

WORK PSYCHOLOGY

Understanding Human Behaviour in the Workplace



Sixth Edition

John Arnold and Ray Randall et al.

WORK PSYCHOLOGY

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Sixth Edition

John Arnold and Ray Randall

with Fiona Patterson, Joanne Silvester, Ivan Robertson,
Cary Cooper, Bernard Burnes, Don Harris and Carolyn Axtell

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PREFACE

Work psychology is about people's behaviour, thoughts and emotions related to their work. It can be used to improve our understanding and management of people (including ourselves) at work. By work, we mean what people do to earn a living. However, much of the content of this book can also be applied to study, voluntary work and even leisure activities.

All too often, work organisations have sophisticated systems for assessing the costs and benefits of everything except their management of people. It is often said by senior managers that 'our greatest asset is our people', but sometimes the people do not feel that they are being treated as if they were valuable assets. People are complicated, and their views of themselves and their worlds differ: you will see a great many references to individual differences throughout this book. People do not necessarily do what others would like them to do. One reaction to all this is for managers to focus on things that don't talk back, such as profit and loss accounts or organisational strategy. Another is to adopt a highly controlling 'do as I say' approach to dealing with people at work. Either way, the thinking behind how people in the workplace function, and how they might be managed, tends to be rather careless or simplistic. Work psychologists seek to counter that tendency by carefully studying people's behaviour, thoughts and feelings regarding work. As well as developing knowledge and understanding for its own sake, this also leads to insights about motivation, leadership, training and development, selection and many other people-related aspects of management. Work psychologists are also concerned about the ethical use of psychological theories and techniques, and their impact on the well-being and effectiveness of individuals, groups and organisations.

This book is designed to appeal to readers in many different countries, especially in Europe and Australasia. Judging by the feedback and sales figures for previous editions, we seem to have generally been successful in appealing to a range of people in a range of places. We have tried to make the book suitable both for people encountering the subject for the first time and for those who already have some familiarity with it. Specifically, and in no particular order, we intend that this book should be useful for:

- undergraduate students in psychology, taking one or more modules with names such as work psychology, work and organisational psychology, business psychology, organisational psychology, occupational psychology, and industrial-organisational psychology;
- undergraduate students in business and management taking one or more modules that might have titles such as organisational behaviour, managing people or human resource management;
- postgraduate (MSc, MBA, MA) and post-experience students in psychology or business/management taking one or more modules with any or all of the titles listed above;

- students taking professional qualifications, particularly (in the United Kingdom) those of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD);
- students on undergraduate or postgraduate courses in other vocational subjects such as engineering, whose curriculum includes some elements to do with managing people at work.

We aim to give clear and straightforward – but not simplistic – accounts of many key areas of contemporary work psychology. More specifically, we try to achieve several objectives in order to make this book as useful as possible to its readers.

First, we seek to blend theory and practice. Both are important. Without good theory, practice is blind. Without good practice, theory is not being properly used. We therefore describe key theories and evaluate them where appropriate. We also discuss how the concepts described can find practical application. We provide case studies and exercises to which material in the book can readily be applied. These can be used as classroom exercises, or as assignments for individual students. Some guidance and suggestions about how to use these are included on the website for this book.

Second, we try to present material at a level the reader should find intellectually stimulating, but not too difficult. It is all too easy to use a slick, glossy presentation at the expense of good content. There is always the temptation to resort to over-simple ‘recipes for success’ that insult the reader’s intelligence. On the other hand, it is equally easy to lose the reader in unnecessarily complex debates. We hope that we avoid both these fates (and that you will let us know if we do not!).

Third, we try to help the reader to gain maximum benefit from the book by providing several more aids to learning. Each chapter begins with clearly stated learning outcomes, and concludes with some short self-test questions and longer suggested assignments that reflect these outcomes. At the end of each chapter we provide a small number of suggestions for further reading. Throughout the text we specify key learning points that express succinctly the main message of the preceding sections of text. We include a number of diagrams as well as text, in recognition that pictures can often express complex ideas in an economical and memorable way. We highlight key controversies and debates because it is not uncommon for research findings to point in different, apparently contradictory, directions. To help the reader, we weigh up the arguments. Because no topic in work psychology sits in isolation from others, we also point towards some of the most natural connections between different parts of the book. At the end of the book there is a comprehensive glossary explaining in a concise way the meaning of lots of key words and phrases. There is also a very long list of references, to enable interested readers to find more material if they wish – for more advanced study for example.

Fourth, we have chosen topics that we judge to be the most useful to potential readers of this book. Some usually appear in organisational behaviour texts, whereas others are generally found in books of a more specifically psychological orientation. We believe we have found a helpful balance between these two overlapping but different worlds, so that there should be plenty of relevant material both for people who want to be psychologists and those who do not. The topics we cover in chapters or parts of chapters include individual differences, employee selection, assessing work performance, attitudes at work, training and development, teamwork, work motivation, stress and well-being at work, designing work and work equipment, managing diversity, leadership, careers, organisational change and culture, dispersed working, the nature of work psychology as a discipline and profession and how to design, conduct and understand research studies in work psychology.

Fifth, we provide up-to-date coverage of our material. There are currently exciting advances in many areas of work psychology, and we try to reflect these. At the same time, where the old stuff is best and still relevant, we include it. There is nothing to be gained by discussing recent work purely because it is recent, especially if that comes at the expense of better quality and more useful material.

Sixth, we attempt to use material from many different parts of the world, and to point out cross-national and cross-cultural differences where these seem particularly important. Much of the best research and practice in work psychology originate from North America, but it is possible to go too far and assume that nowhere else has contributed anything. No doubt we have our own blinkers, but we try to include perspectives from places other than North America, especially the UK and other European

countries. Nevertheless, the USA and Canada provide much valuable material. We therefore also make use of research and theory originating in those countries.

Developments from the fifth edition

Readers familiar with the fifth edition of this text, published in 2010, may find it helpful if we describe the changes we have made. These are more evident in some parts of the book than others. Readers familiar with previous editions will readily recognise this book as a direct descendant of the others, but will also notice quite a few differences. As the book has grown over the years, so has the workload involved during its revision. We say this every time, but it has taken us longer than we (and our families) would have liked. As ever, we apologise for this. If you have been waiting for this new edition you might justifiably have been losing patience with us.

The changes from the fifth edition reflect the fact that quite a lot has happened in work psychology over the last few years. Reviewers commissioned by the publisher (plus users' comments made direct to us) helped us to see where rethinks were required.

I (Ray Randall) worked on Chapters 1, 2, 6, 10 and 11. John Arnold is now the contributor of three chapters (7, 12 and 13). As with the fifth edition, Fiona Patterson (Chapters 3 and 4) and Joanne Silvester (Chapters 5 and 9) also took a major role. Bernard Burnes has once again contributed the chapter on organisational change and culture. Don Harris (Chapter 8) and Carolyn Axtell (Chapter 15) handled a chapter each. Ivan Robertson and Cary Cooper have taken more of a back seat this time but their contributions can be seen in various parts of the text, most notably in Chapter 10. All contributors are excellent researchers with an international reputation in their field. Importantly, all are also practitioners, with extensive experience of intervention in organisations and this allows them to describe how theory can be put into practice. We are proud of this edition, but as with all preceding editions, your opinion is the one that really matters!

Feedback from readers of previous editions clearly indicated that they appreciated the clarity of style and the combination of theoretical and practical considerations. They also very much valued the substantial list of references, many quite recent. Naturally, we have tried to preserve these features. The style remains the same and the reference list has been revised and updated. We are grateful for the feedback we have received and wherever possible we have reflected it in this edition.

We have chosen to include some new learning features in this edition that we hope prove useful. The 'Research methods in focus' feature is designed to give readers a deep and detailed insight into how work psychologists go about their business (whether it be research or practice). Hopefully, it helps to demystify research methods by showing how these 'come to life' when applied to investigate or solve important issues. Reading about research methods and statistics can be daunting and difficult so we hope that this feature makes the activity more accessible and enjoyable. After much deliberation, we have chosen to retain the more generic material about research methods in Chapter 2. This is designed to give readers the 'lenses' needed to make sense of a wide range of published research. When read in conjunction with the Research methods in focus features it is designed to help readers to develop a solid knowledge base that can be used to interpret, use and critique any other research they encounter.

Psychologists often disagree about theories, the meaning of research findings, what constitutes good data and too many other things to list in this preface without doubling the length of the book. This can be confusing. Who are we to believe? Is the weight of evidence in favour of one side or the other? We use the new 'Key debate' feature to help these debates stand out from the rest of the text. Without appointing ourselves as judge and jury, we use this feature to present the arguments as we see them and to comment on the amount and quality of evidence available. We can't always solve the controversy, but we try to describe why it exists and how it might one day be resolved. We feel these issues have important implications for practice: too often promises are made about interventions before uncertainties about the underlying research have been adequately resolved.

As work psychologists progress in their careers, they often become more specialised, focusing on particular topics, organisational problems or research methods (it's one of the reasons why we need so many contributors for this text). There's nothing wrong with this and it certainly helps us to avoid overloading ourselves or attempting to practise in areas we know too little about. That said, we feel it is very important to understand and appreciate the linkages and connections between different topics in our field. A simple question demonstrates the point. Is it worth training someone to do a job if a good selection process would identify somebody who is already adequately skilled? The answer to this question is not a simple one (excuse us for sitting on the fence, just this once) but it does involve considering the research on both selection and training. To keep the book neatly organised and easy to navigate we keep these topics separate. We simply couldn't do justice to them unless a chapter is devoted to each. The Points of integration feature is designed to give the reader a quick insight into how these connections work – both in terms of research and theory. We also use them to show how people from different fields of expertise can be brought together to develop effective interventions.

From positive feedback provided by reviewers we have kept the large number of exercises and case studies. The majority of case studies have been updated to highlight the relevance that psychology has when dealing with contemporary issues in the workplace. We have kept several of the exercises that are familiar to instructors, but many are updated to ensure their relevance to, and resonance with, our intended readership. Where we feel the case studies from earlier editions still have a strong relevance these have been retained.

In the fifth edition we significantly increased the number of meta-analyses and systematic reviews we used and this seems to have been well-received. We are aware that this emphasis can carry with it a risk. We could omit the important details and 'colour' that come with the discussion of specific studies carried out in interesting organisational contexts. This time around we have tried to do justice to both the 'big data' studies and the smaller-scale, well-designed, interesting and important pieces of research. It is, after all, the latter that make up the 'bread and butter' activities of many researchers and practitioners. We offer commentary throughout designed to help readers to avoid falling into the trap of overestimating the importance of the results of either studies of 'big data' or isolated research findings.

We have retained the Stop to consider boxes. There are two to four of them in most chapters. These are designed to encourage students to pause to reflect on their learning. Their content is designed to foster critical thinking and cement learning. We hope these prove useful for students who wish to go beyond an understanding of content to attempt further analysis of the issues described.

Chapter 1 retains much of the introductory material of previous editions. We feel that this is particularly useful for those new to the study of psychology. It is also designed to illustrate how the basic assumptions made by psychologists, and the approaches they follow as a result, find their way into work psychology. This chapter is now considerably shorter than before. The feedback we received indicated that the content on workplace trends was better left to the relevant parts of the book. We still provide a brief introduction to important cross-cutting themes including culture and diversity, but these are now dealt with more comprehensively by considering them throughout the book. Contemporary issues are integrated into the content of each chapter (including in the Exercises and Case studies) in order to provide clearer illustrations of how research and theory can be applied.

We thought long and hard about removing the material on research methods in Chapter 2, and decided not to. In order to make use of the latest research we make reference to a large number of journal articles in the book. Therefore, we feel that this chapter does a reasonable job as a 'quick reference' guide to help readers make sense of the source material that we used and as an aid for interpreting research they encounter in the future. Its content is designed to be just 'technical enough' to give the reader a basic understanding of why different methods of data collection and analysis are used to deal with various theoretical and practical questions. In this edition we also include some discussion of evidence-based management to go alongside discussion of the notion of the scientist-practitioner and a detailed analysis of the academic-practitioner divide. These sections are designed to help readers to cement their understanding of how the transition can be made between theory and practice, a recurrent theme in the book. This is not a research methods book, but we hope that Chapter 2, along with the Research methods in

focus features throughout, orientate students to many of the ways data are collected, analysed and used in our discipline.

Thanks to the considerable effort made by Fiona Patterson, Chapter 3 changed a lot for the fifth edition. Generally, it was seen as more accessible as a result, and better integrated with the rest of the text. This time around the focus has been on expanding the coverage of some of the more difficult and controversial issues associated with the study of individual differences. Fiona has included a more detailed discussion of the issues of bias and fairness when using psychometrics tests to measure individual differences. New research on emotional intelligence, creativity and innovation receives considerable coverage to reflect the growing importance of these topics for researchers and organisations alike. Some important questions are now being asked about the structure and nature of personality: these challenges to established theories are examined in some detail.

Chapter 4 is now one (rather large) chapter covering all aspects of personnel selection. Fiona Patterson's chapters on selection have always been very well received. This time around we gave her the rather tough job of joining them together. The idea was to enable readers to better appreciate the connections between different elements of this complex and diverse topic. The coverage is similar to previous editions, but has been extensively updated. Selection has always been a rapidly developing area of research and practice. New and important advances such as the promise offered by situational judgements tests and the more widespread use of online testing get increased coverage to reflect their growing importance. Candidates' reactions to their experiences of selection are dealt with in more detail.

Chapter 5, by Jo Silvester, on assessing performance at work retains much of the structure from the fifth edition. There are many important technical issues that are covered in detail: it was important to keep this content and to update it in line with the changing needs of work organisations. As multisource feedback has become more popular, this approach to measuring and managing performance is discussed in considerable detail. Given the changing nature of work, there are now many jobs for which good (and bad) performance is difficult to define. In the chapter, Jo uses some of her own research with politicians as an example of this challenge and how it can be addressed. Performance that is outside of contractual obligations (e.g. proactive helping behaviours) is discussed, along with its causes and consequences. The updated chapter contains a more detailed analysis of the use of electronic performance monitoring. The way such data are perceived sets an important research agenda for psychologists that also has significant practical implications.

Chapter 6 on attitudes at work has been refocused. It is never an easy decision to cut content for the fear that some readers might be disappointed. In the fifth edition, there were still some remnants of the basic social psychology material that dominated this chapter in early editions. The section on the basic psychology of attitude change has gone: the factors that change key workplace attitudes such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment are now weaved into the core content. The section on the psychological contract has expanded considerably to better reflect the diversity and quantity of research on the topic. We also took the decision that topics associated with employee relations (e.g. participation at work, management of careers, management of change) now receive good coverage elsewhere in the text. This left us with more room to give additional space to work-related attitudes and the associated concepts of employee turnover, unemployment and underemployment. As we have done before, when lots of material has been removed from a chapter, we have placed Chapter 7 from the fifth edition on the website accompanying this book.

Chapter 7 (work motivation and work design) has been extensively updated. Strong coverage of established theories of motivation do remain. John Arnold has given additional coverage to developing research agendas (e.g. perceptions of justice) that offer great promise. Research is also examined that has identified ways of enhancing the effects of established theories of motivation such as goal-setting. The impact of individual differences on motivational processes is now discussed in detail across the chapter. Emerging concepts including purposeful work behaviour are examined in depth. The chapter includes consideration of new approaches to the topic of work design and their relevance to various contemporary working practices and work environments.

Chapter 8, Design at work by Don Harris, was a new addition in the fifth edition. Its relevance may not be obvious to all readers. We strongly feel that the contribution that psychologists can make to the design and improvement of physical work environments and work equipment deserves a prominent place in this text. These contributions have been substantial, not least in the design of various types of displays and these are discussed in depth in new material for this edition. The proper management of end-user input into design is a recurrent theme in the chapter. The complex psychological processes that humans use to process the information at work are also discussed throughout. These are just two aspects of workplace design where psychologists will continue to make very significant contributions to research and practice.

Jo Silvester's chapter on training and development (Chapter 9) retains the extensive coverage of the various elements of the training cycle and theories of learning from previous editions. The mechanisms for delivering training and development in work organisations now receive much more attention. There is a detailed section on team-based training that taps into a growing research agenda regarding the effectiveness of delivering training in this way. Mentoring as an intervention, and the challenges associated with mentoring a diverse workforce, are now discussed. Leadership is covered in many chapters and here Jo examines the psychological processes that are important when implementing leadership development. This is an activity that represents a significant investment for many organisations.

Chapter 10 on stress and well-being at work was well-received in the fifth edition. For some time now we have wanted to include more balanced coverage in this chapter so that the benefits of 'good work' are as apparent as the risks associated with 'bad work'. This time around there is much more coverage of theories that describe how employees thrive and develop through their experiences at work. Concepts from positive psychology are examined in detail. There is more breadth and depth in the discussion of individual differences to include concepts such as resilience and psychological capital. The detailed section on interventions has been retained, but expanded to provide a more in-depth treatment of how these can be used to help employees develop their psychological resources.

Chapter 11 on teamwork has been trimmed a little as some of the content we felt was better positioned elsewhere (e.g. participation in decision-making is covered in several places in the text). The basic psychological research on groups is retained but shortened so that the chapter now moves a little more quickly into the topic of work teams. We also felt this was a good place to focus on the issue of diversity and how it relates to work performance and other important outcomes. Implementing teamwork is generally seen as being a good idea with potential benefits for the organisation and for the employee. In this edition we give more consideration to the research that helps us to identify what can be done to increase the chances that these good outcomes will occur.

John Arnold has revised the chapters on careers and leadership. There are many changes in both. Chapter 12 on leadership covers more ground than before. Leadership research throws up many contentious issues and the chapter includes an enhanced critical analysis of the key established theories. The links between leadership and the use of participation and empowerment now feature prominently in this chapter (and less so than in the chapter on teams). Gender and leadership and leading across cultures get increased coverage to reflect the importance of these research agendas to modern organisations. Throughout the chapter there is commentary on the 'dark side' of leadership including, for example, the misuse of transformational leadership behaviour and the ethical issues that arise when employees become highly susceptible to their leader's influence.

The revisions in Chapter 13 (Careers and career management) include: more detailed analysis of the boundaryless career that taps into a rich vein of recent research; increased breadth and depth of coverage of career interventions (both at an organisational and individual level); and more detailed consideration of how career success is defined and achieved. The key elements of this chapter have been retained from previous editions: the chapter is seen as one of the defining features of the book. However, there is enhanced coverage of mentoring, the connections between gender and career development, and the development of career preferences. This is a very comprehensive chapter that delves deep into many areas where theory and practice come together.

Bernard Burnes' chapter on change (Chapter 14) retains its structure from the fifth edition. It has been very well-received in the past as an authoritative review of the field. The updates reflect innovative

and important new thinking around the topics of change and culture. In several parts of the chapter the updated material provides new insights about how existing theories and models can be put to better use. The chapter also identifies where new approaches might be needed to deal with the situations and pressures being faced by modern work organisations. Several promising emerging theories are identified, discussed and evaluated.

Carolyn Axtell's chapter on the psychology of dispersed working (Chapter 15) is the final chapter because it integrates many of the issues discussed throughout the text. It is a good demonstration of the relevance and utility of psychological theory in contemporary work settings. The chapter shows that if we are to make the best use of new ways of working, research from various different areas of work psychology need to be applied. This topic also has its own research agenda and presents new challenges for work psychologists. These have produced innovative and exciting approaches to research and intervention.

As with every iteration of this book, the average length of each chapter is greater (with the exception of Chapter 1). We hope that the coverage is contemporary and more integrated than before. Lecturers using the book may want to recommend parts of certain chapters, rather than whole chapters, to support a particular lecture topic, so it is worth having a close look at the contents pages to check what is where.

As before, we welcome feedback and dialogue about this book. Please direct it to Ray Randall, School of Business and Economics, Sir Richard Morris Building, Loughborough University, Leicestershire, Leicester, LE11 3TU, UK (r.randall@lboro.ac.uk). Thank you for reading this preface, and please now carry on into the rest of the book!

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CHAPTER 1

Work psychology An initial orientation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- 1 describe five areas of basic psychology;
- 2 examine the relationship between basic psychology and work psychology;
- 3 describe the key features of each of the following traditions in psychology:
psychoanalytic
trait
phenomenological
behaviourist
social cognitive;
- 4 identify the main similarities and differences between the traditions;
- 5 specify how each tradition contributes to work psychology;
- 6 specify the topics covered by work psychologists;
- 7 describe the employers of, and roles adopted by, work psychologists;
- 8 specify ethical issues in work psychology;
- 9 describe the main sources of information about work psychology research and practice;
- 10 outline why diversity and culture are cross-cutting themes in work psychology
- 11 identify some of the significant changes in the world of work that psychologists need to consider.



Introduction

In this chapter we aim to help the reader gain a broad understanding of the nature of work psychology and the context within which it operates before tackling more specific topics later in the book. We start with a brief description of the discipline of **psychology** as a whole and discuss the links between what we call basic and applied psychology, with work psychology positioned as one branch of applied psychology. Then we provide a brief analysis of images of the person offered by five traditions within basic psychology. These are psychoanalytic, **trait**, phenomenological, behaviourist and social cognitive. Each of these traditions has influenced work psychology: in some respects they contradict each other and in some circumstances they complement each other. As you read this text you will see that some of the issues we know most about have been examined using a variety of traditions and approaches and this can help to enrich greatly our understanding. The nature of their contribution is briefly outlined in this chapter and the portions of this book that examine those contributions in more detail are identified. We then recount briefly some history of work psychology before moving to coverage of work psychology today. Here we give an account of the different labels sometimes given to work psychology, the topics it covers, what work psychologists do and ethical issues that arise in practice. We also alert readers to the best sources of good knowledge about work psychology (apart from this book of course!). In the latter part of this chapter we look briefly at some cross-cutting themes in work psychology: **diversity** and cultural differences. The British Psychological Society (2014) specifies these as themes relevant to all aspects of work psychology: we have done our best to reflect these in each chapter of the book so that you can see how they ‘come to life’ in practice. We also point out some ways in which the world of work is changing: again these are covered in much more detail in the relevant chapters.

Basic psychology and work psychology

Psychology has been defined in various ways. Perhaps the simplest yet most informative definition is that provided long ago by Miller (1966): ‘the science of mental life’. Mental life refers to three phenomena: behaviours, thoughts and emotions. Most psychologists these days would agree that psychology involves all three.

The notion that psychology is a **science** is perhaps rather more controversial. Science involves the systematic collection of data under controlled conditions, so that theory and practice can be based on verifiable evidence rather than on the psychologist’s intuition. The aims are to describe, explain and predict behaviours, thoughts and emotions (see Chapter 2 for more on psychological theory). Not everyone agrees that it is appropriate to study behaviours, thoughts and emotions in a scientific manner. Some argue that human behaviour is too complex for that, and anyway people’s behaviour changes in important ways when they are being observed or experimented upon (see also Chapter 2). The scientific approach has a large influence on most courses and **training** in psychology, and is perhaps most evident in the emphasis given to research design and statistical analysis in many university psychology courses.

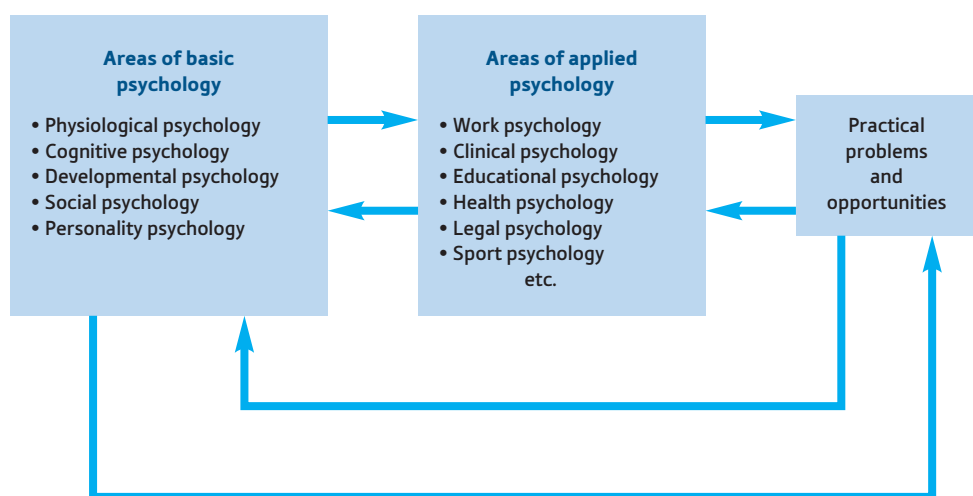
The discipline of psychology can be divided into several subdisciplines, each with its own distinctive focus. Collectively they can be termed *basic psychology*. There are several ways of splitting psychology. Perhaps the most helpful of these is as follows:

- **Physiological psychology** concerns the relationship between mind and body. For example, physiological psychologists might investigate the activity in the brain associated with particular behaviours, thoughts and emotions, or they might be interested in the bodily changes associated with feeling stressed at work.

- **Cognitive psychology** focuses on our cognitive functioning; that is, our thought processes. This includes topics such as how well we remember information under various conditions, how we weigh up information when making decisions, or how quickly and accurately we deal with questions in a **psychometric test**.
- **Developmental psychology** concerns the ways in which people grow and change psychologically. This includes issues such as how and when children become able to understand particular concepts, and how they learn language. Also, developmental psychology is beginning to pay more attention to change and growth throughout adult life.
- **Social psychology** concerns how our behaviours, thoughts and emotions affect, and are affected by, other people. Topics include how **groups** of people make decisions, and the extent to which a person's **attitudes** towards particular groups of people influence his or her behaviour towards them.
- **Personality psychology** focuses on people's characteristic tendency to behave, think and feel in certain ways. It is concerned with issues such as how people differ from each other psychologically, and how those differences can be measured. It also increasingly recognises that situations as well as personality influence a person's behaviour, thoughts and emotions. Hence some attention is also paid to defining how *situations* differ from each other.

Work psychology is defined in terms of its context of application (see Figure 1.1), and is not in itself one of the subdisciplines of psychology defined above. It is an area of applied psychology. As you will see throughout this book, work psychologists use concepts, theories and techniques derived from all areas of basic psychology. These areas are not mutually exclusive: studying people at work from a number of different perspectives is often necessary in order to understand fully the issue being examined. The same is true of psychologists working in other applied contexts such as education and health.

As shown in Figure 1.1, areas of applied psychology use ideas and information from basic psychology. Conversely, they can also contribute ideas and information to the development of basic psychology. Sometimes theory from basic psychology can directly contribute to the solution of real-world problems, and conversely those problems can also stimulate developments in basic psychology. More often, applied psychology rather than basic psychology offers



Arrows represent flows of information and ideas

Figure 1.1

The relationship between areas of psychology

theories and techniques directly applicable to practical problems and real-life situations. In fact, it might be argued that some applied psychologists are more interested in solving practical problems than in theory and ideas from basic psychology (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of the academic-practitioner divide within work psychology). Thus there may be a danger that the areas of applied psychology will fail to reflect advances in basic psychology. It might also be the case that some more theoretically inclined psychologists fail to take sufficient account of work in applied psychology, or of current real-world issues. Schönplflug (1993) argued that applied psychology has not benefited much from basic psychology. Applied psychologists are interested in solving problems, while basic psychologists are driven by a love of knowledge for its own sake. The development of psychology as a profession that can be put to good use depends upon the information flows shown in Figure 1.1.

Key learning point

The five areas of basic psychology all contribute ideas and techniques to work psychology.

Whatever the strength of these diverse and sometimes contradictory viewpoints, it can be said that work psychology, as one branch of applied psychology, does have its own theories and techniques. The following chapters will demonstrate this. Some draw upon basic psychology a lot, others less so.

It would be dishonest to pretend that psychology is a well-integrated discipline with generally accepted principles. Underlying it are several competing and quite different concepts of the person. These are most apparent in personality psychology – not surprisingly since personality psychology is the subdiscipline most concerned with the essence of human individuality. These competing conceptions of humanity will now be examined briefly. The interested reader can find much fuller coverage of each in texts such as Ewen (2010) and Schultz and Schultz (2001). Table 1.1 summarises some of the differences and similarities between the five traditions reviewed in the next section.

Table 1.1

Key characteristics of five theoretical traditions in psychology

	Behaviour	Emotion	Thinking/ reasoning	Self-actualisation	The unconscious	Biologically based needs/drives	Personal change	Self-determination
Psychoanalytic (Freud)	0	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X
Trait	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	X
Phenomenological (Rogers)	0	✓	0	✓	0	0	✓	✓
Behaviourist (Skinner)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X
Social cognitive	✓	0	✓	0	0	X	0	✓

✓ = Emphasised 0 = Acknowledged but not emphasised X = De-emphasised or considered unimportant

Key learning point

Psychology is a discipline that includes many different views of what a person is. Some of these views contradict each other. However, in studying people at work, drawing on a variety of traditions can help to increase the depth and breadth of knowledge about an issue.

Five traditions in psychology

The psychoanalytic tradition

This approach, also sometimes known as *psychodynamic*, was developed by Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). He developed a completely new approach to human nature which has had a great influence on many areas of pure and applied social science, literature and the arts. Perhaps in reaction to the stilted Viennese society in which he spent much of his life, Freud proposed that our psychological functioning is governed by instinctive forces (especially sex and aggression), many of which exert their effect outside our consciousness. He developed his ideas in a series of famous published works (e.g. Freud, 1960). Freud identified three facets of the psyche:

- 1 The **id**: the source of instinctual energy. Prominent among those instincts are sex and aggression. The id operates on the *pleasure principle*: it wants gratification and it wants it now. It has no inhibitions, and cannot distinguish between reality and fantasy.
- 2 The **ego**: this seeks to channel the id impulses so that they are expressed in socially acceptable ways at socially acceptable times. It operates on the *reality principle*. It can tolerate delay, and it can distinguish between reality and fantasy. However, it cannot eliminate or block the id impulses, only steer them in certain directions.
- 3 The **superego**: the conscience – the source of morality. It develops during childhood and represents the internalised standards of the child's parents. It defines ideal standards and operates on the principle of *perfection*.

According to Freud, these parts of the psyche are in inevitable and perpetual conflict. Much of the conflict is unconscious. Indeed, Freud's concept of the psyche has often been likened to an iceberg, of which two-thirds is under water (unconscious) and one-third above water (conscious). When conflicts get out of hand we experience **anxiety**, though often we cannot say *why* we feel anxious.

Because anxiety is unpleasant, people try to avoid it. One way to do this is to distort reality and push unwelcome facts out of consciousness. Freud proposed a number of **defence mechanisms** that accomplish this. For example, *projection* occurs when we see in other people what we do not like in ourselves. It is easier to cope with righteous indignation about somebody else's faults than to come to terms with our own. *Denial* is when we pretend things are not as they really are.

Defence mechanisms consume energy, and impair realism. They therefore detract from a person's capacity to live a full life. When asked what a psychologically healthy person should be able to do, Freud replied 'love and work'. Even many people who have little time for his general approach regard this as a valid point.

For Freud, the key to understanding a person is to uncover unconscious conflicts. Most of these have their origins in childhood and are very difficult to change. They are revealed most clearly when the person's guard is down – for example, in dreams or in apparently accidental slips of the tongue ('**Freudian slips**') where the person expresses what they *really* feel. Freud believed that virtually no behaviour is truly accidental, but that people can rarely

account for it accurately. Some psychologists working from other perspectives in psychology would agree that people cannot report accurately the causes of their own behaviour (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). If correct, this would make a mockery of current work psychology, much of which is based on self-reports, e.g. using **questionnaires** (see Chapter 2) which are taken more or less at face value. Fortunately, there are research methods that allow us to examine the quality of self-report data.

Key learning point

The **psychoanalytic tradition** places a high emphasis on unconscious psychological conflicts which can reduce personal effectiveness at work.

Some psychologists who initially followed Freud subsequently broke away from him, though they remained within the psychoanalytic school of thought. Their biggest quarrels with Freud were that the drives he proposed were too few and too negative, and that the ego was more powerful than he gave it credit for. They tended to place greater emphasis than Freud on social behaviour, and believed that strivings for ideals reflect something more noble than rationalisation of instincts. Perhaps the best known of these post-Freudian psychoanalytic psychologists is Carl Jung. He extended the concept of the unconscious to include the collective unconscious as well as the personal unconscious. Jung saw the collective unconscious as an inherited foundation of personality. It contains images that have never been in consciousness such as God, the wise old person and the young hero. Jung (1933) also examined the ways in which different people relate to the world. He distinguished between **introversion** (a tendency to reflect on one's own experiences) and **extroversion** (a preference for social contact). He identified sensing, intuition, feeling and thinking as other ways of experiencing the world. Some of these concepts have been taken up in trait-based approaches to personality (see next section and Chapter 3).

Within psychology as a whole, the psychoanalytic school of thought lost its earlier domination around the 1950s, and has never regained it. Critics complain that it is highly interpretative, incapable of being proved or disproved, and therefore unscientific. They argue that Freud was a product of his time (but aren't we all?), and was over-influenced by hang-ups about sex. Many also claim that he does not account for women's psychological functioning nearly as well as men's.

Nevertheless, the psychoanalytic approach is far from dead. Freudian terms and concepts (e.g. defence mechanisms) have found their way into common parlance, and some psychologists have used psychoanalytic concepts in the world of work. Much work of this kind seeks to demonstrate that individual and collective behaviour in business is not driven by straightforward pursuit of profit but by the conflicts, defence mechanisms and personal concerns of the people involved. Fotaki et al. (2012) point to several examples of the application of these theories to understand workplace phenomena including: the diversity and complexity of emotional experiences at work (e.g. why some people enjoy a particular work situation while others are distressed by it); the unconscious processes that are linked to workers' respect for and response to those in positions of power; the reasons why we make irrational choices; leadership behaviour as an expression of the type of person the **leader** would like to be (i.e. a person's leadership style might provide us with some insights into their unconscious wants, **needs** and desires). Schneider and Dunbar (1992) analysed media coverage of hostile takeover bids, where one business makes an unwelcome attempt to take over another business. They identified several different themes in media accounts of these events (e.g. growth, control, dominance and synergy) and related these

to developmental themes identified by psychoanalytic psychologists, including dependency, control, mastery and intimacy. Also, Vince (2002) applies psychoanalytic ideas to the ways in which major organisational change was understood and managed in a large company.

Key learning point

The psychoanalytic tradition tries to explain why behaviour at work can often seem irrational, hostile or self-defeating.

The trait tradition

This approach is essentially concerned with measuring a person's psychological characteristics. These characteristics, which include intellectual functioning, are generally assumed to be quite stable. That is, a person's personality is unlikely to change much, especially during adulthood (McCrae and Costa, 1990). Some theorists have developed personality types, or 'pigeonholes', in which any individual can be placed. One good example dates back to ancient Greek times when Hippocrates wrote of four types: phlegmatic (calm); choleric (quick-tempered); sanguine (cheerful, optimistic); and melancholic (sad, depressed).

These days psychologists more often think in terms of traits than types. A trait is an underlying dimension along which people differ one from another. Hence rather than putting people into a pigeonhole, trait theorists place them on a continuum, or rather a number of continua. Trait psychologists such as Eysenck (1967) and Cattell (1965) did pioneering work by identifying specific traits through much careful experimental and statistical investigation (some of this work is covered in more detail in Chapter 3). Favoured assessment devices of trait psychology are personality questionnaires, which consist of a number of questions about people's behaviour, thoughts and emotions. The better questionnaires are painstakingly developed to ensure that the questions are clear and responses to them are stable over short and medium time periods (see also Chapters 3 and 4). Of course, ideally one would collect information about a person's actual behaviour rather than *reports* of their behaviour. Indeed, Cattell among others did just this. However, normally that would be too time-consuming. Personality questionnaires are the best alternative and are used quite extensively in selection and assessment at work.

Most trait psychologists argue that the same traits are relevant to everyone, though for any individual some traits (usually those on which they have extreme scores) will be more evident than others in their behaviour. However, some trait psychologists have taken a rather more flexible approach. Allport (1937) long ago argued that for any given person, certain traits may be *cardinal* (that is, pervasive across all situations), *primary* (evident in many situations) or *secondary* (evident only in certain quite restricted situations). So if we wanted to predict a person's behaviour, it would be important to identify their cardinal traits. These traits would be different for different people.

In recent years there has been a growing consensus among trait theorists that there are five fundamental dimensions of personality – the so-called 'Big Five' or five-factor model (FFM) (Digman, 1990; see also Chapter 3). These are:

- 1 extroversion, for example sociability, assertiveness;
- 2 emotionality, for example anxiety, insecurity;
- 3 **agreeableness**, for example conforming, helpful to others;

- 4 **conscientiousness**, for example persistent, organised;
- 5 **openness to experience**, for example curiosity, aesthetic appreciation.

Key learning point

Research by trait theorists suggests that there are approximately five fundamental personality dimensions.

Most advocates of the trait approach argue that traits are at least partly genetically determined, which is one reason why they are stable. Research comparing the personalities of identical and non-identical twins tends to support this conclusion, though it is very difficult to separate the effects of environment from those of genes. This has been a somewhat controversial topic. Bouchard and McGue (1990) argued that around one-quarter of personality variations are due to inherited factors. This of course means that three-quarters of the variation is due to other factors. Much research on this issue comes from twin studies. Most recently, Power and Pluess (2015) carried out some extremely innovative research using genetic profiling. The links between variations in these profiles and variations in self-report personality data were tested. They found that genetic variations were only significantly linked to two of the Big Five: **neuroticism** and openness to experience. Genetic variations explained 15 per cent of the former and 21 per cent of the latter.

Trait theory carries the danger of circularity. Advocates of **behaviourism** (see the behaviourism section below) have always been keen to point this out. How do we know somebody scores highly on a particular personality trait? Because they behave in a certain way. Why does the person behave in that way? Because they score highly on that personality trait. Behaviour is therefore taken as a sign of certain traits, which is all very well so long as the underlying traits not only exist but also determine behaviour. There is plenty of evidence that situations, as well as personality, influence behaviour (see Cervone and Mischel, 2002). In situations where social rules are strict and widely understood, personality will influence behaviour less than in unstructured situations that lack clearly defined codes of behaviour. For example, in selection interviews usually the candidate must answer questions fully, and avoid interrupting the interviewer. Thus the demands of this situation dictate the candidate's behaviour to a considerable extent. This makes it more difficult for the interviewer to make inferences about the candidate's personality (although they are likely to do so anyway).

In spite of such caveats, the **trait tradition** has had a great influence in work psychology. This is particularly evident in selection (see Chapter 4) and vocational guidance (see Chapter 13), where the aim is to match individuals to work they will enjoy and in which they will work effectively. Salgado (2003), among others, has produced some evidence that people's scores on personality tests based on the FFM are linked to their work performance.

Key learning point

The trait tradition emphasises the importance of stable and measurable psychological differences between people which are frequently reflected in their work behaviour.

Large sums of money are spent on the development and marketing of personality measures such as the NEO PI-3 (published in the UK by Hogrefe), the 16PF (Oxford Psychologists

Press; see also Cattell and Cattell, 1995), the Hogan Personality Inventory (Hogan Assessment Systems) and the Occupational Personality Questionnaires (CEB SHL Talent Management). The latter was originally developed specifically for use in work settings with the backing of many large organisations. Such ventures testify to the continuing prominence of the trait approach in work psychology.

The phenomenological tradition

Phenomenology concentrates on how people experience the world around them. It emphasises our capacity to construct our own meaning from our experiences (Spinelli, 1989). With roots in philosophy as well as psychology, phenomenologists assert that our experience of the world is made up of an interaction between its ‘raw matter’ (i.e. objects) and our mental faculties. Thus, for example, a piece of music exists in the sense that it consists of a series of sounds, but has meaning only when we place our own interpretation on it.

Phenomenologists argue that what appears to be objectively defined reality is in fact merely a widely agreed *interpretation* of an event. They also assert that many interpretations of events are highly individual and not widely agreed. Thus phenomenology places a high value on the integrity and sense-making of individuals. That general sentiment underlies many somewhat different perspectives that can loosely be called phenomenological. Several of these perspectives also portray the person as striving for personal growth or **self-actualisation**; that is, fulfilment of their potential. This optimistic variant of phenomenological theory is often called **humanism**.

A good example of humanism is provided by Carl Rogers (e.g. Rogers, 1970). He argued that if we are to fulfil our potential, we must be *open to our experience*. That is, we must recognise our true thoughts and feelings, even if they are unpalatable. Unfortunately we are often not sufficiently open to our experience. We may suppress experiences that are inconsistent with our **self-concept**, or that we feel are in some sense morally wrong. Rogers has argued that often we readily experience only those aspects of self that our parents approved of when we were children. Parents define **conditions of worth** – in effect, they signal to children that they will be valued and loved only if they are a certain sort of person.

For Rogers, the antidote to conditions of worth is **unconditional positive regard (UPR)**. In order to become a fully functioning person, we need others to accept us as we are, ‘warts and all’. This does not mean that anything goes. Rogers argues for a separation of person and behaviour, so that it is all right (indeed desirable) to say to somebody ‘that was not a sensible thing to do’, and if necessary punish them for it. But it is not all right to say ‘you are not a sensible person’, because that signals disapproval of the person, not just their behaviour. Only when people realise that their inherent worth will be accepted whatever their actions can they feel psychologically safe enough to become open to their experience. Further, since Rogers believes that people are fundamentally trustworthy, he has argued that they will not take advantage of UPR to get away with murder. Instead, UPR encourages more responsible behaviour.

Key learning point

The phenomenological tradition puts high emphasis on personal experience and the inherent potential of people to develop and act responsibly.

As far as work psychology is concerned, the basic point that people’s *interpretations* of events are crucial has been heeded to some extent. As you will see throughout this text,