to establish their existence. However, "motivation", being treated as a natural kind, manages to steer an interesting course as an explanation, apparently managing to rescue itself from naturalist explanations, which were out of vogue in the 1920s and 1930s United States (Danziger, 1997).

In a final break from Freudian theory, psychology developed a theory of motivation that did not invoke the idea of biological drives. In 1938 Murray, head of the Harvard Psychological Clinic, compiled a list of human "needs". These needs differed from drives because the biological mechanism was dropped. This would matter little if researchers had not posited these needs as universal features of the human condition, rather than as culturally specific objects. However, what happened instead is that a set of in-vogue cultural assumptions become reified as they were used as names of hypothetical forces within the person. These forces were supposedly responsible for producing all actions that could be given the corresponding label (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

The effects of this are threefold (whether instinct, drive, or basic need is used). These notions act as cultural apologetics; they continue the idea that reasons for human conduct are rooted in the individual rather than in particular social situations; and they allow motivation to continue as a field. What is also ironic is that for a field that claimed to investigate the why of human behaviour, only one type of why was ever seen as acceptable.

The treatment of psychoanalysis by psychologists interested in motivation illustrates just how complex, and vexing, the relationship between the two domains can be. One interest within psychoanalysis is what motivates behaviour, and as we have endeavoured to show, this is a very different enterprise from a theory of general motivation. Yet by co-opting psychoanalytic accounts as if they were providing theories of motivation, it is possible for psychologists to judge them, most often as lacking, by the standards of psychology. At the same time, by using an historical analysis we can question, and possibly undermine, the knowledge claims of psychology. There is a tautology at the heart of motivation theories that has been recognised, in some contexts, since the heyday of instinct theories. The use of aggregate measures to predict lawful regularities in individual behaviour has to some extent disguised this tautology, as has the limited appreciation of operational analysis that is part of the "scientific" method of psychology (Jones & Elcock, 2001). This epistemological and ontological problem continues to haunt at least some aspects of modern psychology. In

addition, the concept of motivation plays a role in personality theory similar to the unconscious mind in psychoanalytic theory, but in a much more individualistic fashion. Motivation theories have as their root metaphor an energy system, just as with psychoanalytic theories about the unconscious mind. However, in psychology if one fails in a task that is within one's intellectual and/or physical capacity, it is because one is lacking in motivation. The root cause of the failure is the individual, rather than the system of relationships that one is working within and the past experiences that one has had.

At the same time, we must recognise the pragmatic success that this manoeuvring by psychology has had. It allowed for an extension of the domains of human experience that the discipline can claim expertise over, and in applications in sports and occupational psychology it has provided professional psychologists with gainful employment.

11.5 Competition and Clinical Practise

In turning to clinical practice we find the site of both fierce attacks on psychoanalysis and co-operation between psychologists and psychoanalysts. The sites have different historical and geographic localities, and in looking at both it is instructive to examine the different constructions of psychoanalysis that were employed.

One of the fiercest critics of psychoanalysis was Hans J. Eysenck (see Eysenck, 1986). Eysenck was director of the Maudsley Clinic, and developed a theory of personality that arose out of clinical practice. Eysenck's personality theory, encapsulated within measurements along three axes in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, allows for a quantified description of personality. The EPQ was developed on statistical grounds in order to distinguish between "normal" people and those suffering from an "abnormal" personality, and through the use of factor analysis it allowed for an exact numerical description. However, it suffers from the usual problem of validity of such measures. There is a continuing argument over the "correct" factor description to use (three, five, or 16 factors in the current literature), which comes about because within factor analysis, choice of factors is ultimately a judgement call, not a statistical certainty (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

At the same time as developing this instrument, and the attendant theory of personality, Eysenck (1986) attacked psychoanalysis in terms of its efficacy rate – how many people treated with psychoanalysis got "better". In terms of altering symptoms so that the person becomes normal, this has long been a "weakness" of psychoanalysis. Part of the reason was Freud's vision of the goal of the therapeutic use of psychoanalysis. For example, writing in 1917 Freud states that the final result of psychoanalysis is that the patient "has rather less that is unconscious and rather more that is conscious in him than he had before". Freud's

vision of psychoanalysis was never about "normalising" the patient and was not to acquiesce to the

> [d]emand that the person who has been "thoroughly analysed" shall never again feel the stirring of passion in himself or become involved in any internal conflict. The business of psychoanalysis is to secure the best possible psychological conditions for the functioning of the ego; when this has been done, analysis has completed its task. (Freud, 1937, p.354)

This pessimistic view of analysis, allied with a view that an unhealthy civilisation will inevitably result in people having neuroses, are both reasons why psychoanalysis contains within it the potential for subversion and leads to a question, in a clinical context, of what psychoanalysis is actually for. (Given the wide variety of schools of psychoanalysis, this vision does not permeate all of them, while some of them take it even further.) The purpose of clinical psychological intervention, however, as part of the larger psychiatric framework, is normalisation of the individual, that is, removing symptoms and thereby adjusting the patient to behaviours that are expected from them within a given society (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

Much of this is a difference in moral visions of the role of the therapist; however, once the question becomes framed within the moral vision of normalisation, and the question is answered in terms of how many get better, then psychoanalysis is bound to fail. That psychoanalysis, as a tool of personal exploration, retains its appeal is probably because, to paraphrase Richards (2010), knowing one's score on the EPI, 16PF, or whatever will never give the same amount of insight as understanding one's unconsciousness a little better.

The goal here has been to show how psychology has set itself up as the ultimate court in ruling which approaches to understanding psychology count. It is questionable whether the discipline has yet earned the right to do so, and whether or not to do so should be a goal of psychology.

11.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to show just how complex the relationship between psychoanalysis and psychology has been. Even during the time frame when many psychologists were advocating a complete rejection of unobservable mental phenomena, concepts and notions derived from psychoanalysis still came into the discipline of psychology. Often these imports were disguised, and ironically psychology became an arena that both borrowed from psychoanalysis and ruled that psychoanalysis was not scientific enough. Outright competition between the disciplines appears to have been more likely when professional boundaries were at stake, while a limited cooperation was plausible when examining some social and cultural phenomena.

Finally, both psychoanalysis and psychology are cultural products; the nature of psychoanalysis in the United States was quite different from that in Europe, at least

prior to World War II. Possibly as a part of its move to within the medical establishment, it became more concerned with treating symptoms rather than exploring the subconsciousness for its own sake. Perhaps it was this emphasis that later gave ammunition to those who wished to dismiss psychoanalysis as unsuccessful at doing just that.

Marie Jahoda, writing in *Freud and the Dilemmas of Psychology*, noted that Freud did not enjoy an assured place in the history of psychology. Perhaps today he does, but it is as a straw man to be attacked. She suspected that this might be because the logical positivists judged that psychoanalysis could not be a science. Psychologists may thus wish to distance themselves from psychoanalysis, which also claims to be a science, because of the controversy over its scientific status. However, given the identification of psychoanalysis with Freud, and writing 30 years later after much critical work about Freud, it is probably true that the suspicions that psychologists feel about psychoanalysis are overdetermined. It may also be that we have internalised these suspicions to such a point that it is difficult for us to conceive of alternative ways of appreciating psychoanalysis. However, there is no doubt that psychoanalysis has profoundly affected the discourses that we may use about our own minds; and whatever its limitations, it has thus profoundly affected psychology.

Self-test Questions

1. What elements make up the dynamic subconscious according to Freud?
2. Which psychologist first popularised the notion of motivation?
3. Which profession did psychoanalysts join in the United States?
4. What model of science did Freud use?
5. Where did Freud first speak in the United States?
6. According to Freud, what are the points of carrying out psychoanalysis with clients?
7. According to Eysenck, why was psychoanalysis a failure as a treatment?
8. When he first created his personality questionnaire, who did Eysenck use as a population to study?
9. What criticisms do psychologists make of the population Freud initially studied?
10. How did Freud's work change many people?

Thinking Points

1. Why does academic psychology rarely acknowledge the influence of Freud?
2. In what ways did American psychoanalysis diverge from European psychoanalysis?
3. How do concepts from Freud get integrated into some aspects of discourse analysis?

Further Reading

Danziger, K. (1997). *Naming the mind: How psychology found its language*. London: Sage.

This book's chapter on motivation is influential on the analysis presented here, and Danziger's careful analysis of the language of psychology helps in understanding how the concepts of psychology differ from those of natural science.

Frosh, S. (1999). *The politics of psychoanalysis*. London: MacMillan.

This is a very readable book that looks at the relationship between social structures and individuality. Frosh's approach can be polemic in places, but it is a thorough and masterful exploration of aspects of psychoanalytic theory and their application to wider political questions.

12 Parapsychology

Jonathan Elcock

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Gain introductory knowledge about the scope of parapsychology.
- Understand the criticisms of parapsychology from mainstream psychology.
- Gain an insight into meta-analysis and how it may help summarise multiple studies.
- Appreciate how qualitative methods may provide some insights into what happens during a session with a medium.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

In this chapter, we are going to discuss parapsychology and anomalistic psychology. *Parapsychology* can be defined as the scientific study of the capacity attributed to some individuals to interact with their environment by means other than the recognised sensorimotor channels. Anomalistic psychology is the study of bizarre and extraordinary experiences that people may have had, attempting to explain the anomalies through investigating paranormal explanations. We will begin by discussing the current appeal of paranormal phenomena and then we will investigate the history of research into the paranormal, before discussing the types of study that take place today. Some consideration of anomalistic phenomena will enable us to discuss wider paranormal phenomena and the types of processes that may lead to some of the experiences, and why people may believe in the paranormal. Finally we will consider what might count as evidence of parapsychology and why we should be wary of findings that only appear in one laboratory or rely on the detection of very small effect sizes.

By the end of this chapter, we hope that as well as learning about some of the ways that phenomena like ghost sightings may be accountable for in terms of natural processes, you will also learn to utilise your skills as critical thinkers to question your own beliefs. It is hoped that you will be able to extend the arguments about the characteristics of good science to psychology studies as well as parapsychology studies.

12.1 What Is the Paranormal?

Goode (2000) argues that we can distinguish between the paranormal and pseudo-science, although there is some overlap between the two. For example, he argues, thinking that Big Foot, the Abominable Snowman, or the Loch Ness

Activity Box 12.1 What Do You Believe In?

Before you read this chapter, think about your own beliefs. Which of the following do you believe in?

Telepathy
Being able to predict the future
The existence of ghosts
Being able to see into remote locations
Being able to affect other people's bodies with your mind
Being able to move things with your mind

Have you any personal experience of any of these phenomena?

monster exist is an example of pseudo-science, but not the paranormal. There are conceivable scientific mechanisms that could explain them. However, the majority of scientists are unconvinced that the evidence for them is strong enough to believe in them, whereas proponents of the beliefs argue that the evidence does exist. Even if strong evidence did exist, however, it would not overthrow our understanding of biology.

Goode suggests that Creationism is an example that is both pseudo-scientific and paranormal. Modern biology has as its foundation the idea of evolution by natural selection, and Creationism seeks to overthrow those ideas. At the same time, most scientists would argue against the types of evidence that Creationists cite in support of their views, thus making it also pseudo-scientific.

Parapsychology in contrast uses accepted scientific procedures to try to gather evidence about phenomena that are paranormal. While popular representations of parapsychologists may have blurred the distinction, many parapsychologists hold a PhD (often in psychology or physics), publish in peer-reviewed journals, hold scientific meetings, and are methodologically rigorous. The term was first introduced into the English language by Rhine in the late 1920s in an attempt to distinguish between experimental investigations into psychic phenomena, as opposed to doing case study research on, for example, localities reputed to be haunted. We shall return to a fuller discussion of what parapsychologists do later in the chapter, although the distinction may no longer be so relevant.

Goode (2000) continues his argument by contrasting paranormalism, as a belief in explanations beyond the scientific, and scientism. As a social constructionist, he does not attempt to classify one set of beliefs as more valid than another but rather attempts to explain how the belief structures operate. He also notes that scientism is the hegemonic viewpoint, that is, many of our cultural institutions and practises use scientific modes of explanation, and rely upon appeals to science to justify practise. Many people who put arguments in favour of the existence of paranormal phenomena do so in a direct opposition to science, although that does not apply to the majority of parapsychologists.

12.1.1 The appeal of paranormal beliefs

In 2005, Gallup conducted representative telephone interviews in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, comparing cross-national data on five paranormal beliefs; results can be seen in Table 12.1. The US poll investigated a wide range of paranormal beliefs, in addition to ESP, telepathy, ghosts, clairvoyance, reincarnation, and channelling. They found that 73% of their respondents believed in at least one of these paranormal beliefs.

One should be cautious in how these data are treated, but as Goode (2000) noted about a similar 1996 survey, there are two features of note: just how widespread such beliefs are across the population as a whole, and that all of these assertions contradict the way that scientists argue the universe works.

Table 12.1 Cross-National Paranormal Beliefs

	United Kingdom	*United States*	*Canada*
That houses can be haunted	40%	37%	28%
Astrology	25%	25%	25%
That extraterrestrial beings have visited the earth at sometime past	19%	24%	21%
That people can hear from or communicate mentally with someone who has died	27%	21%	24%
Witches	13%	13%	21%

Source: Data from three separate polls, carried out by Gallup UK, Gallup USA, and Gallup Canada by telephone interview. Maximum margin of sampling error is ±3 percentage points (95% confidence interval).

One possible influence on paranormal beliefs is the way that the paranormal is presented in popular media. In the United Kingdom, *Most Haunted* is a popularising of ghost investigations. According to an Ofcom ruling in 2005, the show contains

> a high degree of showmanship that puts it beyond what we believe to be a generally accepted understanding of what comprises a legitimate investigation.
>
> As such this programme should be seen in the light of shows where techniques are used which mean the audience is not necessarily in full possession of the facts.

However, it is difficult to judge how much of its audience knows what an investigation into a purported haunting normally consists of, and in the wake of the success of *Most Haunted*, there have been numerous copycat shows from other networks that follow the same general pattern. While ghost walks have been a modest tourist attraction in some United Kingdom towns and cities, and many country pubs and hotels claim to be haunted, there is a growing industry charging for participation in ghost investigations that follows the same pattern as *Most Haunted*.

Unsurprisingly, paranormal or purported paranormal activity has been the focus of many popular television dramas, films, and books. These clearly fictional entertainment shows, including in recent years the *X-Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Heroes*, as well as less successful shows with similar themes, are unlikely to have much influence on the prevalence of paranormal beliefs.

However, sometimes a show claims to have its roots in a true life story. In the publicity material for *Medium*, the claim was made several times that the show is rooted in the real-life adventures of a psychic who has worked extensively with the police, something denied by the police force she was supposed to have worked with.

This blurring of entertainment shows and factual, or fact-based, shows may be worrisome; certainly a number of sceptic websites have reported on "fakery" in *Most Haunted*, whereas an entertainment show would surely be known to be faked.

12.2 Historical Survey of the Paranormal

In framing paranormalism as a belief system that sits in contradiction to the hegemonic, there is little point in tracing the history of beliefs about phenomena that we would now label as paranormal. There is, however, no particular date that marks when scientism became hegemonic; although Goode makes a compelling argument in favour of the late nineteenth century, this section will begin slightly earlier with mesmerism in the late eighteenth century.

Mesmer claimed that some illnesses arose from the disruption of the normal flow of an invisible universal fluid, which he called *magnétisme animal*, which although normally translated as animal magnetism might better be understood as derived from the Latin *animus*, meaning life force. He maintained in his dissertation

> that the sun, moon, and fixed stars mutually affect each other in their orbits; that they cause and direct in our earth a flux and reflux not only in the sea, but in the atmosphere, and affect in a similar manner all organized bodies through the medium of a subtle and mobile fluid, which pervades the universe and associates all things together in mutual intercourse and harmony. (MacKay, 1841)

A well-trained physician could learn to locate the blocks (those causing the disruption of the flow of the fluid) and by touch, massage, and so on remove the blocks and rechannel animal magnetism through the body, thereby curing the patient (Buranelli, 1975; Gauld, 1992). Mesmer set up a Magnetic Institute and found that he could "magnetize" objects with animal magnetism and these could be used to cure his clients, which rather fortuitously enabled him to offer his services to many more people (Gallo & Finger, 2000; Pattie, 1994). The success of this treatment was well documented and led to its immense popularity in the late eighteenth century.

The scandal which followed Mesmer's unsuccessful attempt to treat the blindness of an 18-year-old musician, Maria Theresia Paradis, led him to leave Vienna in 1777. The following year Mesmer moved to Paris, rented an apartment in a part of the city preferred by the wealthy and powerful, and established a medical practice. Paris soon divided into those who thought he was a charlatan who had been forced to flee from Vienna and those who thought he had made a great discovery.

Consequently, in 1784, King Louis XVI of France established a Royal Commission, chaired by Benjamin Franklin and consisting of such luminaries as Antoine Lavoisier (the father of modern chemistry) to investigate mesmerism (Gould, 1991). The noted natural historian Stephen Jay Gould has heralded the testing and discrediting of Mesmer as one of the earliest and an exemplary instance in which the scientific method was used to expose pseudo-science and charlatanism (Gould, 1989). The Royal Commission designed a number of experiments to test the existence of animal magnetism and irrefutably showed that Mesmer's theory was not valid, in that the existence of the fluid and its flow

was not proved (Pattie, 1994). Some of the experiments involved the patients being split into two groups, with one group coming into contact with "magnetized" objects and the other group coming into contact with placebos (what they believed were "magnetized" objects), so as to test if their reactions ("crises") were due to the treatment or due to the powers of suggestion. This enabled the Royal Commission to demonstrate that the cure did not occur through the treatment-specific ingredients.

It is difficult to know whether or not Mesmer was a charlatan. While he clearly believed in the power of *magnétisme animal*, his public displays of his magnetic cure were often carried out with great drama, with Mesmer waving magnets, while his patients sat with their feet in magnetized water, despite his belief that it was the physician who was directing the *magnétisme animal*. The commissioners acknowledged the effects of Mesmer's treatment: "It is impossible not to recognize in these regular effects an extraordinary influence acting upon the patients, making itself master of them, and of which he who super-intends the process appears to be the depositary" (Walmsley, 1967, p.134; see also Franklin, Lavoisier, Bailly, and Guillotin, 1784/1996). However, there was no evidence that it was the *magnétisme animal* contained in objects that was creating the effect; and hence the mechanism itself was a fraud.

12.2.1 The rise of spiritualism

The rise of spiritualism is important to our focus because part of the reaction to it at the time was the foundation of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). The SPR remains as one of the important organisations in parapsychology (and wider issues of paranormal phenomena) today. Inglis (1985) notes that the Fox sisters and Daniel Dunglas Home are particularly important in the creation of spiritual mediumship.

The three Fox sisters were Katherine (known as Kate; circa 1836–1892), Leah (circa 1811–1890), and Margaret (circa 1833–1893). Katherine and Margaret were to become known as mediums, people who can according to the spiritualists be agents able to bridge the gap between the living and the dead. Leah was initially their manager, but later became a sought-after medium in her own right.

In her retracted confession, Margaret explains how she, then 15, and her younger sister Kate, then 12, began by playing pranks on her mother to convince her the house was haunted. This culminated in a performance for her mother in which the girls used a series of raps to answer their mother's questions. At that point, Mrs Fox asked the sisters if she could call in the neighbours to hear the rapping; and after one neighbour was convinced, a performance for a group of neighbours was arranged for the next night. It was at this gathering that one of the spectators suggested a code so that the rappings could more easily be understood, and a variation on this technique was used by the sisters in future.

Rumours about the alleged haunting at Hydesville continued to spread throughout the countryside, and before long the Fox farmhouse was overrun

with visitors who lingered until nightfall, when Maggie and Katy again felt compelled to serve as mediums for the spirits. Inevitably, the tales of their séances elevated the girls to a new status. Some of their neighbours now regarded them with awe, as divinely inspired individuals chosen to interpret messages from the dead – an attitude that may have contributed to Maggie and Katy's continued reluctance to confess to the prank.

In contrast, a restive group of locals treated the girls with contempt, convinced that they were either tricksters or witches. Emotions ran so high in their nearby Methodist Episcopal church that ultimately the minister asked the Fox family to leave the congregation. In his view, the girls had engaged in unholy practices and their parents must be held accountable. Shortly thereafter, an attorney, E. E. Lewis of nearby Canandaigua, visited Hydesville to investigate. Losing no time, he questioned the neighbours, interviewed former tenants of the farmhouse, and asked the elder Foxes to describe the events in their own words. By late May 1848, Lewis published a pamphlet titled *A Report of the Mysterious Noises Heard in the House of John D. Fox, in Hydesville, Arcadia, Wayne County*. The report was read by the older Leah Fox, then 33, and she visited the family home.

After learning of how the younger sisters created the rapping, Leah began to use her sisters' talents at first for more demonstrations to invited guests, but later at larger demonstrations in the largest auditorium in Rochester. What, according to the retracted confession, had begun as a prank on their mother had turned into a business.

By the 1840s, American preoccupation with death was widespread. The nation's new cities were expanding, its immigration was at an all-time high, and its factories and ports were booming, all of which contributed to urban overcrowding and poor sanitation, which spawned epidemics of cholera, whooping cough, influenza, and diphtheria. The mortality rate was on the rise. Nearly one third of all city-born infants died before reaching their first birthday, and young mothers – bearing an average of five children each – were often fatally struck with puerperal fever. Death thus touched all families, leaving behind millions of relatives with memories of the dead.

Simultaneously, prosperity born of the United States' urbanization and expanding economy flooded the marketplace with factory-spun textiles, dishes, and furniture, prompting a new hope and materialism. In such an atmosphere, traditional religions like Calvinism, with its punitive doctrine of original sin, no longer seemed relevant.

Spiritualism, as a benevolent force which allowed people to communicate with their dead, through a series of raps which rapidly became known as *spiritual telegraph*, caught the spirit of the times. Other mediums followed in the Fox sisters' wake, some who gave more exuberant demonstrations of their powers, and, with the sitters for a private séance sat round a table, often the whole table would tip or turn.

In the United Kingdom, urbanisation had also created the conditions that led to death touching many families, and in 1850s table turning, or table tipping, had become a fad in itself that acted as the prelude to mediumship in this country.

Daniel Home, who later added the middle name Dunglass, became according to Inglis (1985) the dominant figure in UK spiritualism in the 1850s–1870s. Dunglass's displays included raps and tilting tables, but also music from instruments placed some distance from him. Proponents of spiritualism claim that Home was never demonstrated to be a fake, while Home debunked some mediums who included demonstrations of so-called ectoplasm. More sceptical sources point out how Home never allowed himself to be tested under controlled conditions. By the 1880s, such was the controversy about claims that a society was created to investigate it.

12.2.2 The society for psychical research

Founded in 1882 in Great Britain, this was the first society dedicated to studying "that large body of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmerise, psychical and 'spiritualistic' " (Gauld, 1968, p.137). Amongst the well-regarded scholars who were early members include Henry Sidgwick, the professor of moral philosophy at the University of Cambridge; physicists William Barret and Lord Rayleigh; Arthur Balfour, later to be prime minister; Gerald Balfour; and Eleanor Sidgwick, mathematician and later to be principal of Newham College Cambridge.

Early volumes of the *Journal of Society for Psychical Research* show a Herculean effort to track down potential evidence of paranormal activity. However, much of the time they were dealing with what we would now call *anecdotal evidence*, and as time continued members began to express doubts whether this was the way forward.

With time, tensions began to show themselves in the SPR, between those who would prefer to work under controlled conditions to test claims of, for example, psychic ability, and those who were more interested in fieldwork. To some extent, those tensions have never been fully resolved. The organisation has, however, survived, and is still one of the main resources for any investigator interested in the paranormal.

12.2.3 J. B. Rhine

Rhine is famous within parapsychology for beginning a systematic laboratory-based research programme into phenomena such as telepathy. Rhine had completed a master's degree and PhD in botany before he enrolled at Harvard to study for a year under Professor William McDougall. In 1927 he moved to Duke University to work under McDougall, and he remained at Duke for the rest of his career, popularising a laboratory-based approach to studying the paranormal. During this time, he adapted the term *parapsychology* into the English language from the German term introduced by Max Dessoir as well as conducted a number of studies on people who scored exceptionally well using the procedure that is most highly associated with him, using Zenner-type cards to test telepathy.

As discussed below, the use of Zenner cards has fallen out of favour, due to the artificiality of the task compared with anecdotal reports of telepathy. In 1974 Rhine published the paper "Security versus Deception in Parapsychology" in the journal he had founded, *Parapsychology*, detailing 12 cases of fraud that he had detected in the period 1940–1950; however, Rhine refused to name the participants in his studies who had committed fraud, leading to a cloud of suspicion falling on many of those working in the area. Hansen (1990) notes that there are several ways in which fraud and trickery can be introduced into the procedures using Zenner-type cards, and as a deck of 25 cards is normally used without replacement, card counting can also be used to improve hits during a run.

Rhine's legacy is impressive, and the fact that critical discussion of the procedure that he made famous has led to studies using the ganzfeld procedure is an important part of that legacy.

12.3 Examples of Parapsychology Research

12.3.1 Ganzfeld and autoganzfeld studies

Potentially the most fruitful studies in laboratory-based parapsychology have been studies on possible telepathy using the ganzfeld, and latterly the autoganzfeld, procedures. In this section, we will describe how these studies work and investigate the results of these studies. This will involve looking at meta-analysis, a statistical technique for combining the results of several studies that may allow parapsychologists, along with careful control of laboratory conditions, to establish evidence in favour of one *psi* variable.

The ganzfeld procedure grew out of concerns about the classic work of Rhine using Zenner cards explored above. According to Bem and Honorton (1994), researchers in the field had become dissatisfied with the repetitive forced-choice procedure, noting that it failed to capture important aspects of reports of real-life telepathy. According to Bem and Honorton, by reducing ordinary sensory input, *psi*-conducive states are presumed to raise the signal-to-noise ratio, thereby enhancing a person's ability to detect the *psi*-mediated information (Honorton, 1969, 1977). The ganzfeld originally introduced into experimental psychology during the 1930s to test propositions derived from gestalt theory (Avant, 1965; Metzger, 1930) does reduce ordinary sensory input. As an added benefit, the experimental control of the research uses more elaborate safeguards, thus eliminating possible contamination of the results by accidental, or otherwise, experimenter influence.

> The receiver is placed in a reclining chair in an acoustically isolated room. Translucent ping-pong ball halves are taped over the eyes and headphones are placed over the ears; a red floodlight directed toward the eyes produces an undifferentiated visual field, and white noise played through the headphones produces an analogous auditory field. It is this homogeneous perceptual environment that is called the Ganzfeld ("total field"). To reduce internal somatic "noise," the receiver typically also undergoes a series of progressive

> relaxation exercises at the beginning of the ganzfeld period. The sender is sequestered in a separate acoustically isolated room, and a visual stimulus (art print, photograph, or brief videotaped sequence) is randomly selected from a large pool of such stimuli to serve as the target for the session. While the sender concentrates on the target, the receiver provides a continuous verbal report of his or her ongoing imagery and mentation, usually for about 30 minutes. At the completion of the ganzfeld period, the receiver is presented with several stimuli (usually four) and, without knowing which stimulus was the target, is asked to rate the degree to which each matches the imagery and mentation experienced during the ganzfeld period. If the receiver assigns the highest rating to the target stimulus, it is scored as a "hit." (Bem & Honorton, 1994, pp.5–6)

Hit rate over a series of studies is the result that is more commonly used to determine if a *psi* effect has occurred, although it is also possible to analyze the similarity ratings, and even for independent judges to assignment similarity ratings based on the transcript material.

Ideally the study also involves two experimenters, the one with the receiver also being blind to the stimulus material chosen and a careful randomisation procedure from the pool of available images so that there is no influence on the final result because of the decoy and target images chosen.

Following debate between Honorton and Hyman in the mid-1980s, initiated because of contradictory results in meta-analyses published by both authors, a joint communiqué was issued by them, agreeing that while they could not reach an accord about all of the studies in the database, there was still an effect that could not be explained; however, psi may not be the explanation.

> We agree that there is an overall significant effect in this data base that cannot reasonably be explained by selective reporting or multiple analysis. We continue to differ over the degree to which the effect constitutes evidence for psi, but we agree that the final verdict awaits the outcome of future experiments conducted by a broader range of investigators and according to more stringent standards. (Hyman & Honorton, 1986, p.351)

The Bem and Honorton (1994) paper then reports a set of studies carried out by Honorton that attempted to reach those more stringent standards. Overall, with 240 participants and 329 trials, they reached a hit rate of 32%.

The findings from Bem and Honorton (1994) are impressive and important; even though they acknowledge that there is a need for replication across other laboratories, in all other ways the studies meet the criteria for stringent and carefully carried out studies that eliminate the possibility that the experimenter can cue the participant as to the correct answer. The effect size across these studies is certainly one that would be taken seriously in other branches of psychology, and smaller effect sizes can be taken very seriously indeed when they fit in with pre-existing assumptions. Of course, the lack of an agreed mechanism for telepathy does mean that we should treat the results with due caution before replication, but the results are strongly suggestive.

Milton and Wiseman (1999) made an attempt to examine whether the Bem and Honorton (1994) results had been replicated. They conducted their meta-analysis on 30 studies that had been conducted since 1987 (a year after the guidelines on improving the ganzfeld procedure) and reported in journals by February 1997. This led to 30 studies being retrieved, published in 14 different papers, and representing 10 different principal authors and 7 different laboratories. While there is some lack of conformity in precisely how the studies were carried out, Milton and Wiseman adopted the procedures recommended by Bem and Honorton (1994) in producing a meta-analysis. The results of the meta-analysis are, however, disappointing: "The new ganzfeld studies show a near-zero effect size and a statistically nonsignificant overall cumulation" (Milton & Wiseman, 1999, p.390).

In 2001 Storm and Ertel published a meta-analysis of 79 studies, including studies conducted before 1987, and this meta-analysis does show a statistically significant cumulative effect. Milton and Wiseman (2001) in their reply to this article point out the difficulties in using data from before 1987 due to the documented evidence that at least some of these studies did suffer from methodological weaknesses.

In examining these papers there is an important general lesson for meta-analysis; it does nothing to put right data collection procedures that are originally flawed. When one reads the literature by date of publication, there is an excitement that this may be a genuine phenomenon, but the sober analysis of Milton and Wiseman confounds that possibility.

12.4 Other Responses from Psychology

12.4.1 Conversation analysis

Robin Wooffitt has published widely using conversation analysis techniques to analyse naturally occurring speech. Conversation analysis as a technique has its roots within the broad field of ethnomethodology, and is often traced to the work of Harvey Sacks (Stainton Rogers, 2003). Within conversation analysis the focus is on what people do with their words, and what they seek to achieve in the way that they talk. In this section we will give an overview of two of Wooffitt's papers, one analysing the tape recorded "mentation reviews" from ganzfeld experiments, the other analysing mediums.

During the sending–receiving phase of a ganzfeld study, the participant provides a running commentary, a mentation, of the imagery that they experience. During the mentation review, the experimenter confirms with the participant what they experienced from their notes and gives the participant an opportunity to confirm, clarify, or expand upon the reports of their imagery.

Wooffitt frameworks the research with the work of Orne, who in 1962 described the demand characteristics which he felt may affect the psychology experiment, effectively damaging the ecological validity of the laboratory experiment and

providing an insight into the social psychology of the psychology experiment. Demand characteristics have been investigated subsequently, but according to Wooffitt (2007) there has been little systematic work on the language used during laboratory experiments, which Orne suggested may be an important source of demand characteristics. In the analysis that Wooffitt presents, the procedure used is similar to the autoganzfeld studies discussed above. The experimenter in the room has no knowledge of the exact stimulus material used during the trial, thus making any effect more likely to be a demand characteristic rather than an experimenter effect, where an experimenter may tacitly or unselfconsciously influences the outcome of the procedure. This in itself was one of the reasons why the Hyman and Honorton (1986) joint communiqué recommended several ways of tightening up of procedures during the ganzfeld study.

Wooffitt's work investigates how the interaction itself might lead to changes in the way that the participants respond, even when the investigator does not know what image the participant is saying. In the analysis, Wooffitt (2007) explores the different ways that the participant responds to *OK* and *mhm*. While *OK* and *mhm* both appear to be ways to just acknowledge that something has been heard, Wooffitt's analysis makes it clear that in the case of this laboratory interaction, the participant acts differently depending upon which one has been used. In subsequent speech the participant demonstrates more uncertainty when *mhm* has been used. Unfortunately, Wooffitt did not have access to the data on which video clips participants had chosen or their confidence levels, and so is unable to state whether participants had the right answer, although to some extent that is unimportant for conversation analysis, where matters of truth and certainty are seen as conversational achievements.

While Wooffitt's data are relevant to this precise situation, it may be interested to consider how the sequence of interaction in other forms of laboratory studies within psychology may also play a role in how the participant acts, thus confirming or disconfirming Orne's broad concerns about demand characteristics. However, more widely in psychology the routine interactions between participants and experimenters are not recorded and so we do not have access to such a rich corpus of material that Wooffitt had for the ganzfeld procedure.

In Wooffitt (2001), conversation analysis is deployed on a corpus of material comprising 31 recordings of mediums, involving 21 different psychic practitioners and 25 different sitters, or clients of the mediums. Wooffitt frameworks this research with a more general concern of how speakers implicitly, or explicitly invoke the relevance to the ongoing interaction of a purported cognitive event. Wooffitt is careful to point out how a conversation analysis of such interactions does not provide evidence about the assumed cognitive event, but rather how such references are made meaningful through interaction. In the analysis of the interactions between mediums and sitters Wooffitt continues this careful agnosticism towards the supernatural cognitions of the mediums, and distances his analysis from the claims of authors such as Hyman and Roe that psychics engage in various cold-reading strategies to elicit information from sitters.

Wooffitt's analysis shows that very often the sequence of conversation in which the psychic claims that they have knowledge from a supernatural source takes three turns:

> T1 Psychic: a question embodying a claim about, or knowledge of, the sitter, their circumstances, etc.
>
> T2 Sitter: minimal confirmation/acceptance
>
> T3 Psychic: demonstration that the information embodied in the question has come from a paranormal source (Wooffitt, 2001, p.551)

However, this sequence can be disrupted if the sitter treats the first comment as a request for further information, and so rather than just a minimal confirmation the sitter gives much more information. Wooffitt demonstrates how psychics often just seek out minimal confirmation from the sitter before moving on to another turn in which they reveal that they got the information from a paranormal source.

Wooffitt's work is not inherently sceptical about claims either from parapsychology laboratories or by mediums; in common with other conversation analysts, he maintains a studied agnosticism to the topic at hand. Wooffitt's work does reflect back on mainstream psychology; the active creation of the participants' role in the laboratory experiment applies just as much to psychology as parapsychology. The notion that cognition is achieved through conversation applies just as much to cognitions assumed to be from natural sources as those from supernatural sources. Other responses to phenomena studied within parapsychology have been rooted in scepticism.

12.4.2 Anomalistic psychology

In his 2001 article for *The Psychologist*, "Why I Study Anomalistic Psychology", Christopher French presents a number of arguments for why it is important for psychologists to take paranormal claims seriously enough to study them, even though the aim of the study is to provide natural explanations for these events. He begins by giving a case study of a worried student who had various terrifying experiences over the course of 20 years. Her experiences fitted with what we know about sleep paralysis, and she was very relieved that what was happening to her had a natural explanation.

While French (2001) states that anomalistic psychology takes as its working hypothesis that paranormal forces do not exist, he argues that it is necessary to retain an open mind to the possibility that there may be evidence that they do, and to come to conclusions based on evidence rather than the overly quick dismissal of parapsychology that he claims some sceptics come to use.

In recent papers, French along with co-authors have argued that we should treat with caution stories that people tell of the paranormal, pointing to evidence about the unreliability of memory that has come, for example, from eye witness testimony

research and research into how pre-existing biases can affect how information is both received and retained.

12.4.3 Critical thinking and the paranormal

Another place where students may encounter the paranormal is on elements of courses that teach critical thinking. For example, Halpern (1998) uses the figures cited earlier on the belief in the paranormal to highlight the incorrect beliefs that people may have. There is no doubt that this treatment of the paranormal within psychology is very sceptical of claims that any phenomena not explicable by current natural explanations exist.

The treatment of the paranormal in much of the critical thinking literature is very often about explaining why the phenomena under description do not exist and an explanation of the types of rhetorical devices used by its proponents.

12.5 Parapsychology Today

There continues to be an interest in the sorts of phenomena that parapsychology studies, but there is a mismatch between the representations of those phenomena in film and television, popular interest as shown by the audiences for mediumship and self-help books based around "New Age" beliefs, and what scientifically trained parapsychologists research and lecture about.

Within mainstream psychology, there has been some acceptance of articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals, and occasionally coverage of parapsychology in introductory textbooks. As Bem (1993) discusses, the meta-analytic work on ganzfeld studies provides a good vehicle for discussing issues like replication, meta-analysis, and scepticism.

In addressing problems for parapsychology in the twenty-first century, Morris (2000) suggests that parapsychologists need to be able to work across the sceptic–believer divide, and concentrate on the development of those techniques, which in terms of experimental procedures and statistical procedures such as meta-analysis may provide the best evidence for the existence of *psi*. However, as the recent debate between Milton and Wiseman (1999, 2001) and Storm and Ertel (2001) demonstrate, this may be difficult to achieve.

Parapsychology research is dealing with many of the issues that we believe psychology also needs to deal with, the need to move beyond the statistical significance test as a mechanical way to make decisions about the meaning of what happens in experiments; the need to conceptualise and theorise about the open and complex systems that we take snap shots of as we bring phenomena into the laboratory; and the tensions between what is done within the academic discipline and public representations of that subject matter.

Parapsychology, however, also has to contend with a general scepticism towards all of its findings, generated at least in part by a history of deception by some

major figures who claimed to have *psychic* powers; and today by the blurring of the labels *factual* and *entertainment programmes* in popular television programmes.

Within the United Kingdom, the Koestler centre has been successful at producing psychologists who have a thorough grounding in parapsychology and who can set up scientific research programmes and contribute to undergraduate teaching at other universities. While it remains an open question whether or not any of the *psi*-hypothesis work will yield consistent, reliable, and replicable results, it may be the case that in a UK context, with its marketplace for psychology undergraduate degrees, that these universities may gain an advantage in competition for students by having a unique selling point compared to other institutions. It may be, given the issues that scientific parapsychology has to face, that graduates from these institutions will be in a better position to understand psychology in context than other graduates. Paradoxically, because of its subject matter, mainstream psychologists will never discover debates that could inform their academic discipline.

12.6 Chapter Summary

At the start of the chapter, you were asked to consider your beliefs and how they may impact what you read. One thing you may have realised is that the beliefs of the author will also have an impact on what and how they write. A lesson from examining parapsychology research and debates around the literature is the sharp focus on these issues. It may be that you ought to ask these questions of everything you read about psychology, not just the contentious issues, and especially you should consider this where you already have strong beliefs. There is a wealth of empirical data from laboratory experiments and from discourse analytical work that we tend to seek out confirmatory evidence and ignore or rationalise away evidence contrary to our beliefs.

The early history of how séances went from theatre shows, to a table-turning craze, and then to an object of scientific study demonstrates the influence upon the academe of public concern over a phenomenon. In the United Kingdom, where government policy is to turn higher education into a commodity, this may mean that with the continuing interest in the paranormal, psychology courses come under increasing pressure to teach about and research into this area.

The various debates about fraud in the parapsychology laboratory, and the ways that demand characteristics may have much more pervasive effects than often considered in psychology, should perhaps lead us to adopt experimental procedures where the chief investigator is not the person who talks to the participants, and as far as is practicable perhaps we should as well conduct our studies with the same rigour we demand of parapsychology studies.

Many of the debates, about what effect size estimation means, which studies should be used in meta-analysis, and what statistical tools are most appropriate for making claims about knowledge, demand a high level of statistical sophistication from both the researcher and the reader of parapsychology articles. It is to be hoped that psychology also demonstrates such a level of statistical sophistication.

Self-test Questions

1. Through what mechanism did Mesmer believe his powers operated?
2. How was this tested?
3. What were the cultural conditions that favoured a movement like spiritualism?
4. What was the first group to attempt to test these ideas?
5. How does Rhine's procedure differ from the ganzfeld procedure?
6. Why might meta-analyses of the same phenomena differ?
7. What is the aim of conversation analysis with regard to parapsychological phenomena?
8. Why do parapsychological phenomena feature in critical thinking courses?
9. What is anomalistic psychology?
10. Why do parapsychologists use laboratory experiments?

Thinking Points

1. To what extent are parapsychological phenomena culturally bound?
2. Should we be concerned that most psychology experiments are not as well controlled as parapsychology experiments?
3. Should psychologists be concerned that so many people believe in *psi* phenomena?

Further Reading

Blackmore, S. (1996). *In search of the light: The adventures of a parapsychologist*. New York: Prometheus.

Sue Blackmore's account of her work as a parapsychologist. It charts her ultimate disillusionment with the field and gives an insight to just how difficult it is to do controlled studies in this area.

Wooffitt, R. (2006). *The language of mediums and psychics: The social organization of everyday miracles*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Wooffitt examines how mediums and psychics account for their experiences, not through interview studies but rather through conversation analysis of what they say to clients and audiences. Wooffitt uses this analysis to problematise aspects of everyday cognitive psychology as well as provide fascinating insights into how mediums and psychics do things with their words.

13 Psychology in Everyday Life

Dai Jones

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Characterise everyday psychology as a form of reflexive discourse.
- Analyse the relationship between everyday psychology and disciplinary psychology.
- Appreciate the differences between disciplinary psychology and popular psychology.
- Evaluate the appeal and pitfalls of popular psychology.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

In this chapter, we look at some of the ways in which psychology is represented in everyday life. We focus on people's everyday psychology – the kind of thinking we do everyday to understand the behaviour of ourselves and others (Jones & Elcock, 2001) – and on the nature and impact of popular psychology.

We begin the chapter by defining the term *everyday psychology*, characterising it as a particular form of reflexive discourse that is different from the academic and professional discipline of psychology that we described in chapter 1. We'll look at the characteristics of this everyday psychology, and consider some of the attempts of the discipline to explain it. A frequently stated goal of the discipline of psychology has been to improve or replace people's everyday psychologising with scientifically derived psychological knowledge. Indeed, Jones and Elcock (2001) suggest this as a reason for the initial development of scientific psychology. However, we'll see that scientific psychology hasn't had the impact on everyday psychologising that it aspires to. We'll look at the relationship between disciplinary psychology and everyday psychology, and identify some reasons why the discipline hasn't had its expected impact.

Although scientific psychology has had a limited effect on everyday psychology, an alternative form of reflexive discourse, "popular" psychology, has arguably had a greater impact. In the second part of the chapter, we'll look at the nature of popular psychology and compare it to disciplinary psychology. We'll see that there are differences between popular psychology and disciplinary psychology that make the former more appealing to the lay public, but also threaten the validity of the claims of popular psychology. We'll also consider some of the dangers that popular psychology might present.

13.1 Everyday Psychology as Reflexive Discourse

In this book, we use the phrase *everyday psychology* to refer to the beliefs people hold about the causes of the behaviour of themselves and others; and the thought processes people go through to acquire these beliefs and to arrive at explanations (Thomas, 2001). It should be clear from our everyday experiences that "we all psychologize, all of the time" (Jones & Elcock, 2001, p.182). That is, as self-reflective members of a social species, we all find it necessary to think about why we and others behave in certain ways, and we develop a set of beliefs and assumptions to guide this thinking. It has been suggested that we can look at "people as psychologists" (Gross, 2009, p.1) and explain our attempts to understand the behaviour of ourselves and others as if we were naïve scientists, instantiating forms of psychological theory. As one might expect, this everyday psychologizing has been a subject of some interest to disciplinary psychology, and it's instructive to examine the ways in which the discipline has related to everyday psychology. In this section, we look at the nature of everyday psychology and consider the ways in which the discipline has approached it.

13.1.1 Defining everyday psychology

We face an immediate problem in defining everyday psychology, in that the phenomenon goes by a number of names. What we call *everyday psychology* is also called *folk psychology*, *commonsense psychology*, *naïve psychology*, or *lay psychology*. The term *folk psychology* appeals because it fits with the general use of the word *folk* as an adjective to describe something arising from common people, as in *folk physics*. However, the term *folk psychology* already has a specific sense referring to that part of cognitive science concerned with explaining the processes underlying everyday psychology. Similarly, the term *commonsense psychology* is used more specifically to refer to theories of everyday psychology developed by Fritz Heider in the 1950s. *Naïve psychology* is sometimes used as a synonym for either folk psychology or commonsense psychology in the specific senses described previously. We therefore prefer the term *everyday psychology* to avoid ambiguity, and because it is more immediately understandable than *lay psychology*.

A second problem we face is that the term *psychology* has multiple meanings. We saw in chapter 1 that we can use the term to mean both the discipline of psychology and its subject matter. We're now introducing another sense of the word in the phrase *everyday psychology*. In terms of the distinction we made in chapter 1, we can see everyday psychology as part of the subject matter of psychology: that specific part of human psychology that is used in understanding the social world. There are some parts of the discipline, as we shall see, that attempt to explain everyday psychologising, for example attribution theory (Gross, 2009). However, everyday psychology is also in a sense an alternative to disciplinary psychology, and for some represents a competing set of explanations (Thomas, 2001). For the purposes of this chapter, we'll use the term *everyday psychology* to refer to a form of reflexive discourse (as defined in chapter 1) that is used by members of a cultural group, and that consists of both the processes people follow in thinking about behaviour, and the beliefs that result from those processes. This is the sense which Thomas (2001) terms *folk psychology*. This definition might suggest that everyday psychology and disciplinary psychology are two entirely separate forms of reflexive discourse. In fact, there is a complex relationship between the two, which we'll look at in more depth in the next section.

Everyday psychology can be seen as a form of reflexive discourse that consists of a set of implicit principles, assumptions, heuristics, and prejudices that guide our interactions with others. Unfortunately, everyday psychology isn't very reliable: it's subjective, idiosyncratic, and shaped by biases and prejudices. It's often inaccurate, since it relies on incomplete knowledge and is untested (Jones & Elcock, 2001). As we saw in chapter 1, the discipline of psychology developed in part out of a belief that the scientific method would produce a better form of reflexive discourse, and for many the goal is to replace everyday psychologizing. However, Richards (1996, p.274) suggests that everyday psychology acts as a "framework for managing interpersonal relations". As such, it serves a different function to scientific psychology. Whereas scientific psychology is concerned with

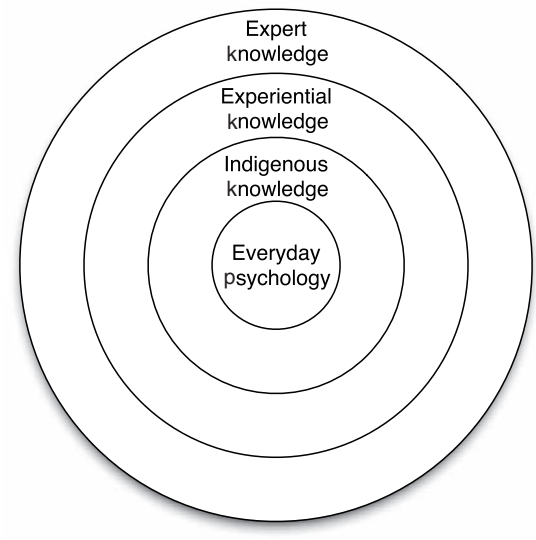

Figure 13.1 Factors shaping an individual's everyday psychology.
An individual's everyday psychology is shaped by different kinds of knowledge. The expert knowledge produced by psychology is less influential than other forms.

producing true theories, managing relationships depends upon tact, discretion, and empathy, and thinking about such relationships includes moral and ethical concerns (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Arguably, everyday psychology serves its own particular purpose, for which scientific approaches aren't suitable.

13.1.2 The determinants of everyday psychology

If scientific psychology can't replace everyday psychologizing, we can hope that it produces knowledge that can improve everyday psychologizing. Before considering the extent to which this happens, it's useful then to consider where everyday psychological beliefs come from. For a given individual, we can identify at least three sources: indigenous knowledge, experiential knowledge, and "expert" knowledge (see Figure 13.1). The term "indigenous knowledge" (Thomas, 2001, p.7) refers to the set of everyday beliefs that are shared by, and learnt from others within, particular cultures. A culture in this sense consists of any section of the lay public sharing some common feature. At a large scale, this may reflect features such as geographical area (Western culture), nationality (British culture), or religion (Christian culture). Within that, there may be subgroups, such as white British or evangelical Christian, at differing levels of specificity. Any given cultural group will have some set of shared beliefs that most members of the group subscribe to, and these shared beliefs contribute to the everyday psychology of members of the group. As an example, we've read earlier about psychology's treatment of "race". Early work in race psychology was conducted by white, Western males. This cultural group seemed to share a pre-existing belief – an everyday psychology – about the innate superiority of white, Western males compared to other groups, which affected their work (Richards, 1997). There are some important points to note here, in terms of the impact of indigenous knowledge on an individual's everyday psychology (Thomas, 2001). First, a given individual won't necessarily share some or all aspects of the general indigenous knowledge of a particular group – not all white, Western males in the late nineteenth century were racist. Second, a given individual will be a member of a number of cultural groups, whose sets of indigenous knowledge may be contradictory in some regards. Third, the indigenous knowledge of a given culture is not a fixed corpus of knowledge, but rather changes over time.

Any particular individual will have an everyday psychology composed of elements of the indigenous knowledge of the different cultural groups that the person subscribes to. However, it will also be affected by their own personal experiences,

and particularly through their interactions with others. We suggested above that everyday psychology provides a framework for managing interpersonal relations. This framework isn't fixed, but rather is constantly evaluated against evidence from experience and observation, and is modified where necessary. Everyday psychology involves, in part, generating explanations for people's behaviour, and predictions of future behaviour, on the basis of our pre-existing beliefs. Where these explanations and predictions are found to be wrong, we may need to change our beliefs, replacing them with experiential knowledge. For example, a person may initially subscribe to a shared cultural belief in the inferiority of other ethnic groups, but through interaction with members of those groups come to believe that there is no such innate inferiority.

A final source of belief in everyday psychology comes from what we might call *expert knowledge*. We characterise expert knowledge here as a novel form of received knowledge that is explicitly taught or presented from a position of authority. It is through expert knowledge that disciplinary psychology might hope to influence everyday psychology, producing apparently well-founded theories to replace experiential or indigenous knowledge. We have heard that psychoanalysis was particularly successful in this, providing people with concepts that they can use to understand themselves and others. Psychoanalytic ideas such as the Oedipus complex have become part of people's everyday psychology.

An individual's everyday psychology is shaped by each of the three kinds of knowledge presented above. The contribution each form of knowledge makes will vary according to the individual, and a person's everyday psychology will change over time. Indigenous psychologies change, as cultures change; and the set of indigenous psychologies subscribed to will change as an individual changes their cultural allegiances, for example in religious conversion. More generally, though, an individual's indigenous knowledge is strongly resistant to change (Gross, 2009), but as we've seen it can be altered through personal experience or expert knowledge. In the next section we consider the extent to which disciplinary psychology changes everyday psychology.

13.1.3 Everyday psychology and disciplinary psychology

Given the definition of *everyday psychology* presented above, we would expect the discipline of psychology to have something to say about it. Our characterisation of psychology in chapter 1 suggested that typically the discipline is seen as a science objectively observing its subject matter, human psychology. Everyday psychology is part of this subject matter, and so we might look to the discipline for explanations of it. We suggested above that, in particular, scientific approaches to the discipline emerged to replace everyday psychologizing with better explanations. However, the model that underlies the scientific approach has influenced how psychology tries to explain everyday thinking. The model is one borrowed from the natural sciences, and sees the scientific psychologist as independent of the object of investigation, observing and theorising about human psychology without being affected by it

(Moses & Knutsen, 2007). We'll see this reflected in most attempts to explain everyday psychology, but we'll also see that this may not be a valid model to follow.

If disciplinary psychology is to replace everyday psychologizing, then it needs to produce the same kinds of knowledge that people use for everyday thinking. This goal is often explicitly stated. For example, Stafford suggests that "the purpose of psychological science is making findings about the human mind and behaviour available … to everyone" (Stafford, 2007, p.95). Stafford here is defending scientific psychology from accusations that it's just a refined form of common sense, "dressed up with big words" (Stafford, 2007, p.94). Part of this defence is that scientific psychology has, as part of its project, the task of testing everyday preconceptions to assess the truth of them (Hansen, 2007). There are many commonly held beliefs about psychology that can be tested, for example the belief that we use only 10% of our brains (Beyerstein, 1999). Many of these beliefs are reflected in everyday proverbs and sayings, for example that "absence makes the heart grow fonder". For the scientific psychologist, proverbs such as these can be treated as logical propositions, to be proved true or false. When they are found to be false, this knowledge is expected to replace everyday knowledge.

If the knowledge produced by disciplinary psychology was sufficient to replace everyday psychologizing, then we might expect trained psychologists to be better at everyday psychology than laypeople. This expectation is reflected in everyday views of psychologists as mind readers or as behavioural experts. However, this doesn't seem to be reflected in practice. As early as 1932, Klein wrote that "rigorous training and exceptional competence in academic psychology may exercise little or no appreciable influence in the direction of making the student more expert in dealing with people" (Klein, 1932, p.552). Skaggs (1934) followed this by suggesting that scientific psychology is necessarily of little practical value to everyday psychology. Jones and Elcock (2001) suggest that nothing has changed, and that professional psychologists are in most areas no better at everyday psychologising than others. It seems as if there are two kinds of psychology – textbook psychology, produced by the academic and professional discipline; and everyday psychology, held by psychologists and laypeople alike. Knowing textbook psychology doesn't greatly affect one's everyday psychology. Evidence for this comes from studies of psychology students' belief in common psychological myths. Higbee and Clay (1998) found that psychology students were as likely as a control group of non–psychology students to believe in the myth that we use only 10% of our brains. Standing and Huber (2003) found slightly more encouraging results: that training in research methods made students more critical of everyday claims, and that some kinds of psychology courses – but not all – seemed to reduce belief in myths. However, the overall level of myth acceptance was still very high, at around 70% (see Activity Box 13.1).

The notion that there are two distinct kinds of psychological knowledge supports the claim we made above that everyday psychology constitutes a separate form of reflexive discourse. However, this somewhat oversimplifies the situation. Rather, there is a reflexive relationship between the two, such that everyday psychology affects disciplinary psychology, and disciplinary psychology

Activity Box 13.1 Psychological Fact or Psychological Myth?

George Orwell said, "Myths which are believed in tend to become true" (Orwell & Angus, 1968). Certainly, psychological myths are potentially dangerous, because they give a distorted picture of human nature and human behaviour, and so potentially distort our interactions with others. Test your own awareness of psychological myths with this exercise. From the list below, try to identify those items that are currently believed to be psychological reality, and those that are psychological myths. The correct answers are given at the end of the chapter.

Answer "fact" or "myth" to the following items:

1. Most people use only 10% of their brain power.
2. Some people are left-brained, and others are right-brained.
3. Playing Mozart's music to infants boosts their intelligence.
4. Hypnosis is useful for retrieving memories of forgotten events.
5. Individuals commonly repress the memories of traumatic experiences.
6. Hypnosis is a unique "trance" state that differs in kind from wakefulness.
7. Individuals can learn information, like new languages, while asleep.
8. The polygraph ("lie detector") test is an accurate means of detecting dishonesty.
9. Ulcers are caused primarily or entirely by stress.
10. Men and women communicate in completely different ways.
11. It's better to express anger to others than to hold it in.
12. Raising children similarly leads to similarities in their adult personalities.
13. The fact that a trait is heritable means we can't change it.
14. Our handwriting reveals our personality traits.
15. There's recently been a massive epidemic of infantile autism.
16. Psychiatric hospital admissions and crimes increase during full moons.
17. Most mentally ill people are violent.
18. Criminal profiling is helpful in solving cases.
19. Virtually all people who confess to a crime are guilty of it.
20. Electroconvulsive ("shock") therapy is a physically dangerous and brutal treatment.

For more on psychological myths, see Della Sala (1999) or Furnham (2001).

affects everyday psychology. For the former, it's clear that at the least, everyday psychology provides hypotheses that disciplinary psychology can investigate (Valentine, 1996). However, the relationship is somewhat more fundamental than this. Kelley (1992) surveys the impact of everyday psychology on scientific

psychology. He claims that much of scientific psychology is pursued using everyday psychology, particularly in terms of the concepts being investigated. The psychologist investigating intelligence, for example, starts from a position of having everyday beliefs about what constitutes intelligence, reflecting the emphasis in the Western rationalist tradition on logical reasoning (Tarnas, 1996). Thomas (2001) suggests that psychologists cannot avoid using everyday psychological concepts, because these are fundamental to the language we use. To pursue scientific psychology without the "taint" of everyday psychological concepts, we would need to develop a complete scientific vocabulary for psychology. This is the stated goal of eliminativists such as Churchland (1992), who suggests replacing everyday psychological language with neuroscientific language. Richards (1996, p.271) argues that this is both impossible and undesirable, giving as an example the contrast:

Everyday psychological language: It is my belief you are profoundly mistaken.
Neuroscientific language: There is a major lack of congruence between our neural coding vectors on this one.

If it is true that everyday psychology affects the basic concepts that disciplinary psychology deals with, this has significant implications for psychology's claims to be an objective science on the natural science model. The physicist investigating the structure of atoms can do so to some extent free of deep-seated beliefs about the nature of atoms. However, as we saw in chapter 4, the psychologist investigating "race" differences is likely to be strongly influenced by pre-existing beliefs regarding "race" (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

We saw above that there are ways in which scientific psychology affects everyday psychology, for example in testing common assumptions. However, it can be argued that the scientific approach makes disciplinary psychology incompatible with the needs of everyday psychology (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Scientific psychology involves looking for universal laws of human behaviour, and theories that are universally true. Scientific psychology can test the truth of the proverb "absence makes the heart grow fonder", and find that it is sometimes true. However, the phrase has a counterfactual, "when the cat's away, the mouse will play". Testing this may find that it too is true in some circumstances. However, the net effect is that we find out nothing. Hansen (2007) suggests that many psychologists treat proverbs such as the above examples as if they were truth propositions to be tested, and the existence of counterfactuals is seen as evidence that everyday psychology is fundamentally flawed. This is to judge everyday psychology in scientific terms, but Hansen argues that we can't apply scientific truth values to the complexity of human reasoning. Rather, she argues, we need to investigate everyday psychology in its own terms.

Another way in which disciplinary psychology might influence everyday psychology is in introducing new concepts to everyday thinking, or refining existing concepts. Terms from scientific psychology have entered the discipline, for example the idea of being *conditioned* to do something. This typically involves an expansion of

everyday psychology, adding new concepts, but these new ideas don't replace existing beliefs, but rather are added to them. When technical concepts are absorbed by everyday psychology, this happens in a way that suits the purposes of everyday psychology rather than reflects theoretical truth (Richards, 1996). For example, McNally (2007) describes the way in which the concept of schizophrenia is used in everyday psychological discourse as referring to a split personality disorder. Schizophrenia was originally introduced to the public in these terms, and this usage persists even though the disciplinary definition has changed, since laypeople find this sense of the term useful despite its lack of contemporary validity.

The extent to which disciplinary psychology can inform everyday thinking has long been of concern to psychologists. Lewinski and Feder (1939) suggested that psychology was so concerned with science that it was failing to meet the public interest. Despite a recurring theme within the discipline that psychology should be given away, these concerns persist (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Greenwood (1992), for example, suggests that while social psychology in particular offers "scientifically developed forms" (p.349) of everyday psychological explanation, the commitment to the criteria of science necessarily limits its ability to explain everyday thinking. Other, less scientific, forms of psychology have had more success in influencing everyday psychology, particularly psychoanalysis. Hornstein (1992) describes how psychoanalysis captured the imagination of the American public in the 1920s. The initial effect of this was to lead psychologists to more strongly emphasise their scientific credentials, "further limiting psychology's relevance and scope" (Hornstein, 1992, p.254). Its appeal for everyday psychology is that it offers to provide an accessible framework for understanding ourselves and others. (The relationship between psychoanalysis and scientific psychology is discussed more fully in chapter 11.) Arguably, evolutionary psychology may be fulfilling a similar role today. Another approach to psychology that offers promise is social constructionism (Burr, 2003). Social constructionism sees everyday psychological phenomena as arising out of social interaction, and hence as culturally specific. Further, social constructionism sees the discussion of psychological phenomena as having a reflexive relationship with the phenomena themselves, and hence rejects the natural science model of objective investigation as inappropriate for psychology. Finally, social constructionism emphasises the need to investigate everyday language use to learn about everyday psychologising (Liebrucks, 2001). Jones and Elcock (2001) suggest that social constructionism offers a useful framework for understanding everyday psychology.

13.2 Introducing "Popular" Psychology

In the previous section, we described everyday psychology, and suggested that much of everyday psychology is founded on indigenous knowledge. We also suggested that although everyday psychology is difficult to change, it is affected by both experiential knowledge and expert knowledge. Disciplinary psychology presents

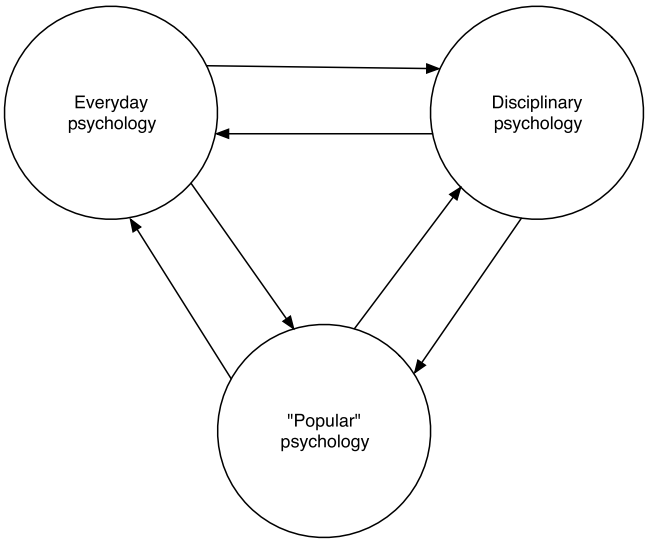

Figure 13.2 Three forms of reflexive discourse.
We characterise disciplinary psychology, everyday psychology, and "popular" psychology as distinct forms of reflexive discourse, although they each influence the others.

itself as a form of expert knowledge that might displace other forms, but there are doubts about the extent to which it does so. However, modern times have seen a considerable growth in the use of scientific-sounding terms within everyday psychology, sometimes described as "psychobabble" (Slovenko, 2003). In this section, we argue that much of the growth of psychobabble can be attributed to an alternative form of expert knowledge, *popular* or *pop psychology*. We'll define pop psychology as a third form of reflexive discourse, outline the nature of pop psychology, and evaluate its effect.

13.2.1 Defining "pop" psychology

There seems to be a considerable thirst for "expert" knowledge to assist us in our everyday psychologizing. Benjamin (2001) describes forms of "public psychology" emerging in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including spiritualism, physiognomy (determining personal characteristics from facial features), and phrenology (determining personal characteristics from the shape of the skull). Of these, phrenology was particularly popular, and claimed to be a true science of mind. Benjamin goes on to highlight the continuing popularity of such forms of psychology, particularly in book shops, with sections titled "Mind, Body and Spirit" and similar; and describes the struggles of disciplinary psychology to distinguish itself from these less scientifically rigorous forms. This struggle is nothing new: Lewinski and Feder (1939) show a similar concern in pre-war psychology. We can say that there exists a third form of psychology competing for the public's attention. We call this form of psychology *pop psychology*.

We define pop psychology as a form of reflexive discourse that produces claims about intra- and interpersonal psychology for a lay audience (Jones & Elcock, 2001). As such, it joins disciplinary psychology and everyday psychology as a trio of reflexive discourses that attempt to explain the same object of investigation, human psychology (see Figure 13.2). Pop psychology advances a number of types of knowledge, including self-help material of varying degrees of validity; other forms of advice, particularly relationship advice; and claims about psychological phenomena presented as fact, either for interest or as part of an action plan. Some examples of pop psychology include the following:

Self-help: Edmonds, N. (2006). *Positively Happy: Cosmic Ways to Change Your Life*. London: Vermilion.

Relationships: Gray, J. (1993). *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. New York: Harper Business.
Psychological "facts": Coon, C. S. (2004). *One Planet, One People: Beyond Us Vs. Them*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus.

It's difficult to give a set of definite criteria for what counts as pop psychology, but it is usually easy to recognise. Pop psychology books share a "family resemblance" – they seem similar to each other, and different from other psychology books. Benjamin (2001) describes the "Bookstore Project" of the graduate student section of the American Psychological Society, an attempt to persuade book shops to shelve scientific psychology books separately from pop psychology books. This certainly happens in some British book shops (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Benjamin notes the potential difficulty of deciding which books count as "proper" psychology and which as "pop", although in most cases the difference is clear. Some dimensions on which pop and proper psychology differ include the following:

- *Methodological and theoretical rigour*. Disciplinary psychology expects publications to present well-founded theories, and, where research is reported, for this to be methodologically sound. Pop psychology may make little reference to accepted theory, and where research is reported this may fall short of accepted standards.
- *Evidence base*. Evidence is the *sine qua non* of psychology as an empirical, systematic discipline, and gives us grounds for believing the claims made. Pop psychology often has a limited evidence base, relying more on the authority of the author as an "expert".
- *Centrality of topics*. Disciplinary psychology investigates a wide range of topics, but there are some topics that can be considered standard within psychology, and others that are quite marginal. Some pop psychology investigates topics that are either little considered within the discipline or not considered at all.

None of these dimensions is clear-cut, but rather each represents a range. So, for example, it's impossible to give a cut-off point for how much evidence is enough. Taking these dimensions together, though, it's possible to say that pop psychology lies along a continuum, from work that is effectively the author's own everyday psychologizing committed to print, to work that is near scientific psychology (Jones & Elcock, 2001). The latter includes work that does a laudable job of introducing ideas from psychology to a lay audience, for example Jarrett and Ginsburg (2008), Sutherland (2007), and Wiseman (2007). However, examples such as these are rare, and in any case they are better considered as disciplinary psychology presented in an accessible form for a lay audience, rather than as a separate form of reflexive discourse.

Pop psychology as a form of reflexive discourse in its own right has particular characteristics that distinguish it from disciplinary psychology, however that may be presented. Pop psychology gives simplistic explanations of complex phenomena that claim to provide universal truths, for example reducing gender relations down to a claim that men and women speak different languages. Much pop psychology is

self-help material, which provides simple "recipe knowledge" – how-to instructions that claim to change a person or a situation (Stanovich, 2009). These characteristics would not be such a concern if the material presented was valid. However, more commonly pop psychology appears to be an author's expression of their own idiosyncratic beliefs presented as incontrovertible fact (Jones & Elcock, 2001). This relates particularly to the lack of evidence to support the claims made. Such evidence as is presented typically consists of anecdotes, testimonials from a small number of people, or limited case studies. While disciplinary publication, particularly in journals, is subject to peer review to assess the validity of the claims made, no such process occurs for pop psychology.

Given the suggestion above, that pop psychology often reflects the everyday beliefs of the author with little or no evidence or theoretical background, we're left relying on the assumed authority of the author. It's in the interests of publishers to present authors as experts in the relevant area, but often they have limited or no validated expertise in a particular area. To take the three examples listed above, Noel Edmonds is a British radio DJ and television presenter. John Gray has no accredited higher education qualifications, his doctorate being completed by correspondence course from a non-accredited institution in the United States that was closed by court order in 2001 (Barrett, 2007). Carleton S. Coon is a diplomat with a 30-year career in the US Diplomatic Corps. Although these works are presented as expert knowledge, the expertise of authors is often in doubt.

13.2.2 Evaluating "pop" psychology

As we've seen above, pop psychology provides easy answers, instant cures, and guarantees of success. Justman (2005) describes them as making Utopian promises. Such promises are particularly appealing in rapidly changing societies where people are concerned with adjustment (Napoli, 1981). In such a social context, and particularly when society is becoming increasingly secular, materialistic, and individualistic, people look for certainties to guide their lives, and reassurance that what they believe is true. Pop psychology offers to provide such answers, to help people to satisfy their wants and desires, and to make people feel better about themselves (Justman, 2005). Perhaps ironically, this seems to especially be the case in times of relative affluence. In the 1920s, during an economic boom in the United States, popular psychology books included *The Psychology of Jesus* and *The Psychology of Playing the Banjo* (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Napoli describes the growth of applied psychology after World War II, particularly during the changing times of the 1950s and 1960s, and suggests that new interest in psychological interventions came from the middle classes, who weren't experiencing maladjustment *per se* but rather "vague feelings of discontent" (Napoli, 1981, p.144). The marketers of pop psychology have an interest in persuading potential readers that they should be discontented, in order to create the demand for claimed solutions. In this way, pop psychology becomes part and parcel of social change (Murphy, John, & Brown, 1984).

Many will see pop psychology as harmless fun, but this is often not the case. With self-help material in particular, there can be negative consequences. For example, people relying on self-help material for bibliotherapy – book-based treatment – may use it inappropriately and make a problem worse (Rosen, 1987). There is evidence that bibliotherapy using self-help materials can be effective, but these findings typically relate to high-quality materials written by mental health professionals, particularly when used in conjunction with professional help (Redding, Herbert, Forman, & Gaudiano, 2008). Given this, it's important for would-be users of bibliotherapy to be very careful to select good-quality material. Focus Box 13.1 relates some guidelines on choosing self-help material.

Focus Box 13.1 Choosing Self-Help Books

The self-help market is huge, both in terms of sales and in terms of the number of titles published (Arkowitz & Lilienfeld, 2006). The quality of self-help materials varies greatly (Paul, 2001). At their best, self-help books can be an effective form of do-it-yourself psychological intervention (Standing & Huber, 2003). However, self-help materials can make a condition worse (Rosen, 1987). Particular dangers with buying self-help books "off the shelf" include people misdiagnosing themselves, and selecting the wrong material; people selecting ineffective materials; and people misapplying the treatments described (Craighead, McNamara, & Horan, 1984). It's important, therefore, to be wary when choosing and using self-help books. Thoughtful reviews of the effectiveness of self-help materials are given in Bergsma (2008) and Papworth (2006). The safest advice is to only choose self-help books following consultation with an appropriate professional, whether that be a clinical psychologist, counselling psychologist, psychiatrist, doctor, or mental health nurse. If appropriate, only use self-help material under the supervision of such a professional. If you wish to buy a self-help book independently, follow advice on what are effective materials. The following points to look for are derived from Fried (2001) and Arkowitz and Lilienfeld (2006):

1. Choose books or other materials that are based on research and valid psychological theory. Look to see if the author references published academic sources to support their claims.
2. Examine the credibility of the author. Do they have appropriate academic and professional qualifications in the relevant area? Given that it's your mental health at stake, don't be afraid to research the institutions that have awarded apparent qualifications, and the societies that the author claims to be a member of.
3. Fellow or recovered sufferers are not a good source of advice. What worked for them won't necessarily work for you.
4. Not all psychological states are easily changed, for example those with a strong genetic component like manic-depressive disorder, or those that are central to our beings, like sexual orientation. Self-help materials are unlikely to have an effect with these.
5. Be sceptical of books making unrealistic promises, for example curing a phobia in 5 minutes.
6. Beware of simple single solutions. Most human problems are complex and require multiple actions, and individual differences partly determine what actions will be effective. Look for material that reviews symptoms, ideally with a self-diagnosis questionnaire; and that presents a range of well-founded strategies.
7. Always seek professional advice for serious problems, such as clinical depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

For a critical analysis of the self-help industry, see Justman (2005).

Apart from self-help material, popular psychology can be seen as problematic more generally, in that it may provide support for erroneous beliefs, sustain ideology, and reinforce prejudice, all through unsubstantiated claims. We heard previously that everyday beliefs are resistant to change. This reflects fundamental biases in human reasoning, and particularly that people tend to seek information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs and ignore information that contradicts it, and interpret ambiguous information in ways that provide confirmation (Shermer, 2007). This may explain in part why counterintuitive findings from disciplinary psychology have little impact. It may also explain why pop psychology is so popular, since unfounded pop psychology, written to reflect the beliefs of the author, may provide confirmation of prejudiced views amongst those with the same beliefs. This is shown, for example, in analyses of claims about gender in pop psychology. *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* suggests that men and women are genetically predisposed to communicate in significantly different ways. Deborah Cameron, professor of language and communication at the University of Oxford with particular expertise in language and gender, shows in *The Myth of Mars and Venus* (2007) that such claims are inaccurate; that belief in them can have negative consequences; and that we need more sophisticated, less simplistic ideas about gender similarities and differences. Sadly, the general public finds Gray's book more appealing than Professor Cameron's.

Unfounded claims of gender difference are common in pop psychology. Boynton (2003) analysed relationship advice in pop psychology and found that such books tend to enforce particular traditional roles upon women. Anderson and Accomando (2002) analysed four well-promoted pop psychology books on raising male children, and found that they emphasised the existence of universal, essential differences between genders. Crawford (2004) suggests that self-help texts discussing relationships place the onus upon women both to conform to traditional gender roles and to take responsibility for maintaining harmony in the relationship. In all these cases, the effect of the books is to reinforce the very everyday beliefs about gender that feminist psychology, as described in chapter 5, seeks to challenge. In so doing, they naturalise inequality and divert attention from the social structures that produce that inequality.

13.3 Chapter Summary

In chapter 1 of the book, we introduced the notion of the discipline of psychology as being a particular form of reflexive discourse, that emerged to replace or refine pre-existing everyday discourses. In this chapter we looked more closely at the potential of psychology for achieving such a replacement, and introduced another form of reflexive discourse, "popular" psychology.

We characterised everyday psychology as a particular form of reflexive discourse engaged in by lay individuals in attempting to understand and explain the behaviour of themselves and others. We suggested that everyday psychology is developed from

three kinds of knowledge – indigenous knowledge, being a given culture's generally understood notions of human nature and human behaviour; experiential knowledge, being the particular ideas of everyday psychology that an individual acquires through direct personal experience; and expert knowledge, being those concepts and ideas individuals are exposed to through literature, the media, and other sources. Of these, indigenous knowledge seems particularly resistant to change.

Everyday psychology has particular characteristics, and particular purposes, that mean that disciplinary psychology faces difficulties in replacing it. We considered the status of existing attempts to replace everyday psychology, and saw that the two forms of reflexive discourse have a reflexive relationship with each other, but serve different purposes. Everyday psychology influences disciplinary psychology, casting doubts on its claims to be an objective science. Disciplinary psychology has some effect on everyday psychology, particularly in introducing new concepts to augment everyday psychology, but when these new concepts are incorporated into the everyday they're often transformed into something different from the original formulation. We ended our consideration of everyday psychology by concluding that disciplinary psychology typically doesn't produce the kind of expert knowledge that people find usable within their everyday psychology, leaving a gap that is filled by popular psychology.

Popular psychology is a third form of reflexive discourse that purports to present expert psychological knowledge to laypeople to improve their everyday psychologising. Popular psychology is the latest in a long tradition of "public psychologies", suggesting that there is a public demand for accessible psychological information. Unfortunately, popular psychology is often weak in methodological and theoretical rigour, evidence base, and the centrality of topics covered. At an extreme, popular psychology seems to be little more than the everyday psychology of the author given the appearance of authority through the act of being published. There are dangers in this, particularly in that popular psychology may reinforce everyday beliefs that should be challenged.

The implicit goal of disciplinary psychology, to improve everyday psychologising, is a laudable one. However, the nature of most disciplinary psychology means that the goal is missed, while popular psychology has too many weaknesses of its own to provide such an improvement. In chapter 15, we'll consider what changes might be made to disciplinary psychology to make it more accessible and more relevant to the lay public, and so more effective in improving everyday psychology.

Self-test Questions

1. What other terms are used for *everyday psychology*?
2. What's wrong with everyday psychology?
3. What are the three factors that shape an individual's everyday psychology?
4. How does everyday psychology influence scientific psychology?
5. How does scientific psychology influence everyday psychology?

6. What kinds of knowledge are presented in popular psychology?
7. What three dimensions do disciplinary psychology and popular psychology differ on?
8. What are the main characteristics of popular psychology?
9. Why is popular psychology so appealing?
10. Why is popular psychology a cause of concern?

Thinking Points

1. On the basis of the material in chapter 12, consider how everyday perceptions of parapsychology differ from psychology's treatment of it.
2. Think about your own everyday psychology. Where does your everyday knowledge come from? To what extent has it been shaped by academic learning in psychology? To what extent has it been shaped by "popular" psychology?
3. To what extent does "popular" psychology mis-represent the academic discipline?

Further Reading

Gross, R. (2009). *Themes, issues and debates in psychology* (3rd edn). London: Hodder & Stoughton, chapters 1 and 2.
Thorough discussion of social psychology's attempts to explain everyday psychologising.
Jones, D., & Elcock, J. (2001). *History and theories of psychology*. London: Arnold, chapter 11.
Includes a chapter summarising scientific psychology's attempts to characterise everyday psychology.
Justman, S. (2005). *Fool's paradise: The unreal world of pop psychology*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.
An entertaining discussion of the nature of, and dangers arising from, popular self-help psychology.
Lilienfeld, S., Lynn, S., Ruscio, J., & Beyerstein, B. (2010). *50 great myths of popular psychology: Shattering widespread misconceptions about human behaviour*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
Effectively debunks 50 common psychological myths, and briefly discusses a further 250. It includes useful information on how to identify and resist such myths.
Stanovich, K. (2009). *How to think straight about psychology* (9th edn). London: Pearson Education, chapters 1 and 12.
Good coverage of the lay public's reactions to disciplinary psychology.
Thomas, R. M. (2001). *Folk psychology across cultures*. London: Sage.
A rigorous analysis of the nature of everyday psychology, looking at different dimensions of everyday psychologizing from a cross-cultural perspective.

Correct Answers for Activity Box 13.1

All of the items listed are common psychological myths. They are drawn from Lilienfeld, S., Lynn, S., Ruscio, J. & Beyerstein, B. (2010) *50 great myths of popular psychology: Shattering widespread misconceptions about human behaviour* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell). This book effectively debunks the myths listed and many others, and is highly recommended.

14 Further Issues in Psychology

Dai Jones

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand a range of issues that are fundamental to psychology, and the ways in which individuals adopt positions regarding those issues.
- Reflect on the appropriateness of reductionist approaches to psychology.
- Evaluate positions regarding the relationship between mind and body, and reflect on how these support theoretical approaches to psychology.
- Contrast idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychology, and understand the relationship to scientific psychology.
- Understand views of free will and determinism in psychology, and assess the compromise position of soft determinism.
- Reflect on the implications of the issues presented for psychological science.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

The aim of this book has been to discuss a range of issues and debates in psychology in the context of how psychology has engaged with controversial social issues. We have discussed a number of such issues, focussing on those that are most associated with the ways in which psychology interacts with society. Thus we've considered specific issues around bias in psychology, particularly in relation to gender and "race"; issues around the ways in which psychology has dealt with abnormality, in terms of mental health; the nature–nurture debate and its influence in modern society; and the extent to which psychology has acted in service to the state. We've also looked at some foundational issues underlying these specifics, including the scientific status of psychology; the way in which disciplinary psychology interacts with everyday and popular forms of psychologising; the status of psychology's constructs, particularly intelligence and personality; and ethical issues in psychological research and practice.

There are a range of other issues that are debated in psychology, which are less immediately relevant to psychology's engagement with society but which fundamentally affect one's view of the nature and purpose of psychology. In this section, we consider why it's important to be aware of the existence of issues in psychology, and of the effect they have on the conduct of psychology. We then briefly survey some of the outstanding issues that aren't considered fully elsewhere in the book. These include, amongst others, the relationship between mind and body, the appropriateness of reductionism, free will and determinism, and idiographic versus nomothetic approaches. In considering these issues, we look at the implications of different positions for how psychology is conducted, particularly for the notion of psychology as a science.

14.1 The Issue with Issues

We saw in chapter 1 that there are a range of topic areas that are investigated by psychology, and there are a range of theoretical approaches that might be used to investigate those topics. The effect of these in combination is to create considerable diversity within psychology. This is a concern for some, who call for more unity in psychology (e.g. Goertzen, 2008; Ral, 2006). For others, this is an inevitable part of psychology (Richards, 2010). One reason for this continuing disunity is that psychologists differ on a range of fundamental issues (Jones, 2008d). Being aware of these issues is important to understanding the diversity of psychology. More fundamentally, though, knowledge of these issues, and of the stance towards them adopted in making any particular claim, is fundamental to evaluating theories in psychology.

The position an individual takes towards any issue in psychology is a reflection of that individual's own everyday psychology (see chapter 13), and particularly of the indigenous knowledge that person subscribes to, both in the general sense discussed in chapter 13 and in the specific sense of accepted disciplinary and cultural knowledge discussed in the next chapter. These positions affect a psychologist's conception of

human nature, of the project and purpose of psychology, and of the right approach and method to take in pursuing psychology (Jones, 2008d). Thus the differences between those taking a cognitivist approach to social psychology and those taking a social constructionist approach go beyond whether they use quantitative or qualitative research methods, but rather reflect fundamentally different views of the bases of human nature and of what can be known about human nature (Stainton Rogers, 2003). Moreover, the positions an individual takes will also influence their interpretation of evidence and the claims they make (Jones, 2008d). For example, a psychologist who adopts a strongly nativist position regarding the nature–nurture debate will be likely to interpret a statistical finding of differences in intelligence between genders in terms of an essential, biologically based determination of intelligence; whereas a more environmentally minded or constructionist psychologist is likely to interpret any such differences in terms of different developmental and socialisation experiences. This effect can be seen in many of the preceding chapters, and explains in part why there is such disagreement on issues such as "race" and IQ.

A particular problem psychology faces is that for each of these issues, there are no objective criteria to resolve them, no known "right" answer (Jones, 2008d). Apart from explaining disagreement, this also suggests that attempts to unify psychology are doomed to failure. We can, though, use knowledge of these issues to evaluate psychological theories, and to be more critical consumers of specific psychological claims. The historical approach we outlined in chapter 2 is useful here, in helping to identify the factors that influence psychologists' choices of position regarding these issues and the effects of that on the theories produced (Richards, 2010). In the preceding chapters, we've seen evidence of specific factors that influence these choices, including the general sociocultural context, the political beliefs and background of the psychologist, sources of funding, and what is practically possible (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

14.2 Reductionism and Its Appropriateness

We've covered the issue of reductionism implicitly in chapter 6, where we suggested that nativist positions regarding the nature–nurture debate can be seen as reductionist in that they reduce psychological explanations to physiological ones. This is one example of the general view of reductionism, which is that complex phenomena can best be understood by reducing them to simpler parts (Bell, 2002). Often, reductionists may claim that only one form of explanation is necessary to explain behaviour, as sometimes seems to be the case in the nature–nurture debate.

14.2.1 Forms of reductionism

There are various forms of reductionism, including physiological, biological, experimental, and machine (Jones, 2008d). The reductionism referred to in chapter 6 is physiological reductionism, in that it attempts to explain psychological phenomena in terms of brain operation, genetics, or both. It may also be termed *neurobiological*

reductionism (Garza & Fisher Smith, 2009) or *neurogenetic determinism* (Rose, 1998). As we saw in chapter 6, this form of reductionism is hotly debated. *Biological reductionism* refers to attempts to explain human behaviour in terms of simpler animals. Examples of this include behaviourism, which saw different species as sharing the same fundamental learning mechanisms, and sociobiology, which investigates instinctual behaviour (Richards, 2010). In its modern form, biological reductionism entails the search for genetic bases of behaviour and so overlaps with physiological reductionism to some extent. The other two forms of reductionism are more concerned with methodology. *Experimental reductionism* suggests that we can better investigate the complexity of human behaviour by trying to isolate particular factors that might influence behaviour, and then test these in experimental settings (Bell, 2002). Experimental reductionism is fundamental to current scientific psychology. *Machine reductionism* refers to the use of computer models to explain behaviour, and was important in the emergence of the cognitive approach (Jones & Elcock, 2001). For some, such models are more rigorous than experimental research (Strube, 2000). Generally, however, computer models are little used in contemporary cognitive psychology.

14.2.2 Reductionism and levels of explanation

Another way of conceptualising reductionism is in terms of a hierarchy of levels of explanation (Bell, 2002). Table 14.1 shows such a hierarchy. In this view, different sciences are at different levels of the hierarchy, with lower levels being seen as more scientific. In this view, reductionism can be seen as an attempt to explain a particular phenomenon at a lower than expected level of explanation, for example explaining personality in terms of genetics, in order to be more scientific. This reflects the quote attributed to James Watson, "There is only one science, physics: everything else is social work" (Rose, 1998). Looking at reductionism in this way, it's tempting to ask what the "right" level is, but there is no one right level – it depends on what answers one is trying to find. We can say that psychology asks two kinds of questions, the "why" and the "how" (Jones, 2008d), and different levels of explanation are appropriate for different kinds of questions. Table 14.1 gives the example of shaking hands. To explain how we shake hands, we might talk about the physiological changes necessary to achieve motion, or the cognitions necessary to guide the movement of the hand. In asking why we shake hands, we might appeal to social or genetic explanations. It's in the why questions that we see the greatest debate (Bell, 2002). We can see the nature–nurture debate as fundamentally being about how to answer "why" questions, whether particular behaviours and capabilities are caused by physiology or environmental factors. In these terms, reductionism is seen as advantageous in that it provides concise, scientific explanations. However, in addition to the dangers discussed in chapter 6, reductionism can mean that we lose features of the phenomenon of interest and commit a category error (Bell, 2002), wherein the political implications of a handshake, for example, reside in a different category of knowledge to physiology.

Table 14.1 A Hierarchy of Sciences
Different sciences are seen as being at different levels of explanation. Reductionism can be seen as an attempt to explain a phenomenon at a lower level of explanation than might be expected

Science	*Units of Explanation*	*Example: Shaking Hands*
Sociology	Society	Political role (e.g. Adams & Trimble)
Social psychology	Groups	Social purpose: affiliation
Cognitive psychology	Mental processes	Instructions to hand
Physiology of systems	Brain physiology	Action of muscles and nerve fibres
Physiology of units	Genes	Genetic basis of affiliative behaviour
Anatomy or biochemistry	Chemicals in situ (e.g. the brain)	Role of chemicals in affecting behaviour
Chemistry	Chemicals in isolation	
Physics	Subatomic particles	

14.3 The Mind–Body Relationship

The mind–body debate is a longstanding one. In its modern form, it begins with the French philosopher René Descartes in the seventeenth century, who posited a position of dualism. He saw the body, including the brain, as mechanistic, and the mind as a non-physical, divine endowment that interacted with the body through the pineal gland. Following Descartes, a number of competing positions have been developed which are summarised in Figure 14.1. These alternatives can be seen as attempts to eliminate the "ghost in the machine" proposed by Descartes (Gross, 2009). The mind–body question is a fundamental one for psychology, and the different approaches to psychology discussed in chapter 1 can be seen in terms of the positions they adopt regarding the debate. Adopting a particular approach entails accepting its view of the mind–body relationship or, perhaps more commonly, having a particular view of this relationship will affect what theoretical approach is deemed as acceptable.

14.3.1 Characterising "mind"

Psychology began as the "science of mind", with Wilhelm Wundt investigating the structure of consciousness and William James its functions. However, the emergence of behaviourism as a school saw the neglect of mind within psychology, before its re-emergence, in a very specific way, with the cognitive approach (Leahey, 2003). Clearly mind is important to psychology, but before we can consider theories of its relationship to the body we need to define it. *Mind* is often characterised as having three components: the cognitive, the affective, and the conative. The cognitive component relates to knowing and reasoning, the affective broadly to emotional experiences,

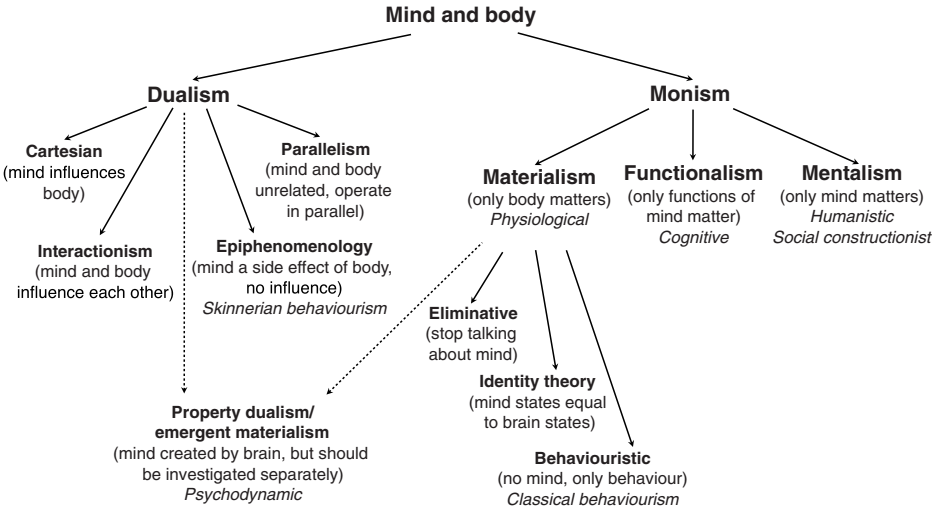

Figure 14.1 Views of the mind–body relationship.
Different views of the relationship between body and mind are shown with their relationships to each other. Associated approaches to psychology are shown in italics.

and the conative to willing and having intentional purpose; and the three interact with each other (Tallon, 1997). Within this, consciousness is seen as that part of the mind that we have awareness of, while the unconscious may also be seen as important, for example in Freud's tripartite model of mind or theories of the cognitive unconscious (Mies, 2005). As stated above, the cognitive approach to psychology accepts a role for mental processes, but reflecting the Western rationalist tradition has tended to overlook the affective and conative components of mind (Richards, 2010). There has been increased interest recently in the role of emotions in cognitive psychology (e.g. Fox, 2008), but the conative component remains overlooked, perhaps because it conflicts with a commitment to determinism in scientific psychology.

14.3.2 Theories of the mind–body relationship

In terms of the theories of the relationship between mind and body shown in Figure 14.1, three are most important to contemporary psychology – materialism, functionalism, and mentalism. Materialism is the view that we should stop discussing the mind and concentrate on explanations in terms of brain states, either because there is a direct correspondence between brains states and mind states, and brain states are more fundamental (identity theory); or because mind exists only in the language we use, and we should talk instead about brain states (eliminative materialism). We discussed these forms of materialism in chapters 6 and 13. Mentalism is the view that the physical brain is unimportant in guiding our psychology, but in its extreme form it conflicts with evidence that the physical operation of the brain affects our psychology, for example from psychopharmacology (Meyer, 2004). Functionalism is the view that underpins the cognitive approach, and it

suggests that we can distinguish between the "software" of the mind and the "hardware" of the brain, with the hardware being unimportant: the focus of functionalism is on explaining the functions performed by the mind in terms of programmatic operations (Maslin, 2007). However, functionalism has been criticised as a return to Cartesian dualism (Gross, 2009), and has difficulty in accounting for both the subjective nature of conscious experience and the conative aspects of the mind.

It seems that each of the three main views within psychology has some difficulties. A possible solution is to be found in the notion of emergence (Bedau, 2008). In emergent materialism, and the related positions of property dualism and non-reductionist materialism, the mind is seen as arising out of the operation of the brain, and as being shaped by it. However, mind is seen as having a separate status to the brain, being at a different level of description and needing explaining in its own terms. This supports the position of Rose described in chapter 6 and Richards' arguments against eliminative materialism described in chapter 13. It may also support ideas of embodied cognition, an approach which attempts to overcome the solipsism of standard cognitivism and instead emphasises the importance of the physical body, the external environment, and individuals' actions in the world in shaping human cognition (van de Laar & de Regt, 2008).

14.4 Idiographic versus Nomothetic Approaches

The debate about whether psychology should adopt an idiographic or a nomothetic approach is fundamental to a consideration of the scientific status of psychology. To adopt a scientific approach to psychology entails being nomothetic, whereas the anti-scientific approaches of humanistic and social constructionist psychology are idiographic. However, for most people there is no debate here – psychology is and should be a science (Jones, 2008b). The debate is usually discussed in terms of personality psychology, but in that area there is an emerging consensus that the two approaches can be reconciled (Gross, 2009). However, Valentine (1992) suggests that the "idiographic" methods used in personality psychology are actually nomothetic but using only single cases, rather than truly idiographic. Outside of personality psychology the debate is quite obscure, but it is still an important one, and in particular underpins the argument about whether social psychology should be conducted through a cognitivist or a social constructionist approach (Stainton Rogers, 2003). In this section we consider the debate in general terms and look at its implications for the idea of scientific psychology. For more on personality psychology, refer to chapter 9.

14.4.1 Defining the two positions

The terms *idiographic* and *nomothetic* were popularised in English-speaking psychology by Gordon Allport, in calling for an idiographic personality psychology (Allport, 1937). An idiographic approach studies the person as a unique individual,

Table 14.2 Nomothetic and Idiographic Approaches to Psychology
This table summarises the differences between nomothetic and idiographic approaches to psychology. The differences are discussed more fully in the text.

The Nomothetic Approach	*The Idiographic Approach*
Search for generalities and similarities between people	Study people as unique individuals
Human psychology seen as generally lawful	Human psychology seen as specific to particular instances
Seeks explanation	Seeks understanding
Positivistic and reductionist	Holistic
Variable centred	Person centred
Quantitative methodology, particularly the scientific method	Qualitative methodology, particularly new paradigm methods
Investigates large numbers of participants to search for norms and commonalities	Uses methods such as case studies – in-depth exploration of individuals
Identifies group norms – what all people tend to do	Identifies individual norms – what a particular person tends to do

whereas a nomothetic approach tries to derive general laws to explain all people. There are a number of differences between the two approaches, summarised in Table 14.2. Gross (2009) suggests that psychology asks in what way people are like all others, are like some others, and are like no others. To ask how people are like all others is to suggest that there are universal psychological processes, and general psychology is concerned with finding these universals. Since there is a commitment to identifying and investigating universal psychological processes, this is usually pursued using nomothetic approaches to generate universal laws. Since science involves the search for universal laws to describe the world, this general psychology is usually pursued using the scientific method, particularly through the cognitive approach. Cognitivist theories attempt to explain the universal mental processes underlying behaviour. To ask how people are like some others is the concern of individual difference psychology. This focuses particularly on personality and intelligence, and as mentioned above is the area where the idiographic versus nomothetic debate is most apparent. Modern individual difference psychology takes a nomothetic approach, attempting to identify universal dimensions of personality (McGhee, 2001). The extent to which people are like some others is the extent to which they show similar scores on these personality dimensions. To ask how an individual is like no others is to adopt an idiographic approach, emphasising the uniqueness of each individual. This is the view taken by humanistic and social constructionist psychology.

While the idiographic versus nomothetic debate is usually considered in terms of how to investigate personality, it can be seen more generally as the question of which aspects of human psychology can be investigated universally, and which can

only be investigated in individuals. In other words, to question the dividing line between asking how people are like all others and asking how people are like no others. For most, psychology is the science of human universals. However, in social psychology there is a fundamental debate about whether interpersonal and group behaviour should be investigated in universal terms (i.e. like all others) or in unique, individual terms (i.e. unlike all others). Stainton Rogers (2003) draws a contrast between experimental and critical approaches to social psychology, corresponding broadly to scientific-cognitivist and social constructionist approaches respectively. For Stainton Rogers, the two approaches are mutually exclusive, and differ in their basic views of ontology and epistemology. The purpose of experimental social psychology is to produce objective knowledge in the form of general laws governing psychological processes. Theories are developed to identify cause-and-effect relationships, and then refined through the hypothetico-deductive method. Such lawful explanations "smooth out" individual complexity, and specify a limited set of variables to study, eliminating anything seen as extraneous. In contrast, critical approaches pursue explication rather than explanation. Rather than identifying lawful cause-and-effect relationships, critical approaches attempt to tease out the sociocultural factors that govern social interaction in specific circumstances, and that mediate how people make meaning in particular situations. Rather than smoothing out individual complexity, the complexity is characterised in its own terms through the focus on the specific and through identifying anomalies.

14.4.2 Implications for psychology as a science

The debate in social psychology presented above relates to whether social psychology should be pursued scientifically. However, this debate applies more widely across psychology. For example, it has been suggested that cognitivism should be replaced by discursive, idiographic approaches to understanding cognition (Edwards, 2006; Potter, 2000). Four positions can be identified regarding the choice between scientific, nomothetic methods and alternative, more idiographic methods in psychology (Jones, 2008b; Stevenson & Cooper, 1997):

1. Psychology should use scientific methods exclusively, although these may be improved upon.
2. Psychology should reject science and use alternative methods.
3. Psychologists should use different methods for different areas of psychology, for example cognitive psychology should be investigated scientifically but social psychology should not be.
4. Psychologists should use a mix of methods to get a richer understanding, a position of epistemological pluralism.

The first position suggests that psychology should only investigate how people are like all others, while the second suggests that we should only investigate the unique experiences of individuals. The third suggests that we can draw a dividing

line between the "like all others" and "like no others" questions depending on the phenomena being investigated, on the assumption that some phenomena are based on fundamental psychological processes that are shared by all, whereas other phenomena depend on unique aspects of the individual. The fourth position can be seen as suggesting that we share a universal set of basic psychological processes, but that the way in which such processes are marshalled is unique to the individual and dependent upon the specific circumstances an individual finds themselves in. We can use nomothetic methods to investigate the general architecture of human psychology, but need to use idiographic methods to understand any particular individual's use of that architecture.

14.5 Free Will and Determinism

The final debate we will consider is that between free will and determinism. Determinism in this sense is the position that behaviours or psychological states are determined by identifiable causes. We've seen some aspects of this debate already, particularly in discussing reductionism. Reductionism assumes that a given phenomenon is caused, or determined, by events at a more fundamental level. For example, physiological reductionism claims that psychological states are determined by brain states or genetics, hence Rose's alternative label of *neurogenetic determinism* (Rose, 1998). As an example, to say that there is a genetic basis for violence is to claim that an individual's violent behaviour is determined by their genetic inheritance, suggesting that the individual has no choice in their behaviour. Much of psychology implicitly assumes determinism (Gross, 2009), because, as we saw in chapter 1, adopting the scientific approach to psychology involves searching for the determining causes of behavioural effects – to be scientific requires being deterministic (Valentine, 1992). However, a difficulty remains, in that accepting determinism conflicts with our subjective experience of having free will.

The commitment to a scientific approach to psychology, and science's reliance on determinism, means that this debate is often obscured in psychology (Jones, 2008d). It is, though, fundamental to arguments about whether psychology should be a science, so the main anti-science approaches to psychology, the humanistic and the social constructionist, reject determinism and emphasise the importance of free will. It also arises in arguments about and evaluations of physiological explanations where they are criticised for being excessively deterministic. Other strongly deterministic approaches to psychology include the behaviourist, where behaviour is seen as determined by learnt associations between stimulus and response; and the psychodynamic, where behaviour is seen as determined by unconscious urges. However, the cognitivist approach is also implicitly deterministic, since it continues to use the scientific methods developed by the behaviourists (Jones & Elcock, 2001). We'll look more closely at the different sides of the debate before addressing a possible solution.

14.5.1 Defining free will and determinism

One problem that arises in dealing with this debate is over defining free will. Valentine (1992) offers three possible interpretations. The first interpretation suggests that people have free will if they have a genuine choice of behaviour. However, this is untestable, since we cannot guarantee that there isn't an underlying cause we can't identify. The second interpretation recognises that behaviour is often predictable rather than random, so there is usually some cause to it. However, we have free will to the extent to which our behaviour is unconstrained, meaning that these causes don't have to be adhered to. The third interpretation is to see behaviour as voluntary in that we have control over it, as opposed to instinctual, involuntary behaviour. In this sense, "choice" means exerting control over behaviour. These definitions of free will accept that behaviour is often predictable and fit our subjective experience. However, it becomes difficult to provide explanations of how behaviour comes about.

As we've seen, there are a number of deterministic approaches in psychology. These share an acceptance that all behaviour has a cause, but differ on what the determining causes might be. In the nature–nurture debate, for example, the debate is usually about whether behaviour is caused by heredity or the environment (Jones, 2008d). Taken to an extreme, determinism suggests that with sufficient knowledge and sufficient information, all future behaviour is predictable. This fits classical ideas of science and suggests the possibility of control. However, modern physics disputes such hard determinism, and the position is unfalsifiable since causes are assumed to exist even if they can't be identified.

An important ramification of the free will versus determinism debate is its implications for ideas of moral and social responsibility. In our everyday thinking we typically assume that people are responsible for their actions, and hold them accountable for those actions (Gross, 2009). This ascription of responsibility necessarily implies freedom of choice. Determinism, on the other hand, would suggest that people are not responsible for their actions, and so we should not ascribe blame or praise to actions (Jones, 2008d). Legal systems have traditionally assumed that people are accountable for their actions unless they are experiencing "diminished responsibility", effectively a temporary suspension of free will (Gross, 2009). However, recently defence lawyers have increasingly used claims of a genetic basis for behaviour to argue for more lenient punishment because clients couldn't help themselves, although equally prosecution lawyers could argue for more stringent punishment because particular criminals are inherently bad (Feresin, 2009).

14.5.2 Soft determinism

From most perspectives, the debate between free will and determinism is impossible to answer, and so a compromise position of soft determinism is adopted (Valentine, 1992). This suggests that our actions may have an immediate, proximal cause in

mental life, and hence can be seen as voluntary because we make conscious decisions; however, that mental life is itself caused, so there is determinism at a lower level (Gross, 2009). This was the position adopted by William James in the late nineteenth century, but behaviourism's rejection of mental life as having a causative role in behaviour meant accepting hard determinism. With the emergence of the cognitivist approach from the mid-twentieth century soft determinism has returned, and is now the implicit position in most scientific psychology. The debate now becomes a question of what behaviours are determined and to what extent (Jones, 2008d). Clearly instinctual behaviours, such as blinking when an object is thrown at you, are strongly determined. However phenomena such as language and social behaviour are seen as more under the control of cognitive processes, and so less determined. Thus soft determinism, and the cognitivist approach, sits between the two extremes of the hard determinism of the physiological approach and the free will of the social constructionist approach. It also fits with the position of emergent materialism within the mind–body debate. In this view, the mind has evolved to arise out of the physical operation of the brain in order to allow us to direct our actions (Gross, 2009).

14.6 Chapter Summary

We began the chapter by reviewing the notion of issues in psychology, and saw that one way to explain the diversity of psychology is by considering the positions that different psychologists take towards a number of fundamental debates. These debates lack objective criteria for resolution, and so the positions adopted reflect the everyday psychology of the psychologist, which is itself shaped by a number of factors. We went on to look at a number of specific issues. We considered the appropriateness of reductionism, and saw that the right level at which to pursue psychology depends on the kinds of answers one wants to achieve. We then went on to look at the major positions regarding the relationship between the mind and body – materialism, functionalism, and mentalism – and characterised these in terms of the theoretical approaches to psychology with which they are associated. We saw that each of these positions has some difficulties, and suggested an alternative position of emergent materialism. We examined the debate between idiographic and nomothetic approaches to psychology, and looked at the implications of this debate for the question of whether psychology should be a science. Finally we considered the issue of free will and determinism, and saw that mainstream scientific psychology adopts a position of soft determinism.

In various parts of the book, we have discussed psychology's desire to be seen as a science. Psychology adopts a particular view of science, and this has implications for the positions taken towards a number of the debates we discuss here. So, being scientific requires psychology to adopt the positions of being nomothetic and determinist. The dominant approach in mainstream scientific psychology is

cognitivism, which is functionalist but compatible with emergent materialism. It is usually considered to be non-reductionist in looking at cognitive psychology, but can be seen as such in overlooking the influence of the physical body and the wider environment, the criticism presented by theories of embodied cognition. It can be considered as reductionist in looking at social psychology, since it concentrates on explanations in terms of internal mental processes in individuals to explain behaviour in group settings.

Self-test Questions

1. How does the existence of a number of issues and debates in psychology explain the diversity of the discipline?
2. Why do psychologists choose particular positions regarding issues in psychology?
3. What forms of reductionism are commonly adopted within psychology?
4. How does reductionism relate to levels of explanation?
5. What are the components of the mind?
6. What three theories of the mind–body relationship underlie contemporary approaches to psychology?
7. What are the differences between nomothetic and idiographic approaches to psychology?
8. What are the implications of the idiographic-nomothetic debate for whether psychology should be a science?
9. What are the disadvantages of accepting a strongly deterministic position?
10. How does "soft determinism" resolve the debate between free will and determinism?

Thinking Points

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of a reductionist approach to psychology?
2. How does determinism conflict with our subjective experiences?
3. To what extent is it reasonable to look for universal laws in human psychology?

Further Reading

Bell, A. (2002). *Debates in psychology*. London: Routledge.

A good integrated approach that focuses on how these various issues and debates relate to each other.

Bem, S., & Looren de Jong, H. (2006). *Theoretical issues in psychology: An introduction* (2nd edn). London: Sage.

An excellent treatment of the philosophy of science and philosophy of psychology, which incorporates most of the debates discussed here. Some readers may find it a little too advanced for introductory reading.

Gross, R. (2009). *Themes, issues and debates in psychology* (3rd edn). London: Hodder Education.

The best coverage of issues and debates in psychology for students. It gives a chapter-length treatment for most of the issues included in this chapter.

McGhee, P. (2001). *Thinking psychologically*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

This takes a different approach to issues and debates in psychology than most. It addresses the debates in the context of looking at different topic areas in psychology.

Valentine, E. (1992). *Conceptual issues in psychology* (2nd edn). London: Routledge.

A classic book that covers all the issues discussed here, and more, in depth. More advanced than the Gross volume, but also less accessible.

15 Psychology at Issue?

Dai Jones

Contents

Learning Outcomes

When you've finished reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Contrast the mainstream view of psychology as an objective science with the view of psychology as reflexive and sociohistorically embedded.
- Appreciate the ways in which psychological knowledge is generated in specific contexts and competes for acceptability in those contexts.
- Reflect on the value of and potential for changes to research practice in the discipline.
- Identify a range of issues in how psychology relates to areas of social concern.
- Evaluate suggestions that psychology should become a more unified, integrated discipline.

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

Introduction

Throughout the book, we've considered a range of topical examples of how psychology relates to particular areas of social concern. We hope that these discussions are interesting in their own right, but we've also attempted to show that psychology is not always the objective, fact-making discipline it is sometimes presented as, and to show that there is a range of issues and debates on which psychologists disagree. In this chapter we will draw together some conclusions from the material presented in the previous chapters, and consider what kind of discipline psychology is and what kind of discipline it might be in future.

We begin the chapter by summarising the message of the book, in contrasting the "mainstream" view of psychology as an objective science conducted by impartial researchers with an alternative view of psychology, as a reflexive discipline embedded in particular social, cultural, and historical contexts. In this view, the knowledge psychology produces is a reflection of the particular time and place in which that knowledge was created; and that knowledge has a reflexive relationship with the human psychology to which it relates. As part of this, we will consider the conditions under which knowledge claims may be accepted or rejected, showing that claims need to fit the wider sociopolitical context.

In the second part of the chapter, we consider some aspirations for how psychology might change in the future. We will suggest changes to scientific research methodology, including a reduced emphasis on the hypothetico-deductive method. We will then look at how psychology might better recognise its own reflexivity, and particularly take account of the role of values and ethics, and the need to eliminate bias. As part of this we will look at increased efforts towards "giving psychology away". Finally, we will evaluate the potential for unity within psychology and consider the extent to which it is an inherently diverse discipline.

15.1 Questioning Psychology

We began this book by defining psychology as the systematic study of mental life and behaviour, and for most psychologists as specifically the science of mind and behaviour. The use of scientific methods gives psychology its identity, but also, it is claimed, enables psychology to produce objective knowledge of human psychology. However, this view has been criticised throughout psychology's history. For example, Helen Thompson Woolley reviewed research into psychological differences between gender groups, and suggested, "There is perhaps no field aspiring to be scientific where flagrant personal bias, logic martyred in the cause of supporting a prejudice, unfounded assertions, and even sentimental rot and drivel, have run riot to such an extent as here" (Woolley, 1910; in Milar, 2010).

One would hope that much has changed in the hundred years since Woolley wrote those thoughts, but the material presented throughout this book suggests otherwise. Despite claims to producing objective factual knowledge, we've seen

evidence of bias in psychology's work, and of psychology creating its own subject matter. In this section, we reflect on the nature of psychology and compare the standard view of psychology to critical perspectives. We'll characterise psychology as reflexively embedded in particular sociocultural and historical contexts, and claim that those contexts influence what psychological knowledge is deemed acceptable.

15.1.1 Mainstream views of psychology

Throughout the book we adopt a position that there is a "mainstream" view of psychology, as a science conducted by objective researchers who use particular methods to uncover the truth about human nature (Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin, 2010). This sees psychology as standing apart from the social contexts within which it is conducted, objectively investigating its subject matter of human psychology, itself seen as separate from the work of psychologists and unaffected by it. Against this, there are a range of forms of critical psychology that emphasise the reflexivity of the discipline, the sociopolitical consequences of psychological research and practice, and the influence of a range of contextual factors in shaping the ways in which psychology is conducted (Jones & Elcock, 2001). These insights have informed the writing of this book, and in this section we'll present an alternative characterisation of psychology. Before doing so, however, we'll look a little at why this mainstream view developed and what its consequences may be.

Jones and Elcock (2001) discuss how psychology emerged and developed in a social context that valued scientific knowledge above other forms, wherein scientific status was essential for a newly emerging discipline to be taken seriously. The idea of being a science, and the adoption of scientific methods, is fundamental to psychology's status as a discipline within modern scientific culture, and for many psychologists that status is essential to the discipline's self-image (Richards, 2010). Given this, it is unusual for psychologists to question their discipline's scientific credentials, and the inevitable discussion of "Is psychology a science?" given in introductory textbooks often serves to revalidate an existing commitment to the scientific ideal, rather than to genuinely question psychology's status as a science.

If the desire for psychology to be a science is not in question, we might ask what kind of science psychology should be. During psychology's emergence in the late nineteenth century, philosophers such as Windelband distinguished between natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and social or human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) (Gross, 2009). The natural sciences were concerned with generating universal general laws detailing cause-and-effect relationships, whereas the human sciences were concerned with more interpretative understanding, or *Verstehen* (Valentine, 1992). Following this distinction, Wilhelm Wundt identified two forms of psychology: an experimental, physiological psychology modelled after the natural sciences, and a more interpretive "folk psychology" modelled after the social sciences (Jones & Elcock, 2001). This distinction survives in the debate between idiographic and nomothetic approaches (see chapters 9 and 14). However, for most, psychology is

firmly modelled on the natural sciences, with Wundt's distinction being repudiated. Reasons for psychology's adoption of the natural science model included a desire to distance itself from philosophy in order to establish an independent disciplinary identity (Jones & Elcock, 2001), and the promise of a natural science–type psychology to provide a tool to manage social problems (Richards, 2010). A view was taken that the natural science model, in emphasising the derivation of general laws, was more rigorous and objective than the social science model, with no place for intuition and interpretation. A particular emphasis was placed on objectivity: Morawski (2005) describes a prevailing view that experimental methods assured objectivity, and therefore psychologists using such methods needed no special scrutiny as to their motives.

The idea that psychology's scientific methods assure objectivity has proven resistant to change. Psychology is seen as being immune to sociocultural trends and ideological influences (Prilleltensky, 1989). This is despite the well-established field interrogating scientific practice, called the *sociology of scientific knowledge* (SSK), which shows that even in pure natural sciences such as physics, true objectivity is unobtainable (Jones & Elcock, 2001). SSK recognises that intuition and interpretation are key parts of science. Critical psychologists apply insights from SSK to psychology, but such work has had little effect on mainstream views. Morawski (2005) identifies a particular resistance to addressing the reflexive elements of psychology, in part due to the role science plays in psychology's self-image. However, the semblance of objectivity also provides a valuable screen for those who might wish to present a particular argument within psychology, as we saw in the chapters discussing gender and "race". In the next section, we'll see how critical psychology reveals that psychologists have pre-existing views of human nature, and that these beliefs influence the claims that psychologists make.

15.1.2 Critical views of psychology

The previous section casts doubt on the idea of psychology as an objective science. In this section, we present an alternative view drawn from the work of critical psychologists. We believe that the view of psychology presented here better explains the ways in which psychology engages with society. This alternative view suggests that it has a reflexive relationship with its subject matter; is embedded in specific sociocultural and historical contexts, and reflects its host society; and is shaped by a range of contingencies, or historical accidents (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Prilleltensky (1989, p.795) argues that "psychology and society are involved in a network of mutual influences that contribute to shape each other", claiming that psychology has been used to maintain the status quo, and has found the rhetoric of objectivity a valuable means to this end. Thus, for example, psychological theories have been used to support claims of differences by "race", class, and gender, and the implications of such theories have been that such differences are inevitable and not due to structural inequality in society. In this sense, psychology can be seen as "politics by other means" (Staddon, 2001, p.i). Psychology has a reflexive

relationship with society, such that it engages in social discourse and helps to shape the nature of that discourse in wider society, for example in contemporary discourses misapplying the concept of addiction to explain socially undesirable behaviour around sex, shopping, or Internet use.

There is another sense in which psychology is reflexive, regarding its subject matter. Psychology investigates a particular set of constructs, which are reflections of the society in which those constructs are investigated. Thus, for example, notions of "intelligence" in the early twentieth century were somewhat different in France from those in the United States and United Kingdom (Schneider, 1992), while Danziger (1997) relates his difficulties in discussing the construct of motivation at all in an Indonesian setting. More, psychology's constructs are hypothetical, in that their existence is created and assumed by the psychologist. This leads to the development of measurements for these phenomena, and when a successful measure is developed the construct is assumed to exist – a process of reification (Richards, 2010). However, this is not necessarily a safe assumption. Several issues stem from this. One is that such constructs are presented as fixed aspects of human psychology, and used to judge, manage, or influence people in various ways. Such ideas are propagated not only in the host society but also internationally: Watters (2010), for example, discusses the spread of American concepts of mental illness, and how this negatively affects other cultures. Another issue is that, as we discussed in chapter 13, when psychologists theorise about psychological constructs, they create or change those constructs. Danziger (1997, p.36) suggests, "Many of the fundamental categories of twentieth-century psychology are … twentieth-century inventions. Such concepts as 'intelligence', 'behaviour' and 'learning' were given such radically changed meanings by psychology that there simply are no earlier equivalents."

The stance we take in this book is to reject the positivistic view of psychology as an unproblematic, objective science. Psychology is certainly conducted using scientific methods, with a considerable degree of success in some areas, but there are a number of issues with this, such that psychology can be seen as an "uncertain science". However, we do not adopt an entirely constructivist view that psychology is created by its host society. Rather, we see psychology as founded in mutualism (Richards, 2010). We have seen that the discipline has a reflexive relationship with both society and its subject matter. The mutualist view suggests that these three – society, the discipline, and human psychology – continually interact with and change each other (see Figure 15.1). In this, psychology and other human sciences are different from the natural sciences (Smith, 2005). We look at some implications of this in the final section.

15.1.3 "Known facts", disputed claims, and consensus knowledge

In the previous section, we suggested that psychological claims are made in interaction with particular social contexts. In this section we look at this a little more closely. We can see psychology's knowledge base as consisting of "known facts" and disputed claims. Within mainstream psychology, much psychological

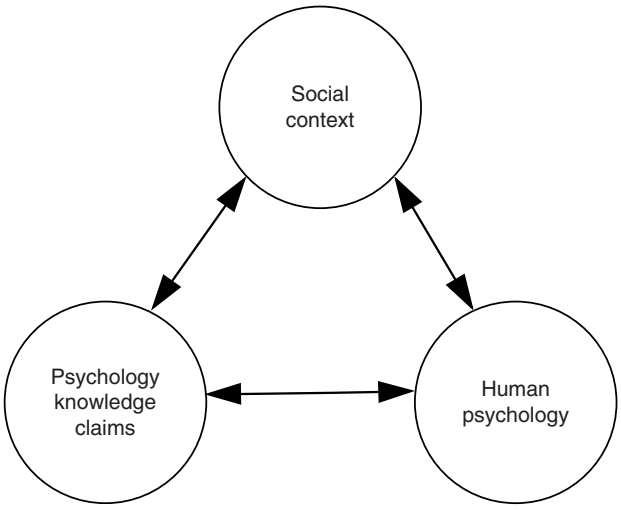

Figure 15.1 Mutualism.
In *mutualism*, psychological knowledge is produced in a continual interaction with the social context and the phenomena being investigated.

knowledge is presented as truth – the "known facts" – and widely accepted as such. This fits with a logical positivist view that science advances through a process of hypothesis testing and theory refinement, with occasional refutations through Popperian falsification (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Within this view, there is no obvious recognition that any knowledge claim may be rejected in future, and that this has happened throughout psychology's history. Psychology texts from the 1930s and 1940s confidently assert the findings of behaviourist psychology, but these findings are no longer accepted. This issue is addressed to some extent by the approach of conventionalism, which sees scientific theories as evolving through convention on the basis of factors such as parsimony and elegance (Jones & Elcock, 2001). In conventionalism, theories change gradually over time in response to research results, through processes of addition and modification. It is only when theories are repeatedly not supported that they are altered or discarded. There is recognition that supporting a particular hypothesis may provide evidence for a theory, but cannot prove a theory because another theory with more explanatory power may yet be developed. Conventionalism provides a more nuanced account of theory change, but this account largely ignores wider cultural factors; and it still presents currently accepted theory as the most accurate available (Jones & Elcock, 2001).

The view we present in this book is that knowledge claims in psychology are part of a consensus view within particular disciplinary and cultural contexts at a given historical point (see Figure 15.2). Claims are accepted to the extent to which they fit with a particular consensus. Psychologists have a pre-existing set of beliefs about human nature, about the project of psychology, and about what constitutes acceptable knowledge. This is most apparent when claims are rejected: for example, Lubek and Apfelbaum (1987) describe how John Garcia's work on learning theory, and his identification of conditioned taste aversion, was repeatedly rejected by mainstream journals. Garcia is a very well-respected psychologist, elected to the US National Academy of Sciences in 1983, but his work on taste aversion from the 1950s challenged the consensus view of learning theory. Supporters of the mainstream worked to "block, marginalize or reject a deviant set of scientific ideas" (Lubek & Apfelbaum, 1987, p.60). These efforts were so successful that in 18 years Garcia had only two papers accepted by journals published by the American Psychological Association. A more general example is the reception of Frederic Bartlett's pioneering work on the constructive nature of memory (Jones & Elcock, 2001). Bartlett published *Remembering: A Study*

in Experimental and Social Psychology in 1932, describing a constructive approach to memory that emphasised the role of social and cultural factors. However, Bartlett's ideas remained unrecognised by behaviouristic American psychology until the 1960s, when the new cognitive approach was more amenable to his ideas. This shows the importance of fitting with a disciplinary consensus, but there are two further lessons to learn from Bartlett (Jones & Elcock, 2001). One is to do with the nature of historical writing: histories of psychology written from the 1960s tended to highlight Bartlett as one of the progenitors of cognitive psychology, despite his limited recognition, because he serves as a valuable founding father for the subdiscipline. The other is that Bartlett's work described memory in terms of both internal mental structures and the social and cultural factors affecting memory. In the new cognitive psychology, which emphasised internal mental processing to the exclusion of external factors, these wider elements of Bartlett's work were ignored. Bartlett's ideas were cherry picked for those aspects that fitted the new consensus.

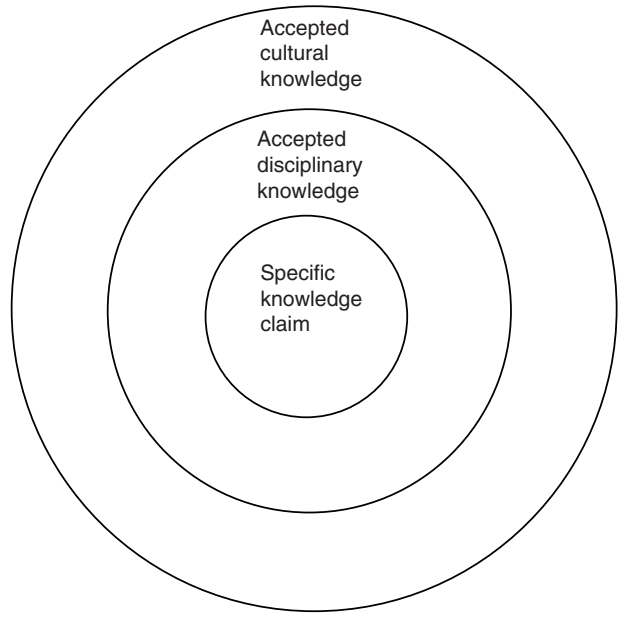

Figure 15.2 Situating Knowledge.
Any specific knowledge claim is made, and judged for acceptance, in the context of what is acceptable in the discipline (or subdiscipline) and in the culture at large.

Clearly the disciplinary consensus within psychology is important to the acceptability of knowledge claims. However, claims must also fit the wider social and cultural consensus. In a review of gender difference research, Helen Thompson Woolley wrote that "the truest thing to be said at present is that scientific evidence plays very little part" (in Milar, 2010). We have seen many examples in the book of claims being accepted in psychology for reasons other than scientific evidence, despite what the mainstream view would suggest should be the case. Moral and political values are fundamental to the acceptance or otherwise of psychological claims, particularly in areas of social concern, as illustrated by Focus Box 15.1. This is apparent when considering the notion of constituencies in psychology, discussed in chapter 2. Briefly, psychologists may identify with people like themselves on some characteristic (ethnicity, gender, etc.) and address psychological issues in a manner that reflects the interests of that group, misrepresenting the interests of people outside the group. This relates to everyday psychology: psychologists are influenced in their work by their everyday psychological beliefs, derived in part from indigenous and experiential knowledge learnt within particular sociocultural settings.

The result of the disciplinary and social consensus is such that the acceptability of a particular claim does not necessarily correspond to truth. We need to be careful to evaluate "known facts" in psychology, thinking critically about scientific claims in

Focus Box 15.1 The Rind Controversy

The standard model of scientific progress suggests that a paper is published presenting particular claims, and those claims are evaluated through science's "self-correction" mechanisms of replication, falsification, and re-analysis of the original data. When the claims made are supported by these mechanisms, the claim is accepted. However, the Rind controversy gives the lie to this model by showing the importance of social and political factors in the acceptability of claims.

The controversy began with the publication in 1998 of a paper by Rind, Tromovich, and Bauserman investigating the widespread belief that child sexual abuse causes intense harm. The paper reported a meta-analysis of 59 studies of college students investigating the long-term effects of child sexual abuse, *meta-analysis* being a technique that looks for an "average" finding across a number of different pieces of research. The results showed that negative effects were not pervasive or intense, contradicting the widespread belief. The authors included an explicit statement that the results of their study should not be seen as informing any moral or legal judgement, since those were outside of the purview of science. However, this did not prevent considerable controversy. The purpose of this box is not to discuss the validity or otherwise of Rind et al.'s claims, but rather to reflect on the factors which influence the acceptability of a particular claim.

Within 9 months of publication, Rind et al.'s paper was at the centre of a "political storm" involving the American Psychological Association, the US Congress, campaigning organisations, and the popular media (Garrison & Kobor, 2002, p.165). The results of the paper were picked up by the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), an organisation that promotes treatment of homosexuality through psychotherapy. NARTH criticised the research and also the American Psychological Association, as publisher of the journal, claiming that the APA wished to normalise paedophilia (Garrison & Kobor, 2002, p.165). Following this, the research was attacked by a number of conservative radio talk show hosts and campaigning organisations such as the Family Research Council. The attacks focussed on the methodology employed and the motives of the researchers, although the criticisms were often ill informed and derogatory (Lilienfeld, 2002a). The APA distanced itself from the research, and promised an independent review of an article for the first time in its history (Lilienfeld, 2002a), perhaps in an attempt to assuage criticisms of the APA from the US Congress. For its part, both chambers of Congress passed a resolution condemning the research as severely flawed. The organisation invited to conduct an independent review, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, declined to do so because there was no evidence of improper methodology or questionable practices by the researchers, and decried criticisms of the research by those who misrepresented it (Lilienfeld, 2002a).

Given the nature of the research being reported, it was inevitable that it would generate controversy. The particular lesson we wish to draw from this episode is that psychological claims are made and evaluated within specific social contexts.

psychology as much as we are encouraged to think critically about pseudoscientific claims. In doing so, we need to consider not only the research evidence in support of a claim but also the context in which the claim is made and how it has been derived, including the background of the theorist and sources of funding for the research.

While there is a considerable body of knowledge within psychology that is accepted as valid, there are also a number of disputed claims in psychology.

Much of this book concentrates on such claims, both in such specific cases as "race" and IQ, and in the more general sense such as the nature–nurture debate. Where there is current debate in psychology, the consumer may already be alerted of the need to think carefully and critically about the claims made. However, it's also more difficult to evaluate these claims, because the debates continue due to a lack of consensus and of objective criteria to resolve them. It may be a statistical fact that in North America, white and black adults differ on average IQ (Rushton & Jensen, 2005). However, there are at least three possible interpretations of this finding, including that intelligence is largely genetically determined, and genetic differences between racial groups lead to differences in IQ; that different ethnic groups have had different experiences, perhaps due to inequality, leading to different outcomes; and that the measurements used are biased. Despite the claims of psychologists to be value-free finders of truth, interpretation of the statistical finding is fundamentally influenced by political values (Sternberg, 2005). In considering such issues, it's important to remember that a debate may continue because one side or the other doesn't fit with the consensus, or because some psychologists have their own specific consensus that differs from that of the mainstream. However, that a claim doesn't fit a consensus, or that a group doesn't fit the mainstream view, does not mean the claim or the group is mistaken.

15.2 Reshaping Psychology

Psychology is a well-established discipline that continues to grow in student numbers and professional opportunities. As we have seen, though, there are a number of debates around what kind of discipline psychology should be. We've described psychology as an "uncertain science", but also suggested that scientific status is fundamental to most psychologists' view of the discipline, and is important to psychology being able to fulfil the roles it assumes within modern society. Given this, psychology will continue to be pursued using scientific methods. In this section, we begin by suggesting some areas for improvement in the way in which scientific methods are used and interpreted in psychology.

Having reviewed the use of scientific methods in psychology, we go on to review the nature and purpose of the discipline. Throughout the book, we've adopted a broadly "critical psychology" stance towards psychology. Parker (2007, p.1) suggests that critical psychology can give us insights into how psychology is, what issues may arise with it, and what psychology "might do instead". It is in this spirit that we close the section, and the book, with some cautious suggestions for improvement.

15.2.1 Refining psychological research

Most psychologists are committed to the idea of psychology as a science, which means doing research in a particular kind of way – through experimentation and the use of inferential statistics for decision making. This suits the goal of finding

cause-and-effect relationships, and of generalising laws to explain regularities in behaviour. However, this commitment introduces some concerns. One is that the scientific method needs to be applied carefully to produce valid results. Another is that relying only on a single method constrains what we can investigate, such that if our preferred method is the difference test, then psychology becomes a science of differences. As Abraham Maslow once said, if the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail. In this section, we look at ways of improving scientific research, and consider the desirability of using multiple methods to get a richer understanding.

We saw in chapter 1 that there are a number of issues with the use of the scientific method in psychology that must be accounted for to ensure the validity of scientific research. The journal *Perspectives on Psychological Science* recently devoted a special issue to reflections on how psychological science can be improved. The special issue, summarised by Jarrett (2009), had 26 articles, which suggests widespread recognition that psychological science needs improving.

A number of ideas for improvement come from identifying problems in how psychological research is conducted and interpreted. The goal of much research is to collect data which can be analysed with inferential statistics to test a hypothesis – the hypothetico-deductive method described in chapter 1. An experimental hypothesis is accepted if inferential statistics show a significant result at a given alpha level, typically set at 5%. This process was popularised by Fisher in his 1925 textbook *Statistics for Research Workers* as an objective way of evaluating hypotheses (Hubbard & Lindsay, 2008). However, criticisms of the process have appeared from at least the 1930s (Cohen, 1994). Cohen (1994) suggests that significance testing "does not tell us what we want to know, and we so much want to know what we want to know that, out of desperation, we nevertheless believe that it does!" (p.997).

Despite this, most psychologists use the *p* value as the main decision-making tool for scientific research – what Dienes (2008, p.82) describes as the "unchallenged establishment view" – without necessarily making an informed choice. Hubbard and Lindsay (2008) suggest that significance tests exaggerate the evidence for the experimental hypothesis. They suggest increased use of replication instead, wherein multiple studies of the same effect are conducted to see if results are consistent; and an increased concentration on sample statistics, confidence intervals, and particularly effect sizes. As the name suggests, effect sizes are a measure of the size of the effect observed in an analysis. So, rather than only looking for a significant difference in intelligence between gender groups, with a yes or no answer, we should pay more attention to the size of the difference, which is typically small in gender difference research.

Effect sizes seem more informative than simple *p* values as research results, although their use has provoked debate. However, there are more fundamental problems with significance testing. Ioannidis (2005) claims that most research findings based on significance testing are false, and may be no more than measures of prevailing bias, and further claims (Ioannidis, 2008) that neither replication nor

finding large effect sizes address the fundamental problems with significance testing. He suggests that psychology should instead adopt the alternative statistical method of Bayesian inference. Bayesian inference gives direct evidence of the probability of a hypothesis being right, whereas *p* values do not represent strength of evidence for a particular hypothesis (Dienes, 2008). Haig (2009) goes further and rejects the emphasis on statistics alone, calling instead for the more qualitative approach of inference to best explanation. In this, theories are evaluated on the grounds of breadth, simplicity, and analogy to determine whether they are the best available explanation of a set of evidence, although statistical results may be used as evidence within this.

Two other difficulties are commonly noted in the practical application of the hypothetico-deductive method within psychology. One is the observation that psychologists use complex statistical tests, such as analysis of covariance or structural equational modelling, without fully understanding the nature of such tests (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2007). Reviewers of papers submitted to journals increasingly expect advanced analyses to be used before research is deemed publishable. Peterson (2009) recounts being required to use structural equational modelling before having an article accepted for publication, despite it adding little of value to the research. Peterson calls instead for "minimally sufficient research", wherein the analyses used are no more complex than required to test the hypotheses. The second practical difficulty is in the choice of participants for research. We saw in chapter 1 that it is essential that representative samples of participants be used for research results to have external validity. However, most research in psychology is conducted by academics who use their students as participants, and students have been found to be unrepresentative of the wider population in a particular culture (Valentine, 1992). More problematically for a science that attempts to explain universal aspects of the psychology of all humans, there is mounting evidence that individuals from Western industrialised societies are quite unrepresentative of all humans, such that the results of Western psychological research apply only to Western individuals (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, in press).

We concentrate on the hypothetico-deductive method in this section because that is the method most commonly used in psychology. However, any one method will have some weaknesses, and can only give certain kinds of results. Because of that, an increasing number of psychologists have suggested the adoption of systematic pluralism – the use of multiple methods, each with a clear purpose – in psychological research (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2007). Using multiple methods allows for multiple perspectives on a given phenomenon. In addition, since psychology can only research phenomena for which an accepted methodology is available – for example, the use of statistics requires the researcher to design studies to fit the statistical tests being used – it allows a wider range of phenomena to be investigated. Using multiple methods also enhances generalisation, since they give multiple sources of evidence for a theory, separating knowledge making from any specific set of collected data. Suggestions for methods that might be used more widely in psychology include increased use of field research, to make psychology more

relevant to everyday lives; more use of introspection; and greater use of more idiographic methods such as single-case experimental designs.

The purpose of this section has not been to decry the use of the hypothetico-deductive method, but rather to encourage more care in its use. In particular, researchers should be more reflexive about their own research practice, and so be both more aware of how their own actions can influence the research findings, and more wary of the unthinking and unfounded assumption that the use of the hypothetico-deductive method necessarily ensures objectivity (Morawski, 2005).

15.2.2 A vision for psychology

Psychology is a productive discipline, and has long been concerned with being applicable to the conditions of human life and society, particularly in the United States (Jones & Elcock, 2001). We've seen throughout this book examples of psychology being engaged with society, for good and for bad. Sutton (2005) reviews the value of practical applications of psychology, and argues that psychology has made a significant difference to people's lives. The examples cited by Sutton are examples of psychology being "given away", a long-term goal of the discipline. However, many argue that psychology could do more, particularly in facilitating social justice and solving social problems (Walton & Dweck, 2009). We saw in chapter 13 that psychology hasn't always been successful in addressing the concerns of people's everyday psychologising. In Focus Box 15.2, we look at the continuing challenge of giving psychology away. In the remainder of this section, we set out some issues for psychology as a science engaged with society.

Jones and Elcock (2001) set out a vision for psychology. They suggest psychology should be engaged with the societies it is located within, be critical and reflexive of itself and its impact, and be ethical and cognisant of its moral dimension. Richards (2010) argues that psychology should go beyond seeking objective knowledge for behavioural management, and seek wisdom in expanding possibilities, enriching meaning, and facilitating liberation. Both see psychology as part of a broader notion of the human sciences, accepting the reflexive character of psychology and how this reflexive character makes psychology different from the natural sciences (Smith, 2005). These ambitions pose particular issues for psychology around its social embeddedness, its engagement with values and moral concerns, ethical considerations, and achieving equity and eliminating bias.

As the preceding chapters have indicated, psychology has often had a particular social role, sometimes deliberately sought and sometimes apparently inadvertent. We've seen that psychology's reflexive relationship with society means that psychology is shaped by social context, for example Hwang (2005) describes psychology as inextricably linked with sociocultural history. As we have seen, the work of psychologists is shaped by social context, and by their own views that arise in that context. Psychology in turn shapes social discourse, from its effect on social policy to its impact on changing individuals' everyday psychology. Hwang gives the example of modernisation theory, which was popular in psychology from the 1960s to

Focus Box 15.2 Giving Psychology Away

Psychologists have long talked about the need for psychology to be made accessible to people (Jones & Elcock, 2001). George Miller famously stressed the importance of "giving psychology away" in his 1969 presidential address to the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA has since established a Public Interest Directorate, tasked with promoting human welfare and equality through education and training, and involvement in public policy making; and the British Psychological Society (BPS) has established a strategy for taking psychology to society. Despite this, psychology continues to have a problem with its public image, and, as we saw in chapter 13, "popular" psychology continues to dominate everyday understandings and people continue to believe in psychological myths. Arguably, attempts to give psychology away have had limited success.

Psychology's public image problem is indicated by findings that psychology is viewed as having made fewer contributions to society, and psychologists as having less expertise, than natural sciences such as physics and biology (Janda, England, Lovejoy, & Drury, 1998). There has been increasing coverage of psychology in the British media, but much of this relates to New Age beliefs and celebrity gossip, and can be seen as more akin to pop psychology than the scientific discipline. When psychologists do engage with the media, there are a number of pitfalls and ethical issues, although the BPS is active in providing media training to psychologists (see also chapter 8). Discussions about giving psychology away typically focus on making psychological knowledge more accessible to the public, although there are also calls for psychology to be more useful to members of society.

Efforts to make psychology more accessible focus on its dissemination through the media. This includes raising the visibility of psychology by emphasising its contributions to society, and improving public understanding by focussing on psychology's accomplishments and being more proactive in public education and the media. However, Davey (2007) points out some of the difficulties with this, particularly in that psychological research may not be relevant to individuals' experiences. For Davey, psychology needs to provide more advice that addresses people's everyday concerns. One way of achieving this is for psychologists to write accessible popular science that is not "pop" psychology, for example the books referred to in chapter 13. However, there are barriers to this. Academics face pressure to produce academic research articles rather than popular material, while the media may be resistant to publishing academic psychology. For example, Epstein (2006) relates how as editor of *Psychology Today* he emphasised the dissemination of psychological research, but under different leadership and in the face of commercial pressures the journal has come to emphasise "pop" psychology.

As Davey (2007) intimates, attempts to share psychological research with the public will be for nought if that research is not relevant to individuals. Huppert (2009) suggests that the goal of psychology should be enhancing well-being for all, rather than addressing disorder in the few. This is the goal of community psychology and positive psychology. Such a focus on welfare might suggest that psychologists should adopt a value position. This is an anathema to those who aspire to being objective scientists, but for others psychology should abandon notions of detachment, and work to develop psychological literacy among individuals and communities as a means of promoting welfare (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007).

the 1980s. This American approach saw "modernisation" as inherently virtuous, and Americans and American society as more modern than any other. Global development meant modernising other societies, and psychology could play a role through modernising individuals. Thus psychology was seen as playing a very

deliberate role in social change, albeit often with good intentions. We argue in this book that this is inherent in the nature of psychology, and that psychologists need to be aware of this in their work, rather than maintain a semblance of objectivity.

Modernisation theory shows the importance of values to the work of psychology, even if they are implicit: to assume that modernisation is inherently good is a value judgement. The extent to which psychology should acknowledge values is a contested issue in psychology. Some argue that as an objective science, psychology should not be concerned with values, but rather scientific truth, and any discussion of values should be separated from facts (Staddon, 2001). For others, such a separation is impossible, and psychological constructs can only be described in terms of value concepts (Brinkmann, 2005). As we've seen, the idea of a purely objective psychological science is difficult to sustain, and we would suggest that values should be recognised, together with the moral implications of work in psychology. No matter how much they might wish to, psychologists shouldn't disclaim responsibility for how society makes use of their expertise, for example in maintaining discriminatory positions (Richards, 2010). Rather, psychologists should be aware of the moral dimensions of their work: Prilleltensky (1997) suggests a framework through which this might be achieved.

The issue of values is closely concerned with the question of ethics. We considered ethics in depth in chapter 8, which showed ongoing ethical dilemmas for psychologists. Seider, Davis, and Gardner (2007) suggest a new paradigm for considering such dilemmas, which goes beyond existing ethical guidelines to consider, for example, conflicts of interest. Pachter, Fox, Zimbardo, and Antonuccio (2007) report the findings of an APA task force on external funding and conflicts of interest. They found that corporate funding is an area of significant concern, particularly with the pharmaceutical industry, which has been found to use funding to influence sciences through a variety of mechanisms, including educational organisations that promote marketing, and "astroturfing" – establishing fake grassroots organisations as a form of consumer advocacy. Such conflicts are a particular concern given the increasing medicalisation of psychological phenomena, and attendant treatment with pharmaceuticals, that we discussed in chapter 6. Pachter et al. (2007) conclude with a number of recommendations for how psychologists can better preserve their independence in the light of such conflicts of interest.

We have seen a number of examples of bias in psychology. We suggest that psychology should aim to be fair to all groups in psychology. One way to achieve this might be to explicitly teach multiculturalism and diversity to psychologists. However, achieving social justice through psychology is difficult, since it involves confronting entrenched interests and the status quo within the discipline. Fox, Prilleltensky, and Austin (2010) suggest that the underlying assumptions of mainstream psychology facilitate inequality, particularly in producing theories that naturalise the social advantages of dominant groups and assist the management of other groups. When psychology became institutionalised within society, the form it took was that which suited the interests of those institutionalising it. As the membership of the discipline

has diversified, so too has the discipline: "in the last three decades the influx of women, non-whites and uncloseted gays into psychology has wreaked havoc with many assumptions, both theoretical and methodological, previously largely unquestioned" (Richards, 2010, p.388). However, mainstream psychology maintains its old, institutionalised form.

15.2.3 Unity in psychology

There is a particular issue in psychology we have not previously addressed. This is the question of whether psychology should become a unified discipline in place of its current diversity and fragmentation. This lack of unity is often identified as a problem in psychology (Goertzen, 2008). For Goertzen, the lack is due to underlying philosophical tensions, such as those we considered in chapter 14. While there have been a number of arguments for unity, these fail to address the underlying tensions. For some, unity means one theoretical approach becoming dominant over others so that the discipline becomes homogeneous. For example, it has been suggested that evolutionary or mentalistic approaches might fill such a role. However, such homogenisation entails accepting a particular set of positions regarding the debates referred to previously, for example a reductionist materialism, without clear evidence that these positions are appropriate for all the phenomena that psychology investigates. One response is that unity need not mean homogeneity, but rather it can be achieved through greater integration. For example, Ral (2006) suggests that multiple methods and perspectives might be integrated in focussing on particular specialisms in psychology. Similarly, Sternberg (2004) suggests that integration can be achieved through a focus on particular phenomena with different levels of analyses, which he characterises as the biological, the ecological, and the cultural.

Some of the integrated positions discussed above allow for some diversity in psychology. For others, psychology is inherently pluralistic, and any true integration is impossible. Dafermos and Marvakis (2006) consider a future in which psychology splits into two fields, an individualistic-cognitive-neurological field associated with the natural sciences, and a generalised social psychology associated with other social sciences, reflecting the distinction suggested by Wundt in the late nineteenth century. For Richards (2010), unity is impossible due to the reflexive character of psychology, and the diverse nature of psychologists. Even if all psychologists agree on the need for unity, and on a shared goal for psychology, for example that it should work towards achieving human welfare, psychologists will disagree as to how this might be achieved. Just as the population at large reflects different views of human nature and different desires for how society should be, so too do psychologists, who are a sample from that population. For psychology to become more homogeneous, its subject matter – human psychology – must first become more homogenised. Stenner and Brown (2009) call for a "psychology without foundations", wherein pluralism is accepted and diversity is not seen as a cause for concern.

15.3 Chapter Summary

We opened the chapter by reflecting on the mainstream view of psychology as a natural science conducted by objective researchers uncovering the truth about human nature. We suggested that this view is misplaced, and contrasted it with views from critical psychology. From this perspective, psychology is reflexive with both its subject matter and the sociocultural context in which it is conducted. We presented a position of mutualism, in which psychology engages in a continual three-way interaction with society and human psychology. As part of this, we considered the ways in which psychological knowledge claims are made in particular social and disciplinary contexts, and are judged as acceptable to the extent to which they meet the expectations of those contexts.

In the final section, we considered the implications of the view of psychology outlined in the book for how psychology should be conducted. We suggested that psychology should be more careful in its use of the hypothetico-deductive method and more open to systematic pluralism, the use of multiple methods to gain richer understanding. We went on to look at particular issues for psychology to consider arising from its nature as a reflexive, socioculturally embedded discipline, particularly around the place of values and ethics in the work of psychologists. We finished the section by reflecting on calls for disciplinary unity, suggesting that diversity might be inherent in the nature of the discipline.

Self-test Questions

1. How does the natural science model influence the nature of psychological science?
2. In what ways can psychology be considered to be reflexive?
3. How "real" are psychology's constructs?
4. To what extent are knowledge claims shaped by the contexts in which the claims are made?
5. What are the problems with relying on significance tests?
6. What are the advantages of systematic pluralism?
7. How do values affect the work of psychologists?
8. What are the challenges in "giving psychology away"?
9. How might psychology be fairer to all groups in society?
10. Why might unity in psychology be impossible to achieve?

Thinking Points

1. To what extent is the psychology we learn or otherwise hear about chosen for its acceptability in our given cultural and disciplinary context?

2. What problems might ensue in adopting a systematic pluralism approach to psychological research?
3. How might psychology better achieve a goal of promoting well-being in individuals?

Further Reading

Bem, S., & Looren de Jong, H. (2006). *Theoretical issues in psychology: An introduction* (2nd edn). London: Sage.

An excellent treatment of the philosophy of science and philosophy of psychology. Integrates the debates covered in chapter 14 with a discussion of the nature of psychology.

Danziger, K. (1997). *Naming the mind: How psychology found its language*. London: Sage.

Taking as its focus the constructs and categories used in psychology, Danziger shows how psychology emerges out of particular historical and cultural contexts.

Dienes, Z. (2008). *Understanding psychology as a science: An introduction to scientific and statistical inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

An introduction to key issues in science and statistics relating to the practice of research in psychology.

Fox, D., Prilleltensky, I., & Austin, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Critical psychology: An introduction* (2nd edn). London: Sage.

A clear introduction to the major themes in critical psychology from some of the leading scholars in the field.

Richards, G. (2010). *Putting psychology in its place: Critical historical perspectives* (3rd edn). London: Routledge.

The first edition of this book inspired the authors of the current text. A lucid and well-developed account of the reflexive nature of psychology.

Selected Glossary

This section gives a selected glossary for some of the key terms we use in the text. The glossary is not meant to be exhaustive, or to replace a standard dictionary of psychology. It is intended to help the reader with some of the more esoteric terms we use in the text, some of which are widely used only in the subdiscipline of critical psychology. It includes terms that appear in multiple chapters, to avoid the reader having to refer to a previous chapter to see a term defined; terms that have a distinctive meaning within critical psychology; and terms that are hard to find in student-level dictionaries of psychology. At the end of the section, we recommend a number of such dictionaries that we have found to be useful and accessible.

Cognitivism A theoretical approach to psychology that uses concepts from computing and information theory to explain thought processes, characterised by the metaphor of the mind as a computer. It adopts the **scientific method** developed in behaviourist psychology, and is generally **nomothetic** and broadly **positivist**. It has become the mainstream orientation in academic psychology. The approach is used not only in cognitive psychology, but also in social, developmental, and individual difference psychology.

Constituency We use the term *constituency* to refer to those members of a population who are like, and so represented by, particular members of the psychology profession. In this view, white, middle-class, male psychologists are likely to reflect the interests of other white, middle-class males – their constituency – and produce theories accordingly.

Contingency We suggest that the development of psychology is contingent upon historical events, in that psychology developed as it did because it depended on other circumstances being the case. Thus, psychology in the US quickly developed a range of applications because of the nature of American society at the time. The implication of this contingent view is that psychology's development has not followed a progressive path of improvement, getting closer to the truth of human nature, but rather is a reflection of the particular circumstances – social, political, and economic – that obtained during that development.

Critical history An approach to history that emphasises the need to identify the factors that shape historical change. Critical histories attempt to be contextualist, in seeing development as the result of many inter-related factors; naturalistic, in recognising

Psychology in Social Context: Issues and Debates, First Edition. Philip John Tyson, Dai Jones, and Jonathan Elcock.

that the work of individuals is affected by the context in which they work; constructivist, in that theories are not seen as reflecting a true state of affairs; and historicist, in that they attempt to understand work in the historical context in which it took place.

Critical psychology The term *critical psychology* refers to a range of views of psychology that reject the notion of psychology as an objective science that finds the truth about human nature, and instead emphasise the ways in which psychology is embedded in, reflects, and shapes particular social, cultural, and historical contexts. This approach emphasises the need to analyse the foundations and the consequences of psychological claims.

Effect size A measure of how large an effect is in a psychology study. Unlike the physical sciences, where there are internationally agreed units of physical properties, within psychology it is often difficult to say what the unit of measurement represents. As a consequence, effect sizes are often reported with regard to the amount of variation explained by an independent variable.

Empiricism Although *empiricism* has a specific sense in philosophy, we use the term in a more general way to refer to the development of knowledge through the gathering of observed evidence. Psychology is an empirical discipline, in that theories are supported by evidence that is systematically collected through a range of methods, including scientific and qualitative amongst others. This commitment to systematic evidence distinguishes psychology from other forms of **reflexive discourse**, and for some assures objectivity. However, data collection cannot be entirely separated from theorising, and the evidence gathered has to be interpreted, leading to controversies such as those around race and gender differences.

Epistemology The study of what we can know and how we can know it. Different approaches to psychology, such as **positivism** and **social constructionism**, adopt specific epistemological positions, reflecting different assumptions about the nature of knowledge.

Essentialism The concept that psychological phenomena exist as properties of individual people, and are universal to particular kinds of people. Thus, all women might be seen to possess a particular kind of language, distinct from males. Often this is explained in terms of an underlying determining cause, for example biology causing universal psychological differences between ethnic groups.

Everyday psychology Also termed *folk psychology*, this refers to the psychological beliefs and practices of the general public, distinct from the theories and methods of the academic and applied discipline of psychology.

Hermeneutics The theory and practice of interpretation and the study of interpretation theory. Contemporary hermeneutics encompasses not only issues involving the written text but also everything in the interpretative process. This includes verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that affect communication, such as presuppositions, as well as the meaning and philosophy of language.

Idiographic An approach or set of methods which emphasises the unique elements of the individual or the phenomenon of interest, as in much of history and biography.

Meta-analysis A statistical technique used alongside systematic literature reviews that attempts to determine whether or not a group of studies shows an overall effect for a particular independent variable.

Nomothetic An approach which seeks to provide general law-like statements about psychological phenomena, often by emulating the logic and methodology of the natural sciences.

Normative The way that particular theoretical constructions may act to encourage or enforce social activity and outcomes that ought (with respect to the norms implicit in those structures) to occur, while discouraging or preventing social activity that ought not to occur.

Ontology The study of the nature of reality. Different approaches to psychology adopt particular ontological positions, for example **positivist** approaches may adopt a **realist** ontology, while **social constructionist** approaches may adopt a **relativist** one.

Operationism The process of defining intangible concepts in terms of publicly available outcomes, for example defining *extroversion* in terms of the behaviours people perform. Operationism is important in allowing the measurement of hypothetical psychological constructs.

Popular psychology A form of **reflexive discourse** that produces claims about psychology aimed at a lay audience. It can be seen to differ from academic

psychology in terms of evidential, methodological, and theoretical rigour.

Positivism A commitment to using the **scientific method**, measurement, and logical reasoning to develop theories in psychology, which are then viewed as "true."

Quasi-experiment A study that looks for differences between groups on an independent variable, as with an experiment, but wherein the independent variable is not deliberately manipulated by the researcher. Since the independent variable is not manipulated, quasi-experiments cannot demonstrate that the independent variable causes differences.

Realism A position in **ontology** or **epistemology** that reality exists independently of our observation of it, and that through using appropriate methods we can discover true theories about reality.

Reductionism In general terms, the view that complex phenomena are best understood by reducing them to simpler constituent parts for investigation. Also used in the context of levels of explanation to refer to the explanation of a concept which appears at one level in terms of a lower level, for example explaining the psychological processes of memory in terms of physiological processes in the brain.

Reflexive discourse This term can be understood to mean conversations about the self. We use it to refer to bodies of knowledge that attempt to explain human nature, for example psychology, philosophy, and theology. It can also be used in a more specific way to refer to an individual's own reflection about him- or herself, and the language he or she uses to represent that reflection.

Reflexivity Technically, the act of self-reference, although the term is used casually to refer to the practice of self-reflection. We use it to refer to a situation wherein an activity and the referent of that activity belong to the same class. For example, the discipline of psychology is conducted within societies in an attempt to explain aspects of society, and so psychology belongs to the same class as wider society. This leads to a reflexive loop, in that society influences the kind of psychology performed, while the performance of psychology in turn influences society.

Reification Technically, the ascription of concrete status to abstract concepts. The term is also used more pejoratively to refer to the acceptance of a hypothetical concept as valid and real without definite proof. For example, the development of a measure of extroversion may lead people to believe that extroversion is a fixed personality characteristic, but this belief may not be well founded: the measure does not prove the existence of the phenomenon.

Relativism A view in **ontology** or **epistemology** that we can only understand the world, including psychological phenomena, in terms of a particular frame of reference, including historical and social contexts and our own construction of the world.

Scientific method (or hypothetico-deductive method) An approach to theory development originally derived from the natural sciences and logical positivist philosophy. It involves using a theory to develop predictions, which are then tested empirically. If the prediction is supported, this is viewed as evidence in support of the original theory.

Social constructionism An approach to psychology and other social sciences that emphasises the extent to which phenomena of interest are created within societies by people.

Further Reading

Colman, A. (2009). *A dictionary of psychology* (3rd edn). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A very comprehensive dictionary with some 10,500 topics. The entries are brief but accessible.

Richards, G. (2009). *Psychology: The key concepts*. London: Routledge.

This covers some 200 higher order concepts, including some detailed coverage. Unusually, it includes concepts from critical psychology such as *mutualism* and *reflexivity*.

Stratton, P., & Hayes, N. (2003). *A student's dictionary of psychology* (4th edn). London: Hodder Education.

This is well written for students, and is nicely illustrated. It doesn't have some of the additional features of Colman or Winstanley.

Winstanley, J. (2006). *Key concepts in psychology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

A nicely presented collection, but not as comprehensive as Colman or as critical as Richards.

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