Psychology for Professional Groups

Psychology and People: A tutorial text

Psychology for Professional Groups

Series Editors: Antony J. Chapman and Anthony Gale

Psychology for Professional Groups is a new series of major textbooks published with the British Psychological Society. Each is edited by a teacher with expertise in the application of psychology to professional practice and covers the key topics in the training syllabus. The editors have drawn upon a series of specially commissioned topic chapters prepared by leading psychologists and have set them within the context of their various professions. A tutor manual is available for each text and includes practical exercises and projects, further reading and general guidance for the tutor. Each textbook shows in a fresh, original and authoritative way how psychology may be applied in a variety of professional settings, and how practitioners may improve their skills and gain a deeper understanding of themselves. 'Psychology and People; A tutorial text' incorporates the complete set of specialist topics and their associated teaching materials.

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Antony J. Chapman and
Anthony Gale

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Note: throughout these texts, the masculine pronouns have been used for succinctness and are intended to refer to both females and males.

The conclusions drawn and opinions expressed are those of the authors. They should not be taken to represent the views of the publishers.

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Preface

This book is designed to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of newcomers to psychology. It provides appropriate material for school pupils preparing for examinations at an advanced level, for first-year students at colleges, polytechnics and universities, and for students preparing for professional examinations in which psychology is part of the syllabus. It is called a 'tutorial text' because each chapter can stand on its own as a basis for group discussion.

As an introductory text the book is novel in conception. It does not profess to outline the full range of psychological enquiry. Instead the coverage is biased towards topics and issues which hold direct and immediate significance within everyday life and personal experience. The contents were selected in consultation with various groups of people who apply psychology in the course of their work and/or who teach psychology to professional groups: teachers, managers and trade unionists, social workers, careers counsellors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, doctors and nurses. Thus there are chapters on the family, ageing, the media, social skills and so forth. Within all chapters there is a corresponding bias towards applying existing knowledge in day-to-day living and work environments. Hence, for example, the chapter on learning draws more on human than animal studies, and similarly the chapter on the biological bases of behaviour concentrates on human existence and functioning.

Another distinguishing feature of the book is that at the end of each chapter there are suggestions for practical exercises. These are included because we believe that the applications and potential of psychology are appreciated best by those who themselves are disposed to engage in formal research. In attempting systematic enquiries of the sort formulated here the reader, through adopting the role of experimenter, should acquire a broader and more informed understanding of problems inherent in measuring behaviour and experience. Even when conducted on a small scale, systematic enquiry can help promote a fuller appreciation of psychological theory relating to the individual, to groups and to organizations; it can enable individuals to explore how psychology can be useful at a personal level, revealing, for example, aspects of the individual's aims and purposes

in life, as well as factors influencing that person's attitudes and treatment of other people; and it is an essential part of psychological training. In the routine course of their work most professional psychologists, whether 'researchers' or not, have to measure people in one way or another (e.g. they assess personality, behaviour or experience), and they have to interpret their data in the context of other evidence and theory. As a beginner in psychology, it would be unwise for you to attempt any of the exercises without having first digested the related chapter. Also it is important to have read chapter 1 by Legge on scientific method: this will help you understand psychological enquiry and the ways of thinking inherent in other chapters.

Most readers will have conducted experiments before; for instance, in biology, physics or chemistry. However, the psychology experimenter has some special responsibilities which do not apply in other laboratory-based sciences. Chemists, for example, do not have to ask permission of their chemicals before mixing them in a test tube and subjecting them to the flames of a bunsen burner. And when they finish their experiments they need experience no pangs of conscience when they cast aside the used chemicals. The chemist's relationship with experimental material is that of 'I' to 'it'. But those of us who study human subjects must sustain an 'I-you' relationship; for rules which routinely apply to interpersonal relationships must still hold true in our research and professional practice. Thus subjects of psychological experiments should be asked their permission to be studied; and they should feel free to withdraw as they wish. As far as possible experimenters should explain the purposes of their study to their subjects: this may not always be practicable before an experiment, but is rarely impracticable afterwards.

Some of the projects in this book call for subjects to say things about themselves; for example, they might be asked to say how they feel in one situation or another. We must emphasize that the psychologist has no special right to secure private and personal information from another person without that person's consent. And even when such consent is given people may subsequently worry about their responses to questions and what is thought of them in the light of their answers: they ask, 'Have I done well?', 'Am I normal?' or questions which are yet more personal. These must all be handled in a tactful and sensitive manner. Moreover, the individual should feel that any information given is treated with absolute discretion and confidentiality. Where we believe that specific projects are particularly liable to create ethical problems, we draw attention to it with a standard caution, and at the end of the book we have added the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society. We believe that all students of psychology should familiarize themselves with these guidelines before embarking on research, because they increase the sensitivity of the researcher to the need to treat other human beings with

dignity and respect. One reason people study psychology is that they wish to make life 'better' for others. It would be paradoxical if they were to make life difficult for some individuals who help them in the course of their training as psychologists.

We have encouraged our contributors, all of whom are experienced teachers and leading authorities in their respective fields, to break from convention and to restrict their use of references to a minimum. This is because, in their early days of study, students are only occasionally expected to consult a learned journal or specialist text, especially if other subjects are studied concurrently. For those wanting to read more, there are suggestions in annotated readings at the ends of chapters. There the authors draw attention to relatively accessible publications of appropriate levels of difficulty. They have also supplied review questions to help readers organize their material and prepare for examinations.

The companion volumes in this series 'Psychology for Professional Groups' (see p. ii) have been edited by fellow psychologists who have many years of involvement with particular professions. They have selected various combinations of topics from those in the present volume, and they have set those topics in the context of specific professional practice. The authors of chapters in the present volume have also produced more detailed analyses for the series. Elsewhere in the series, therefore, readers of the present volume can find fuller analyses of most topics herein, and they can also find supplementary accounts of how psychology is applied in practice. Further teaching materials, in the form of additional references and class notes, are contained in the tutor manuals prepared for each of the other volumes and available from the British Psychological Society.

The overriding aims of the series are to illustrate how psychology can be applied in professional contexts, how it can improve the skills of practitioners, and how it can increase the practitioners' and students' understanding of themselves.

In devising and developing the series we have had the good fortune to benefit from the advice and support of Dr Halla Beloff, Professor Philip Levy, Mr Allan Sakne and Mr John Winckler. A great burden has been borne by Mrs Gail Sheffield, who with skill, tact and courtesy has managed the production of the series: to her and her colleagues at the BPS headquarters and at the Macmillan Press, we express our thanks.

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