FOURTH EDITION

SIMPLY PSYCHOLOGY

MICHAEL W. EYSENCK

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ROUTLEDGE

Simply Psychology

Simply Psychology, fourth edition, is an engaging and reader-friendly introduction to the key principles of psychology. Organized around the major approaches to the subject, it covers biological, developmental, social, and cognitive psychology, as well as individual differences.

Supported by a wealth of colour illustrations, it provides students new to the subject with straightforward and clear explanations of all the key topics within contemporary psychology. The features spread throughout the book are designed to help readers to engage with the material and include:

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- chapter introductions and summaries
- further reading and evaluation boxes
- structured essay and self-assessment questions
- case-studies and examples illustrating the application of key theories

It also concludes with a practical chapter that offers students tips and advice to help them improve their study skills and get the most out of the book and their studies.

New for the fourth edition

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- coverage of developments in neuroscience
- new 'In the real world' feature showing how psychology can be used in a range of professional contexts

Simply Psychology is ideal for students studying psychology for the first time, as well as those in related fields such as nursing, social work and the social sciences.

Michael W. Eysenck is one of the best-known psychologists in Europe. He is Emeritus Professor of Psychology in the psychology department at Royal Holloway University of London and Professorial Fellow at Roehampton University. He is especially interested in cognitive psychology (about which he has written several books) and most of his research focuses on the role of cognitive factors in anxiety within normal and clinical populations.

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About the author

Michael W. Eysenck is one of the best-known psychologists in Europe. He is Professorial Fellow at Roehampton University and Emeritus Professor at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is especially interested in cognitive psychology (about which he has written several books), and most of his research focuses on the role of cognitive factors in anxiety within normal and clinical populations.

He has published 52 books. His previous textbooks published by Psychology Press include *Psychology for AS Level (5th Edn)* (2012), *Psychology for A2 Level* (2009), *A2 Psychology: Key Topics (2nd Edn)* (2006), *Psychology: An International Perspective* (2004), *Psychology: A Student's Handbook (6th Edn)* (with Mark Keane) (2010), *Fundamentals of Psychology* (2009), *Fundamentals of Cognition (2nd Edn)* (2012), *Perspectives on Psychology* (1994), and *Individual Differences: Normal and Abnormal* (1994). He has also written several articles on topics within the AS Psychology specification for the journal *Psychology Review*, and has given talks at numerous A-level conferences.

In his spare time, Michael Eysenck enjoys travelling, croquet, walking, bridge, and an occasional game of golf. He is (unusually) a keen supporter of Crystal Palace and (less unusually) Manchester United Football Clubs.

Preface

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of students of psychology in recent years. This increase has happened at all levels, and includes GCSE, AS level, A level, and university degree courses. In addition, there are many more students of nursing, education, business studies, and so on, who study psychology as part of their courses. It is my hope that this book will be of use to all students who are starting to study psychology.

There are two main approaches to writing a simple introduction to psychology. One is to leave out everything that is hard or challenging; this is what might be called the "filleted" approach. The other is to present a more rounded account of modern psychology in a simple and accessible way. I have done my best to follow the second approach. Whether I have succeeded is for the readers of this book to decide.

This is the fourth edition of *Simply Psychology*. I have mostly retained the structure of previous editions. However, there are now new chapters focusing on abnormal psychology and the history of psychology. In addition, all the chapters have been extensively updated and some are very different from the previous edition.

In my opinion (I may be biased!), psychology is the most interesting subject you can study. An important part of my intention in this book is to try to convince you of that. Media coverage often makes it look as if psychologists have only succeeded in discovering things everyone has always known. I feel very strongly that this state of affairs tells us more about the media than about psychology. Hopefully, as you read this book, you will find yourself agreeing with me that psychological research goes considerably beyond the obvious. In fact, such research is full of important insights into human behaviour that can (and already have) benefited society greatly.

What could be more interesting or important than achieving a better understanding of our fellow human beings? Enjoy psychology!!!

Introduction 1

What is psychology?

What is the science of psychology actually about?

Psychology is amazingly wide ranging – indeed, it is relevant to almost everything in our everyday lives as Sigmund Freud was the first to recognise. Here are just a few examples.

Some psychologists are involved in treating mental disorders in increasingly effective ways. Forensic psychologists are engaged in offender profiling and tracking down serial killers and other criminals. Other psychologists use brain scanners to understand the workings of the human mind. Still other psychologists (healthy psychologists) are hard at work trying to persuade us to adopt healthier lifestyles with less smoking and drinking and more physical exercise.

What are the common elements in the very diverse activities of psychologists? Perhaps the most common definition of "psychology" is that it is the scientific study of behaviour. However, this definition is too limited because most psychologists try to understand *why* people behave in certain ways. This requires that they consider *internal* processes and motives. Thus, we arrive at the following definition:

> Psychology is a science in which behavioural and other evidence (e.g., individuals' reports of their thoughts and feelings, patterns of brain activation) is used to understand the internal processes leading people (and members of other species) to behave as they do.

As you read this book, you may find yourself bewildered (hopefully not *too* bewildered!) by the numerous approaches psychologists have adopted in their attempts to understand human behaviour. The main reason for these different approaches is because our behaviour is jointly determined by several factors, including the following:

- The specific stimuli presented to us
- Our recent experiences (e.g., being stuck in a traffic jam)
- Our genetic endowment
- Our physiological system
- Our cognitive system (our perceptions, thoughts, and memories)

- The social environment
- The cultural environment
- Our previous life experiences (including those of childhood)
- Our personal characteristics (including intelligence, personality, and mental health)

We can see the importance of the above factors by considering "road rage" (an angry motorist threatening physical violence to another motorist). His behaviour may depend partly on the genes he has inherited that led him to develop a very aggressive personality. It may depend in part on his childhood experiences, for example, the presence of violence in the family. It may depend in part on his clinical history (e.g., a history of psychopathic or antisocial behaviour).

Still other factors may be involved in causing a man to exhibit road rage. It may depend on his thoughts and feelings (e.g., the other motorist reminds him of someone he despises). It may depend on the man's physiological state. For example, his internal bodily state may be highly aroused and agitated because he is late for an important appointment or has a very stressful job. Finally, his behaviour may depend on cultural factors – expressing one's anger by physically attacking someone is less unacceptable in some cultures than others.

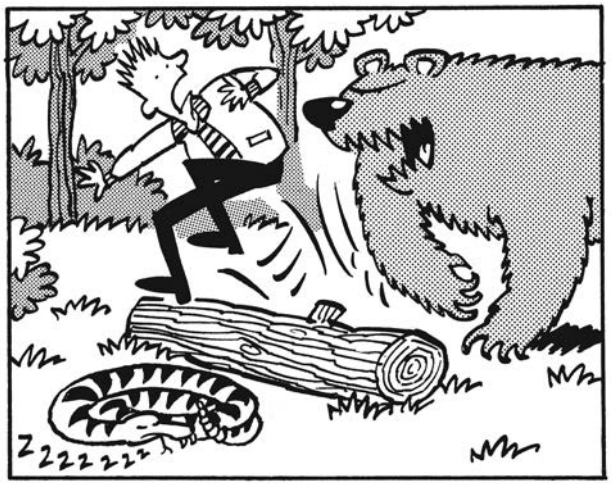
The take-home message is that there is no *single* "correct" interpretation of the man's road rage. Probably several factors just discussed contributed to his behaviour. Thus, the scope of psychology must be very broad to understand human behaviour. More generally, psychology is a multidisciplinary science that has been enriched by physiologists, neuroscientists, sociologists, biologists, biochemists, anthropologists, and others.

How useful is psychology?

Why is common sense of limited usefulness?

Most people think psychology is a fascinating subject (which it is!). We all want to understand ourselves and other people, and that is the central goal of psychology. However, there is much controversy concerning the usefulness of psychology. Sceptics argue that psychology tells us things we already know (the science of the bleeding obvious?). They also argue that laboratory findings often fail to generalise to everyday life because laboratory research is so artificial. Finally, sceptics claim most psychological research is trivial (e.g., rats running through mazes).

One of the most common criticisms of psychology is that it is "just common sense". There are three major problems with that criticism. First, common sense is based only on drawing conclusions that are based only on observations whereas psychology involves experimental testing and attempts to distinguish among alternative explanations of phenomena (Rutter & Solantaus, 2014). As is discussed in Chapter 3, laboratory research allows us to study behaviour under well-controlled conditions. As a result, we can identify the determinants of behaviour more clearly than is possible through simply observing people in everyday life. The advantages of experimental control (i.e., our ability to manipulate variables to see how they influence behaviour) typically outweigh any disadvantages of artificiality.



Note that it is not always possible to use the experimental method fully. More specifically, the experimental method can most easily be used when we want to study the effects of the *immediate situation* on behaviour. In addition to the immediate situation, however, our behaviour is also influenced by several other factors that cannot be manipulated. These factors include recent events (e.g., row with partner) or physical health, our personality, childhood events, genetic factors, cultural expectations, and so on.

Second, common sense does not form a coherent set of assumptions about behaviour. Consider the commonsensical views contained in proverbs. Several pairs of proverbs express opposite meanings to each other. For example, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder" can be contrasted with "Out of sight, out of mind", and "Many hands make light work" is the opposite of "Too many cooks spoil the broth". Since common sense involves such incompatible views, it cannot be used as a sound basis for understanding human behaviour.

Third, the notion that psychology is just common sense can be disproved by considering psychological research in which the findings differed greatly from what most people would have predicted. Here are two such findings. A well-known example is Milgram's (1974) research on obedience to authority. Participants were instructed to administer increasingly strong electric shocks to a middle-aged man with a heart condition (see Chapter 15). A psychiatrist predicted only one person in a thousand would administer the maximum and potentially lethal electric shock. In fact, 65% of Milgram's participants did do so – 650 times as many people as the expert had predicted!

Below is a short quiz so you can see for yourself whether the findings in psychology are obvious (many items are based on those used by Furnham, 1988). For each item, decide whether it is true or false:

Psychology quiz	
1. Flashbulb memories (i.e., vivid memories of dramatic world events like 9/11) are exceptionally accurate and long-lived.	TRUE/FALSE
2. In making decisions, committees tend to be more conservative than individuals.	TRUE/FALSE
3. In small amounts, alcohol is a stimulant.	TRUE/FALSE
4. Physically attractive adults have better social skills and physical health than unattractive ones.	TRUE/FALSE
5. Very intelligent children tend to be less strong physically than those of average intelligence.	TRUE/FALSE

6. Patients with amnesia have very poor long-term memory but can still acquire many skills such as learning the piano.	TRUE/FALSE
7. People's behaviour in most situations depends far more on their personality than the situation itself.	TRUE/FALSE
8. A schizophrenic is someone with a split personality.	TRUE/FALSE

The correct answer is "False" to most of the questions. However, the correct answer is "True" to questions 4 and 6. Unless you already know a lot about psychology, you probably had several wrong answers – thus, psychology is *not* simply common sense!

Hindsight bias

When is hindsight bias involved?

We have seen that many findings in psychology do *not* correspond to common sense. Why, then, do so many people claim such findings are unsurprising or obvious? In other words, why do they argue, "I knew it all along"? The answer lies in a phenomenon known as **hindsight bias**. When you know some outcome (e.g., Leicester City winning the Premiership in 2016), you believe you regarded that outcome as much more likely beforehand than was actually the case. Even warning people in advance about hindsight bias generally does not reduce it (Pohl & Hell, 1996).

What causes hindsight bias? One reason is that information about what has actually happened alters the memory for what had been *expected* ahead of the event itself (Hardt et al., 2010). This helps to explain why it is very hard to prevent hindsight bias. Pohl and Hell (1996) found that warning people in advance about hindsight bias did not reduce the bias at all. There are also motivational reasons – most people prefer order and predictability in their lives, and hindsight bias satisfies those preferences (Roese & Vohs, 2012).

The prevalence of hindsight bias is a problem for teachers of psychology. What it does is to produce students who are unimpressed by most findings in psychology!

Findings: simple and complex

In spite of the existence of hindsight bias, I must admit some findings in psychology are actually obvious. For example, you will not be surprised to hear that practice has beneficial effects on long-term memory.

So far I have only provided you with a *simple* finding relating to the effects of practice. The findings are much less obvious when we consider more *complex* issues. Suppose you need to remember material from a textbook for a test next week. Is it better to spend nearly all your time studying the material or to spend some time studying the material but most of it testing how much you can remember? Most people think the former strategy is better. However, the evidence indicates the latter is typically superior (Karpicke et al., 2009; see Chapter 24).

In sum, simple findings in psychology are often fairly obvious. However, that is rarely the case with more complex findings, which are generally hard for non-psychologists to predict or to explain.

KEY TERM

Hindsight bias: the tendency to be wise after the event using the benefit of hindsight

Cross-cultural psychology

Why is it is important to study cross-cultural differences?

Planet Earth is home to over seven billion people living in a huge range of cultures and conditions. However, this richness and diversity is not reflected in psychological research, the overwhelming majority of which has been on people from Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich et al., 2010). WEIRD societies account for only 12% of the world's population, but 96% of the participants in research published in leading psychology journals are from these societies (Arnett, 2008). The United States alone has 5% of the world's population but 68% of the research participants.

As people and cultures are so diverse, psychologists must take care not to overgeneralise their findings to everyone without sufficient evidence.

Cross-cultural psychology is concerned with the major differences across the world's cultures. What is a **culture**? It is "a way of life, often equated with shared knowledge or what one needs to know to live successfully in a community" (Ojalehto & Medin, 2015, p. 250). Next, we consider some major aspects of cross-cultural psychology. Note that a culture is by no means the same as a country. Indeed, there are several cultures *within* countries such as the United Kingdom or United States.

There are large differences in attitudes and behaviour across cultures and countries (see Henrich et al., 2010, for a review). As Westen (1996, p. 679) pointed out, "By twentieth century Western standards, nearly every human who has ever lived outside the contemporary West is lazy, passive, and lacking in industriousness. In contrast, by the standards of most cultures in human history, most Westerners are self-centred and frenetic." Since those living in WEIRD societies are not remotely representative of the world's population as a whole, it is ill-advised to generalise from them to the rest of mankind.

How do cultures differ?

There is an important distinction between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. **Individualistic cultures** emphasise independence, personal responsibility, and each person's uniqueness. In contrast, **collectivistic cultures** emphasise interdependence, sharing of responsibility, and group membership.

There are various limitations with the distinction between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. First, the concepts of individualism and collectivism are very broad. For example, as Fiske (2002, p. 83) pointed out, "IND [individualism] amalgamates Thomas Paine, Vincent van Gogh, Mahatma Gandhi, Michael Jordan, Hugh Hefner, and Adolf Hitler into one category!" Second, what is true at the cultural level is not necessarily the case at the level of individuals within that culture. Triandis et al. (2001) found only 60% of those living in individualistic cultures had individualistic beliefs, and only 60% of those in collectivistic cultures had collectivistic beliefs.

Recent research by Saucier et al. (2015) covering 33 countries suggests other cross-cultural differences are more important. Cultural differences in

KEY TERMS

Cross-cultural psychology: the systematic study of similarities in (and differences among) cultures around the world.

Culture: the values, beliefs, and practices shared by members of a given society.

Individualistic cultures: cultures (mainly in Western societies) in which the focus is on personal responsibility rather than group needs.

Collectivistic cultures: cultures (such as many in the Far East) in which the focus is on group solidarity rather than individual responsibility.

religious beliefs and practices were much greater than those in individualism-collectivism. Why might that be? Religious beliefs play a major role in individuals' moral judgments, how they treat members of other groups, and how they perceive themselves (Cohen, 2015).

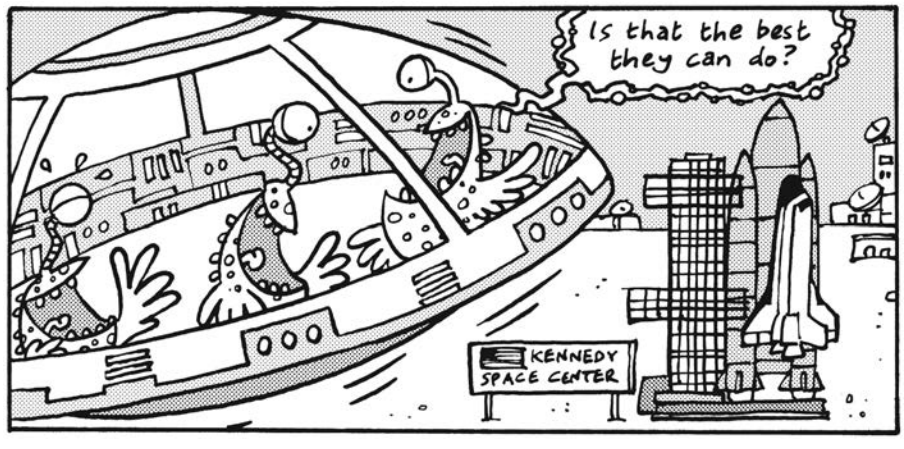
Cultural influences: fixed or flexible?

As Hong et al. (2000, p. 709) pointed out, "Cultural knowledge is [typically] conceptualised to be like a contact lens that affects the individual's perceptions of visual stimuli all the time." In other words, it is generally assumed that our culture has a fixed and constant impact on us. That assumption is incorrect. Cultural influences affect us most when we are in situations making culture-relevant information easily accessible. For example, you may identify more with your own culture when you hear the national anthem than at other times.

Brannon et al. (2015) used a game (the Prisoner's Dilemma) in which participants decided whether to behave cooperatively or in a self-interested way. The participants (African Americans) were presented with images related to American (e.g., image of classic American food) or African American (e.g., image of African American soul food) culture. They were much less likely to make cooperative decisions when primed with American images. These findings showed the predicted flexibility in cultural influences – images related to American culture produced more self-interested behaviour whereas those related to African American culture produced more cooperative behaviour.

Conclusions

Since people's behaviour is strongly influenced by their culture, we must be cautious about assuming that findings obtained in American or European studies are applicable elsewhere. It is also important not to assume that some cultures are superior to others (e.g., Western cultures are "developed" whereas non-Western ones are "undeveloped"). It is arguable that there is "a materially advanced but spiritually bankrupt culture in the West, a spiritually developed and relatively socially stagnant culture in the East, and a developed social consciousness, but relatively undeveloped material culture in Africa" (Owusu-Bempah & Hewitt, 1994, p. 165).



Why is psychology important?

Psychology is important because it addresses issues of enormous significance to us such as how to understand ourselves and others better so as to enrich and enhance our lives. Another major reason why psychology is important is because it has numerous applications to everyday life. Applications of special importance can be found in clinical and health psychology. We will consider both briefly.

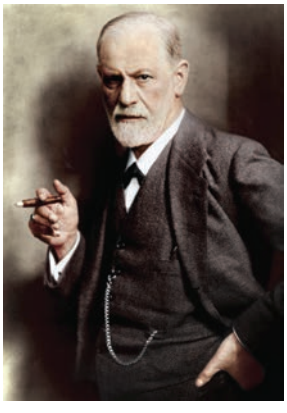
Clinical psychology

Mental disorders cause untold human misery to tens of millions of people around the world every year. For many centuries, it was believed that mental disorders were caused by demons or other supernatural forces. Popular "cures" for mental illness involved making things as unpleasant as possible for the demons. The techniques used included immersing the patient in boiling hot water, flogging, starvation, and torture. It was (erroneously) believed these "cures" would persuade the demons to leave the patient's body and so remove their disorder.

The turning point in treatment of mental disorders came in the early years of the twentieth century when Sigmund Freud developed psychoanalysis as a form of therapy (see Chapters 2 and 20). His great insight was that the best way to treat mental disorders was by using psychological techniques. In the century or so since then, clinical psychology has contributed enormously to the treatment of mental disorders. Of the numerous forms of psychological therapy developed during the twentieth century, cognitive behavioural therapy is of particular importance (see Chapter 20). Unsurprisingly, this form of therapy focuses on cognitive factors (i.e., changing patients' negative views about themselves and their lives). It also focuses on behavioural factors (i.e., changing patients' undesirable patterns of behaviour into desirable ones).

Are all psychological forms of therapy effective? The most common way of answering that question involves the use of **meta-analysis** based on the findings from numerous studies. Matt and Navarro (1997) considered 63 meta-analyses in which different forms of therapy had been compared. Overall, 75% of patients receiving therapy based on psychological principles improved more than the average untreated control patient, and there were only modest differences in the effectiveness of different therapies.

Most studies have concluded that all forms of psychological therapy are comparably effective in the treatment of mental disorders. This has been called the "Dodo Bird verdict" – in *Alice in Wonderland*, the Dodo Bird declared after a race that "Everyone has won, and all must have prizes". However, a recent meta-analysis by Marcus et al. (2014) came to a somewhat different conclusion. They found that all major forms of therapy were effective, but in general, cognitive behavioural therapy was the most effective.



Sigmund Freud.

KEY TERM

Meta-analysis: an analysis in which the findings from many studies are combined statistically to obtain an overall picture

Depression and anxiety

The most common mental disorders worldwide are depression and anxiety disorders. Between 5% and 8% of the European population suffer from clinical depression during any given year (Andlin-Sobocki et al., 2005), and the figure