



# EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Understanding Psychological Research

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# DEDICATION

To three outstanding psychologists who shared the fun and excitement of experimental psychology with us, David A. Grant, William M. Hinton, and L. Starling Reid

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ests lie in cognitive psychology, particularly in human learning and memory. Dr. Roediger has published over 100 chapters, articles, and reviews as well as two other textbooks: *Psychology* (coauthored with E.D. Capaldi, S.G. Paris, J. Polivy, and P. Herman) and *Research Methods in Psychology* (with D.G. Elmes and B.H. Kantowitz). He also edited (with F. I. M. Craik) *Varieties of Memory and Consciousness: Essays in Honour of Endel Tulving*. Dr. Roediger has served as editor of *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition* (1984–1989) and

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**David G. Elmes** is Professor of Psychology and Head of the Department of Psychology at Washington and Lee University, where he has taught since 1967. He earned his B.A. with high honors from the University of Virginia and completed the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees there. Elmes was a research associate for a year at the Human Performance Center of the University of Michigan, and he was a Visiting Fellow of University College at the University of Oxford. At Washington

and Lee, he is director of the Cognitive Science Program. Professor Elmes edited *Readings in Experimental Psychology* and *Directory of Research in Psychology at Primarily Undergraduate Institutions*. He is coauthor of the sixth edition of *Research Methods in Psychology* (with B. H. Kantowitz and H. L. Roediger III). Dr. Elmes has published numerous articles concerned with human and animal learning, memory, and the sense of smell. He frequently referees papers submitted to technical journals, and he was a consulting editor for the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* for several years. He has been active in the Council on Undergraduate Research for a number of years and is currently its president.

# PREFACE

The term *experimental psychology* used to denote only a few selected topics in psychology. In, say, 1930 experiments were conducted to understand sensation, perception, learning, memory and a few other topics. The situation is quite different today: Experimental methods are used to investigate social psychology, developmental psychology, individual differences, and many other topics (such as environmental psychology) that were not considered in psychology's vision seventy years ago. The use of experimental methods has expanded to include most topics in the field. Writing a textbook aimed at this topic has therefore become an increasing challenge.

This textbook is the seventh edition of a book first published in 1978. Each edition has seen both major and minor changes in response to students' and professors' comments, and this edition is no exception. Readers familiar with the previous edition will find changes in every chapter. We have tried to blend the best aspects of the previous six editions with new features to make the book even more appealing. (We describe the changes in more detail below.) We are pleased that the continued popularity of this text has permitted us to produce this new edition, because we think we have been able to improve it, and we have enjoyed working on it again.

The title *Experimental Psychology* has appeared on many textbooks that have lasted to become classics, beginning with E.B. Titchener's pair in the early 1900s, through Woodworth's (1928) text and its revision (Woodworth & Schlossberg, 1954), and finally to those books by Osgood (1953) and Underwood (1966). All these books provided an introduction to research methodology, but they did so in the context of fundamental research in experimental psychology. The books were primarily about the content of experimental psychology, with an emphasis on the research methods used to acquire the knowledge. We see our textbook as firmly within this tradition, even if much less encyclopedic than the great books mentioned above.

Today this approach is unique; during the 1970s and the 1980s, many "research methods" texts appeared that organize the subject matter quite differently. Instead of providing methodology in the context in which it is used, these books treat methodological topics (e.g., betweensubjects designs, small-n designs) as chapter titles and introduce content examples to flesh out the discussion of the methods. This is also an excellent approach, and we have produced another test that embodies this method (Research Methods in Psychology, by Elmes, Kantowitz, and Roediger, also published by Wadsworth). However, Experimental Psychology seeks to provide an integrated blend of content and methodology, with methods discussed in the context of actual research. A primary difference between our text and those of our predecessors in this tradition is that our approach is to select particular examples that best illustrate the methodological point under consideration, and that our book is intended mostly for an undergraduate audience with only a first course in psychology as a background.

We should note one point about terms in our book. In 1994, the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association recommended that the traditional term *subjects*, which had been used for over a century to refer to people who were tested in psychological research, be changed to participants. This change received a mixed reaction in the research community, and some other organizations that publish psychology journals did not go along. For example, the Psychonomic Society permits use of either term in papers published in their journals. In addition, the copyeditors of the American Psychological Association journals do not insist that participants be used as the favored term, but rather encourage its use. Because the situation is unsettled, we have followed the convention of using both subjects and participants when referring to people in psychological research. We tend to use subjects when referring to non-human animals in research, but we use both terms in referring to humans. The usage in our text therefore reflects current practice in the field at large.

# \_ TEXT ORGANIZATION

The philosophy of the text remains unchanged. As with the first six editions, we have striven to achieve an integrated treatment of experimental psychology with a seamless link binding methodology and content. The book includes two main parts. The first five chapters constitute Part One, Fundamentals of Research, and discuss some basic methodological preliminaries that students need. In these chapters we describe some general aspects of science and theory construction; the features of (and differences among) observational, correlational, and experimental methods (with an emphasis on the last); ethical issues in research; and how to read and write research reports.

In the remaining ten chapters, which make up Part Two, Principles and Practices of Research, we flesh out the bare bones provided in Part One by illustrating methodological topics in the context of actual research problems. The chapters are provided with content titles (for example, Perception) and some content is covered in its own right, but the main purpose of the chapters is to present methodological topics in the context of actual research. This organization reflects our belief that the best way to provide students with an understanding of methodology is to embed it in the context of real problems that occur in conducting research. Methodology does not exist in a vacuum, but is devised to solve concrete research problems. We hope that presenting methods in the context of important content issues will help students to see the importance of considering research methods.

## Chapter Format

The chapters in Part Two all share a common format. This parallel structure should help orient students to important features of the text that facilitate learning.

**CHAPTER OPENING** The chapters begin with an outline and quotation. Following a brief orientation to the content area explored in the chapter, the student will come across the first of several boxed inserts,

which readers of the previous editions have found to be helpful and which have therefore been carried over to the seventh edition.

**INTRODUCING THE VARIABLES** This feature quickly orients the student to those independent, dependent, and control variables commonly used in particular research areas. Our coverage of these variables does not exhaust the possibilities, but does include some of the most common ones.

**EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS** This feature represents the main part of the chapter, in which two or three methodology issues are presented in the context of an actual research problem. Thus, for example, in Chapter 10 we discuss the difficulty of ceiling and floor effects in the context of a memory experiment in which this problem actually arose. Many of these experimental topics have been introduced in Part One and are covered in more detail in Part Two. Some crucial topics are even covered more than once in Part Two to ensure better comprehension. The content topics were chosen to be good vehicles for discussing the particular methodological point under consideration. Thus, the content topics may not represent the most important topics in the subject under discussion; nor do we intend our chapters to represent a complete summary of contemporary work in the area. Our intent is to illustrate issues of methods in the context of actual research problems that are of interest. Two other unique features appear toward the end of each chapter in Part Two.

**FROM PROBLEM TO EXPERIMENT: THE NUTS AND BOLTS** In this section, we present the rationale behind experimental-design decisions—how many subjects should be used, why variable *X* is selected instead of variable *Y*, and so on—when hypotheses are taken from a general form to the specifics of an experiment. These decisions are the "nuts and bolts" of experimental research. They are second nature to practicing experimenters and hence seldom articulated in journal articles, but they may represent puzzles to those new to research.

**PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION** This feature suggests safe and simple experimental demonstrations that require little or no equipment and that can be used in or out of class. For example, Chapter 7 includes a demonstration of the Stroop effect and Chapter 14 presents methods to measure one's personal territory or "space bubble."

**END-OF-CHAPTER FEATURES** Finally, each chapter contains a summary in which the main points of the chapter are reviewed, a set of key terms for review and study, and several discussion questions.

## Chapter Sequence

Although students will be best served by reading Part One in correct serial order (especially the first three chapters), those professors and students more interested in methodology than in content can ignore the chapter numbers in Part Two. The table that cross-lists chapter numbers

and experimental topics (to be found at the end of the Table of Contents) can be used to determine the order in which chapters in Part Two are assigned. Thus, the instructor has the option of following a more or less traditional order, or of creating a unique ordering better suited to his or her educational goals. Two lesser used chapters which, however, may be quite necessary for some, are located in appendixes. Appendix A provides a brief sketch of the history of experimental psychology, and Appendix B contains a review of basic statistics.

# Changes in the Seventh Edition

Users of the sixth edition will note several changes in the seventh edition. The most important change is the addition of Web references in every chapter. These references guide readers online to the Research Methods Workshop at The Wadsworth Psychology Study Center: http://psychology.wadsworth.com. In addition, instructors in North America who have specified that InfoTrac College Edition be packaged with this text have provided four months of free access to this extensive virtual library for their students.

New coverage has been added for "history effects" as well as a more complete discussion of random selection and random assignment. Student interest is increased by inclusion of recent Gallup Poll research on Y2K beliefs. Many other topics, such as signal detection theory, perceptual defense, social influence, latency measures and statistical reasoning, have been updated. Of course, in order to keep the text from ballooning to more than could be covered in a semester, these additions have been accompanied by selective deletions. For example, discussion of the psychophysiology of attention that covered event-related potentials and electroencephalograms was deleted. While a few instructors (and the authors) regarded this topic with great affection, most reviewers indicated it was too specialized and not of general interest. So, in order to make room for new improvements, this section was omitted in the seventh edition. Since authors hate to make deletions, such changes were made reluctantly. If we have omitted a section that some teachers would like restored, please write to us so that this can be considered for the eighth edition.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It takes many more people than authors to create a text, and we are pleased to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of numerous others. Our greatest debt is to the users of previous editions. Without their helpful suggestions, this new edition would not exist. Although many teachers offered useful suggestions, we would be remiss not to thank specifically L. Joseph Achor, John B. Best, David del Castillo, John Ceraso, Wendy Domjan, Jerome Friedman, Diane Fuller, Harvey Ginsburg, E. Rae Harcum, Richard Haude, John Jahnke, Denny LeCompte, Kathleen McDermott, Janet McDonald, Kenneth McIntire, Gary Meunier, Douglas Mook, George Moutsiakis, Renee Neely, Gregg Oden, Donald Patterson, Charles Peyser, James Pomerantz, Joan F. Pritchard, Robert Proctor, Ronald Salafia, Albert Silverstein, Lois Tepper, Jyotsna Vaid, Harriet Wall, Mary Susan Weldon, and Cynthia E. Willis for cogent reviews and sage advice. We extend our thanks and appreciation to the reviewers who provided valuable suggestions for improving and strengthening the seventh edition; Jeff Anastasi, Francis Marion University; Veanne N. Anderson, Indiana State University; David Conner, Truman State University; W. Jay Dowling, the University of Texas at Dallas; Robert Rosati, Hofstra University; Theresa Schultz, Dominican University; Brad Thomas, Free Will Baptist Bible College; Evangeline Wheeler, Towson University; and Georgia Wills; Louisiana State University. We thank Michael Cortese for his help in preparing the seventh edition and for preparing the Study Guide and Instructor's Manual for our book. Vicki Knight, Psychology Publisher for Wadsworth, provided invaluable advice and aid for the seventh edition. The staff at Wadsworth Publishing offered expert professional assistance and turned a manuscript into a book with remarkable speed and efficiency. Marcia Craig, our production editor, deserves special praise for her masterful efforts on our behalf. We would also like to thank Mary Schiller, the editor who guided us through five previous editions of this text. Her influence can still be seen on practically every page. We would like to acknowledge the help of several authors and publishers who permitted us to reprint some of their work, and we are grateful to the Literary Executor of the late Sir Ronald A. Fisher, F. R. S., and to the Longman Group Ltd. of London, for permission to reprint from their book Statistical Tables for Biological, Agricultural, and Medical Research. Finally, our deepest gratitude and affection go to our families, who tolerated our absence during the long period it took to complete this revision.

Barry H. Kantowitz Henry L. Roediger, III David G. Elmes

# CONTENTS IN BRIEF

PART (	O N E	FUNDAMENTALS	OF RESEARCH 1			
		CHAPTER 1	Explanation in Scientific Psychology 2			
		CHAPTER 2	Research Techniques: Observation and Correlation 24			
		CHAPTER 3	Research Techniques: Experiments 52			
		CHAPTER 4	Ethics in Psychological Research 88			
		CHAPTER 5	How to Read and Write Research Reports 108			
PART	T W O	PRINCIPLES AN	AND PRACTICES OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY 161			
		CHAPTER 6	Psychophysics 162			
		CHAPTER 7	Perception 192			
		CHAPTER 8	Attention and Reaction Time 226			
		CHAPTER 9	Conditioning and Learning 250			
		CHAPTER 10	Remembering and Forgetting 286			
		CHAPTER 11	Thinking and Problem Solving 326			
		CHAPTER 12	Individual Differences and Development 358			
		CHAPTER 13	Social Influence 390			
		CHAPTER 14	Environmental Psychology 420			
		CHAPTER 15	Human Factors 444			

# CONTENTS

About the Authors v Preface xix

PA	R	Т	0	N	Е
	**		0	7.4	-

#### FUNDAMENTALS OF RESEARCH 1

# CHAPTER 1

#### **EXPLANATION IN SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY 2**

MAKING SENSE OF THE WORLD 3

Social Loafing 3

Curiosity: The Wellspring of Science 4

SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE 5

Fixation of Belief 5

Scientific Procedures 7

THE NATURE OF THE SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION 8

What Is a Theory? 9

Induction and Deduction 10

Evaluating Theories 13

Intervening Variables 14

THE SCIENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY 16

Psychology and the Real World 17

SUMMARY 21

KEY TERMS 21

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 21

WEB CONNECTIONS 22

# CHAPTER 2

# RESEARCH TECHNIQUES: OBSERVATION AND CORRELATION 24

NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION 26

What Do We Observe? 27

Reactivity 29

The Case Study 31

Survey Research 33

Advantages and Disadvantages of Naturalistic Observations 34

THE RELATIONAL APPROACH 36

Contingency Research 37

Correlational Research 38

The Correlation Coefficient 39

CHAPTER 3

Complex Correlational Procedures 45 Cause: A Note 47 SUMMARY 48 KEY TERMS 50 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 50 WEB CONNECTIONS 51 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES: EXPERIMENTS 52 WHAT IS AN EXPERIMENT? 53 Advantages of Experiments 54 Why Experiments Are Conducted 55 VARIABLES 56 Independent Variables 56 Dependent Variables 57 Control Variables 58 Name the Variables 59 More Than One Independent Variable 60 More Than One Dependent Variable 66 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN 66 Between-Subjects Designs 67 Within-Subjects Designs 68 Small-*n* Designs 69 Mixed Designs 70 Control Conditions 70 Pitfalls 72 Quasi-Experiments 74 FROM PROBLEM TO EXPERIMENT: THE NUTS AND BOLTS Conducting an Experiment 80 From Problem to Experiment 80 DATA 81 Obtaining Data 81 Analyzing Data 82 Reporting Data 83 SUMMARY 83 KEY TERMS 85 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 85 WEB CONNECTIONS 87 ETHICS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS 89 Informed Consent and Deception 92 Freedom to Withdraw 93 Protection from Harm and Debriefing 94

CHAPTER 4

Removing Harmful Consequences 95 Confidentiality 95 ETHICS IN RESEARCH WITH ANIMALS 96 Arguments against Research with Animals 97 Arguments for Research with Animals 97 Guidelines for the Use of Animals in Research 99 Guidelines for the Use of Animals in School Science Behavior Projects 100 ETHICS IN DRUG RESEARCH 101 APA Guidelines for Psychologists on the Use of Drugs in Research 101 SCIENTIFIC FRAUD 103 MONITORING ETHICAL PRACTICES 104 SUMMARY 105 KEY TERMS 106 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 106 WEB CONNECTIONS 106 SUGGESTED READINGS 106

# CHAPTER 5

#### HOW TO READ AND WRITE RESEARCH REPORTS 108

HOW TO DO A LITERATURE SEARCH 109 THE PARTS OF AN ARTICLE 111 Title and Author(s) 111 Abstract 112 Introduction 112 Method 112 Results 112 Discussion 115 References 115 CHECKLIST FOR THE CRITICAL READER 116 Introduction 116 Method 116 Results 117 Discussion 117 Checklist Summary 118 A SAMPLE JOURNAL ARTICLE 118 WRITING A RESEARCH REPORT 131 Format 131 Sample Manuscript 133 Style 153 Publishing an Article 156 SUMMARY 157 KEY TERMS 158

#### WEB CONNECTIONS 158 PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION: A LITERATURE SEARCH 159

# PART TWO CHAPTER 6

#### PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

#### PSYCHOPHYSICS 162

MEASURING SENSATIONS 163

6.1 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Operational Definition: Thresholds 165

INTRODUCING THE VARIABLES 166

6 2 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH LILIUSTRATIONS Measurement Scales: Fechner's Law and Stevens' Law 178 Importance of Measurement Scales 181 Fechner's Law 182 Stevens' Power Law 183

6.3 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Small-*n* Design: Psychophysical Methods 184

FROM PROBLEM TO EXPERIMENT: THE NUTS AND BOLTS

How Can We Measure a Pigeon's Visual Threshold? 187

SUMMARY 188

KEY TERMS 188

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 189

WEB CONNECTIONS 189

PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION: WEBER'S LAW 190

## CHAPTER 7

## PERCEPTION 192

ISSUES IN PERCEPTION 193

Direct and Indirect Perception 193 Awareness and Perception 199

7.1 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Verbal Report: Perception without Awareness 203

INTRODUCING THE VARIABLES 204

7.2 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Converging Operations: Perceptual Defense and Perception without Awareness 213

FROM PROBLEM TO EXPERIMENT: THE NUTS AND BOLTS The Color-Distance Illusion 218

SUMMARY 222

KEY TERMS 222

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 222

WEB CONNECTIONS 223

PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION: THE STROOP EFFECT 224

# CHAPTER 8

#### ATTENTION AND REACTION TIME 226

THE COCKTAIL PARTY PROBLEM 227

THE ABC OF REACTION TIME 228

8.1 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Confounding: Dichotic Listening 231

INTRODUCING THE VARIABLES 232

- 8.2 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Selection of the Dependent Variable: Speed—Accuracy Trade-off 236
- 8.3 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS
  Interaction Effects: Event-Related Potentials and Attention 240

FROM PROBLEM TO EXPERIMENT: THE NUTS AND BOLTS

Measuring Attention 243

SUMMARY 246

KEY TERMS 246

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 247

WEB CONNECTIONS 247

PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION: SPEED-ACCURACY TRADEOFF 248

# CHAPTER 9

#### CONDITIONING AND LEARNING 250

TYPES OF CONDITIONING 252

Classical Conditioning: Does the Name Pavolov Ring a Bell? 252 Instrumental (Operant) Conditioning 255

- 9.1 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS
  Within- and Between-Subjects Designs: Stimulus Intensity 257
  INTRODUCING THE VARIABLES 258
- 9.2 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Counterbalancing: Simultaneous Contrast 265
- 9.3 EXPERIMENTAL TOPICS AND RESEARCH ILLUSTRATIONS Small-n Designs: Behavior Problems in Children 270

FROM PROBLEM TO EXPERIMENT: THE NUTS AND BOLTS
The Partial Reinforcement Extinction Effect 278

SUMMARY 281

KEY TERMS 282

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS 283

WEB CONNECTIONS 283

PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION: KNOWLEDGE OF RESULTS AS REINFORCEMENT 284

### CHAPTER 10

#### REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING 286

EBBINGHAUS'S CONTRIBUTION—WHEN MEMORY WAS YOUNG 287 VARIETIES OF MEMORY 291