

# COGNITION, BRAIN, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

SECOND EDITION



# COGNITION, BRAIN, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

## Introduction to Cognitive Neuroscience

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Second Edition

BERNARD J. BAARS

NICOLE M. GAGE



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# Contents

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*Preface* xiii

## **Chapter 1 Mind and brain**

- 1.0 Introduction 3
- 2.0 An invitation to mind-brain science 3
- 3.0 Some starting points 4
  - 3.1 Distance: seven orders of magnitude 4
  - 3.2 Time: ten orders of magnitude 6
  - 3.3 The need to make inferences – going beyond the raw observations 7
  - 3.4 The importance of convergent measures 10
  - 3.5 Major landmarks of the brain 10
- 4.0 Some history, and ongoing debates 13
  - 4.1 The mind and the brain 13
  - 4.2 Biology shapes cognition and emotion 14
  - 4.3 Cajal’s neuron doctrine: the working assumption of brain science 16
  - 4.4 Pierre-Paul Broca and the localization of speech production 18
  - 4.5 The conscious and unconscious mind 20
- 5.0 The return of consciousness in the sciences 25
  - 5.1 How conscious and unconscious brain events are studied today 27
  - 5.2 History hasn’t stopped 28
- 6.0 Summary 29
- 7.0 End of chapter exercises 30
  - 7.1 Study questions 30
  - 7.2 Drawing exercise 31

## **Chapter 2 A framework**

- 1.0 Introduction 33
- 2.0 Classical working memory 34
  - 2.1 The ‘inner senses’ 35
  - 2.2 Output functions 36
  - 2.3 Only a fleeting moment . . . 36
  - 2.4 Understanding Clive Wearing in the functional framework 39
  - 2.5 The importance of immediate memory 40

- 3.0 Limited and large-capacity functions 41
  - 3.1 Dual task limits 41
  - 3.2 Some very large brain capacities 43
  - 3.3 Why are there such narrow capacity limits? 44
  - 3.4 Measuring working memory 44
- 4.0 The inner and outer senses 46
  - 4.1 The mind’s eye, ear, and voice 47
  - 4.2 The imagery sketchpad may use visual regions of cortex 49
  - 4.3 Is inner speech like outer speech? 49
  - 4.4 Is there only one working memory? 50
- 5.0 The central executive 50
  - 5.1 Executive effort and automaticity 52
  - 5.2 Executive and spontaneous attention 53
- 6.0 Action 54
- 7.0 Consolidation of short-term events into long-term memory 57
  - 7.1 Is working memory just re-activated permanent memory? 58
- 8.0 Summary 59
- 9.0 Study questions and drawing practice 60
  - 9.1 Study questions 60
  - 9.2 Drawing exercises 60

## **Chapter 3 Neurons and their connections**

- 1.0 Introduction 63
  - 1.1 Real and idealized neurons 64
  - 1.2 Excitation and inhibition 65
  - 1.3 Neural computation 68
- 2.0 Working assumptions 68
  - 2.1 Starting simple: receptors, pathways, and circuits 69
- 3.0 Arrays and maps 71
  - 3.1 Maps flow into other maps 75
  - 3.2 Neuronal arrays usually have two-way connections 75
  - 3.3 Sensory and motor systems work together 75

- 3.4 Temporal codes: spiking patterns and brain rhythms 76
- 3.5 Choice-points in the flow of information 80
- 3.6 Top-down or expectation-driven processing 81
- 4.0 How neural arrays adapt and learn 83
  - 4.1 Hebbian learning: ‘Neurons that fire together, wire together’ 83
  - 4.2 Neural Darwinism: survival of the fittest cells and synapses 85
  - 4.3 Symbolic processing and neural nets 87
- 5.0 Coordinating neural nets 88
  - 5.1 Functional redundancy 91
- 6.0 Summary 91
- 7.0 Study questions and drawing exercises 92
  - 7.1 Study questions 92
  - 7.2 Drawing exercises 92

## Chapter 4 The tools: Imaging the living brain

- 1.0 Introduction 95
  - 1.1 Brain recording: more and less direct measurements 96
  - 1.2 The time-space tradeoff 96
- 2.0 A range of useful tools – measuring electric and magnetic signals 98
  - 2.1 Single-unit recording 98
  - 2.2 Animal and human studies cast light on each other 100
  - 2.3 Electroencephalography (EEG) 101
  - 2.4 Magnetoencephalography (MEG) 106
  - 2.5 Zapping the brain 107
- 3.0 Functional neuroimaging: a bold new world 113
  - 3.1 Regions of interest 115
  - 3.2 The resting brain is not silent: intrinsic brain processes 118
  - 3.3 Empirically defining cognitive functions: the creative key 119
- 4.0 New ways to measure brain connectivity: diffusion tensor imaging 121
- 5.0 Conscious versus unconscious brain events 121
- 6.0 Correlation and causation 122
  - 6.1 Why we need multiple tests of brain function 123
  - 6.2 Brain damage and causal inferences 124
- 7.0 Summary 124
- 8.0 Chapter review 125
  - 8.1 Drawing exercises and study questions 125

## Chapter 5 The brain

- 1.0 Introduction 127
  - 1.1 The nervous system 128
  - 1.2 The geography of the brain 129
- 2.0 Growing a brain from the bottom up 133
  - 2.1 Evolution and personal history are expressed in the brain 133
  - 2.2 Building a brain from bottom to top 134
- 3.0 From ‘where’ to ‘what’: the functional roles of brain regions 136
  - 3.1 The cerebral hemispheres: the left-right division 136
  - 3.2 Output and input: the front-back division 143
  - 3.3 The major lobes: visible and hidden 145
  - 3.4 The massive interconnectivity of the cortex and thalamus 149
  - 3.5 The satellites of the subcortex 151
- 4.0 Summary 153
- 5.0 Chapter review 153
  - 5.1 Study questions 153
  - 5.2 Drawing exercises 153

## Chapter 6 Vision

- 1.0 Introduction 157
  - 1.1 The mystery of visual experience 157
  - 1.2 The purpose of vision: knowing what is where 158
  - 1.3 Knowing what: perceiving features, groups, and objects 159
  - 1.4 Knowing where things are 160
- 2.0 Functional organization of the visual system 160
  - 2.1 The retina 160
  - 2.2 Lateral geniculate nucleus (LGN) 163
  - 2.3 Primary – or striate – visual cortex (V1) 164
  - 2.4 Extrastriate visual areas – outside of V1 166
  - 2.5 Area MT 166
  - 2.6 The ventral and dorsal pathways: knowing what and where 167
  - 2.7 Areas involved in object recognition 169
  - 2.8 Lateral occipital complex (LOC) 169
  - 2.9 Fusiform face area (FFA) 169
  - 2.10 Parahippocampal place area (PPA) 170
- 3.0 Theories of visual consciousness: where does it happen? 170
  - 3.1 Hierarchical and interactive theories of vision 173

- 4.0 Brain areas necessary for visual awareness: lesion studies 176
  - 4.1 Consequences of damage to early visual areas 176
  - 4.2 Extrastriate lesions – damage outside area V1 177
  - 4.3 Damage to ventral object areas 178
  - 4.4 Damage to dorsal parietal areas 181
- 5.0 Linking brain activity and visual experience 182
  - 5.1 Multistable perception 182
  - 5.2 Binocular rivalry: what you see is what you get activated 182
  - 5.3 Visual detection: did you see it? 185
  - 5.4 Constructive perception: more to vision than meets the eye . . . 185
  - 5.5 Neural correlates of object recognition 187
- 6.0 Manipulations of visual awareness 187
  - 6.1 Transcranial magnetic stimulation 188
  - 6.2 Unconscious perception 189
- 7.0 Summary 191
- 8.0 Study questions and drawing exercises 192

## Chapter 7 Hearing and speech

- 1.0 Introduction 195
  - 1.1 A model for sound processing 196
  - 1.2 Sound and hearing basics 198
- 2.0 The central auditory system 202
  - 2.1 Auditory pathways 203
  - 2.2 Auditory cortex 204
- 3.0 Functional mapping of auditory processing 209
  - 3.1 Primary auditory cortex 209
  - 3.2 The role of the planum temporale in sound decoding 209
  - 3.3 Cortical auditory ‘what’ and ‘where’ systems 210
- 4.0 Speech perception 218
  - 4.1 Background and history 218
  - 4.2 Early theories of speech perception 220
  - 4.3 Functional mapping of speech-specific processes 222
  - 4.4 The link between speech perception and production 223
  - 4.5 Damage to speech perceptual systems 223
  - 4.6 A working model for speech perception in the brain 226
- 5.0 Music perception 229
  - 5.1 Stages of music processing 229
  - 5.2 A separate system for music perception? 229
- 6.0 Learning and plasticity 231
  - 6.1 Plasticity due to deprivation 231

- 6.2 Plasticity due to learning 231
- 6.3 Plasticity due to expertise 232
- 7.0 Auditory awareness and imagery 232
  - 7.1 Auditory awareness during sleep and sedation 233
  - 7.2 Auditory imagery 233
- 8.0 Summary 235
- 9.0 Chapter review 236
  - 9.1 Study questions 236
  - 9.2 Drawing exercise 236
  - 9.3 Exploring more 236

## Chapter 8 Consciousness and attention

- 1.0 Introduction 239
  - 1.1 Waking cognition is consciously mediated 242
  - 1.2 The need for timely waking, sleep, and dreaming 243
  - 1.3 Global rhythms of circadian states 244
  - 1.4 States of consciousness have characteristic thalamocortical activity 247
  - 1.5 The thalamocortical core: massively interlinked and very active 248
  - 1.6 Maps and rhythms 250
  - 1.7 Two-way connections 252
  - 1.8 How neurons synchronize 252
  - 1.9 Synchrony for gain control 254
- 2.0 Waking 255
  - 2.1 Realistic thinking 256
  - 2.2 Orientation to place, time, and persons 257
  - 2.3 Waking is for learning; sleep enables memory consolidation 258
  - 2.4 Attention and consciousness commonly enable learning 258
  - 2.5 Losing consciousness of predictable routines 259
  - 2.6 Implicit learning requires consciousness, too 261
  - 2.7 Fast rhythms coordinate waking tasks 261
  - 2.8 Gamma activity has multiple roles 262
  - 2.9 Gamma synchrony may bind visual features into conscious objects 264
  - 2.10 Theta rhythms have multiple roles 268
  - 2.11 Alpha rhythms 269
- 3.0 Attention enhances perception, cognition, and learning 270
  - 3.1 The Posner flanker task 271
  - 3.2 A model of attention 274
  - 3.3 Attention versus conscious experiences 278

- 4.0 REM dreams 279
  - 4.1 Dreaming as a conscious state 281
  - 4.2 Memory consolidation in REM 282
- 5.0 Deep sleep: ups and downs 282
  - 5.1 Some mental activity occurs even in slow-wave sleep 283
  - 5.2 The arousal threshold changes during sleep 284
  - 5.3 Memory replay and consolidation 284
- 6.0 Putting it all together 287
  - 6.1 Does consciousness reflect a global workspace function in the brain? 287
  - 6.2 Reentrant signaling and complexity in conscious brain events 291
  - 6.3 Does consciousness require an experiencing self? 293
  - 6.4 Why are conscious events reportable? 294
  - 6.5 Evidence for unusual states 295
- 7.0 Summary 301
- 8.0 Study questions 303

## Chapter 9 Learning and memory

- 1.0 Introduction 305
  - 1.1 A functional overview 308
  - 1.2 Learning and memory in the functional framework 308
  - 1.3 Implicit and explicit memory 310
- 2.0 Amnesia 311
  - 2.1 HM: the best-studied amnesia patient 311
  - 2.2 A summary of amnesia 313
  - 2.3 Spared functions in amnesia: implicit and procedural memory 314
  - 2.4 Spared implicit learning 316
- 3.0 Memories are made of this 318
  - 3.1 Electrically evoked autobiographical memories 319
  - 3.2 Long-term potentiation and long-term depression: excitatory and inhibitory memory traces 321
  - 3.3 Consolidation: from temporary to permanent storage 322
  - 3.4 Rapid consolidation: synaptic mechanisms, gene transcription, and protein synthesis 323
  - 3.5 System consolidation: interaction between the medial temporal lobes and neocortex 324
- 4.0 Varieties of memory 325
  - 4.1 Episodic and semantic memory: 'remembering' versus 'knowing' 325
  - 4.2 Episodic memories may turn into semantic memories over time 327

- 4.3 Episodic and semantic memory are often combined 329
- 5.0 MTL in explicit learning and memory 329
  - 5.1 Divided attention interferes with learning 330
- 6.0 Prefrontal cortex, consciousness, and working memory 331
  - 6.1 Working with memory: the frontal lobe works purposefully *with* memory 334
  - 6.2 Prefrontal cortex in explicit (conscious) and implicit (unconscious) learning and memory 334
  - 6.3 Different types of working memory 335
  - 6.4 Prefrontal cortex – storage or process control? 336
  - 6.5 Combining prefrontal and MTL regions for working memory 337
- 7.0 Retrieval and metacognition 338
  - 7.1 False retrieval 338
  - 7.2 Hemispheric lateralization in retrieval 339
  - 7.3 Theta rhythms may coordinate memory retrieval 340
- 8.0 Other kinds of learning 340
- 9.0 Summary 340
- 10.0 Drawings and study questions 342

## Chapter 10 Thinking and problem solving

- 1.0 Working memory 347
  - 1.1 Working memory overlaps with attention, conscious events, and episodic recall 348
- 2.0 Explicit problem solving 349
  - 2.1 Executive control in problem solving 350
- 3.0 Mental workload and cortical activity 354
- 4.0 Using existing knowledge 356
  - 4.1 Practice and training may change connectivities in the brain 357
  - 4.2 Semantic memory 357
  - 4.3 Abstract concepts, prototypes, and networks 359
  - 4.4 Knowledge comes in networks 360
  - 4.5 Conceptual deficits 361
  - 4.6 Judgments of quantity and number 362
- 5.0 Implicit thinking 362
  - 5.1 Feelings of knowing 363
- 6.0 Summary and conclusions 367
- 7.0 Drawings and study questions 368

## Chapter 11 Language

- 1.0 Introduction 371
- 2.0 The nature of language 372
  - 2.1 Biological aspects 374



- 2.2 Language origins 378
- 2.3 Speech versus language 381
- 3.0 The sounds of spoken language 381
- 4.0 Planning and producing speech 383
- 5.0 Evolutionary aspects of speaking and listening 384
- 6.0 Words and meanings 386
  - 6.1 A cultural treasury of words and ideas 387
  - 6.2 Recognizing synonyms 389
  - 6.3 Current evidence about words and their meanings is fragmentary 389
- 7.0 Syntax, nesting, and sequencing 390
- 8.0 Prosody and melody 391
- 9.0 Meaningful statements 391
- 10.0 Unified representations of language 393
- 11.0 Summary 395
- 12.0 Practice drawings and study questions 395

## Chapter 12 Goals, executive control, and action

- 1.0 Introduction 399
  - 1.1 The many and complex frontal lobe functions 399
  - 1.2 From the silent lobes to the organ of civilization 400
- 2.0 Phylogeny and ontogeny 401
  - 2.1 Phylogeny 401
  - 2.2 Ontogeny 401
- 3.0 Function overview 402
  - 3.1 'Memory of the future' 402
  - 3.2 Self-awareness and executive function 402
- 4.0 Closer look at frontal lobes 403
  - 4.1 Neuroanatomy and neurophysiology of the frontal lobes 403
  - 4.2 How prefrontal cortex is defined 403
  - 4.3 The vast connective highways of the frontal lobes 404
- 5.0 A closer look at frontal lobe function 405
  - 5.1 Executive functions 405
  - 5.2 Social maturity and moral development 406
- 6.0 Neuroimaging the executive brain 407
  - 6.1 Attention and perception 407
  - 6.2 Working memory 408
  - 6.3 Executive function and motor control 410
  - 6.4 Decision-making 411
  - 6.5 Rule adoption 412
- 7.0 Frontal lobe dysfunction 413
  - 7.1 The fragile frontal lobes 413
  - 7.2 Frontal lobe syndromes 413
  - 7.3 Frontal lobe damage and asocial behavior 416

- 7.4 Other clinical conditions associated with frontal lobe damage 416
- 8.0 A current view of organizing principles of the frontal lobes 417
- 9.0 Toward a unified theory of executive control: a conclusion 418
- 10.0 Drawing exercises and study questions 419

## Chapter 13 Emotion

- 1.0 Introduction 421
  - 1.1 The triune brain 421
  - 1.2 Basic emotions and the role of reflective consciousness 423
- 2.0 Panksepp's emotional brain systems 423
  - 2.1 Feelings of emotion 425
- 3.0 The FEAR system 425
  - 3.1 Conscious and unconscious fear processing: LeDoux's high road and low road 428
  - 3.2 Fear without awareness 428
  - 3.3 Affective blindsight 430
  - 3.4 Cognition-emotion interactions in fear responses 431
  - 3.5 Implicit emotional learning and memory 431
  - 3.6 Emotional modulation of explicit memory 431
  - 3.7 Emotional influences on perception and attention 432
  - 3.8 Emotion and social behavior 433
  - 3.9 Emotion inhibition and regulation 434
- 4.0 The reward system: liking, wanting, learning 435
  - 4.1 Re-interpreting 'reward': from reward to reward prediction to reward prediction error 436
  - 4.2 Reward is more than learning 438
  - 4.3 'Reward pathway' and drug use 439
  - 4.4 Reward cues influence attention 440
- 5.0 Summary 440
- 6.0 Chapter review 441
  - 6.1 Study questions 441
  - 6.2 Drawing exercises 441

## Chapter 14 Social cognition: Perceiving the mental states of others

- 1.0 Overview 445
  - 1.1 Terms that are used to refer to social cognition 446
  - 1.2 The importance of perspective: the first, second, and third person 446
  - 1.3 Approaches to perceiving others' minds 447
- 2.0 An organizing framework for social cognition 449
  - 2.1 Intention 449
  - 2.2 Eye detection 449

- 2.3 Shared attention 449
- 2.4 Higher-order theory of mind 450
- 3.0 Mirror neurons and intention detection 450
  - 3.1 From action to intention 451
  - 3.2 Eye detection and gaze perception 455
  - 3.3 Shared attention 456
  - 3.4 Higher-order TOM abilities 457
  - 3.5 Social cognition of others like and unlike us: I-It in the brain? 460
  - 3.6 Face perception 462
- 4.0 Summary 463
- 5.0 Chapter review 463
  - 5.1 Study questions 463
  - 5.2 Drawing exercises 463

## Chapter 15 Development

- 1.0 Introduction 465
  - 1.1 New techniques for investigating the developing brain 466
  - 1.2 The mystery of the developing brain: old questions and new 467
- 2.0 Prenatal development: from blastocyst to baby 467
  - 2.1 Epigenesis 468
  - 2.2 The anatomy of brain development 468
  - 2.3 Neural migration 470
  - 2.4 Nature and nurture revisited 474
  - 2.5 Prenatal hearing experience: voice and music perception before birth 476
- 3.0 The developing brain: a lifetime of change 477
  - 3.1 The rise and fall of postnatal brain development 477
  - 3.2 Regional differences in brain development 478
- 4.0 Developing mind and brain 479
  - 4.1 The first year of life: an explosion of growth and development 483
  - 4.2 Childhood and adolescence: dynamic and staged growth 492
- 5.0 Early brain damage and developmental plasticity 503
- 6.0 Summary 505
- 7.0 Chapter review 506
  - 7.1 Study questions 506

## Chapter 16 The genes and molecules of cognition

- 1.0 Introduction 510
  - 1.1 Basic life molecules are also used for neuronal signaling 510
- 1.2 Life uses enzymes 511
- 1.3 The same molecule may send different signals 512
- 1.4 The blood-brain barrier protects the internal milieu of the brain 512
- 1.5 Model organisms 512
- 2.0 Genes in evolution, the lifespan, and daily events 514
  - 2.1 DNA operates over multiple time scales 515
  - 2.2 Brain development: neurogenesis, then synaptogenesis 516
  - 2.3 How did you get that big brain? 517
- 3.0 Gene expression and regulation 518
  - 3.1 Information processing in the cell 519
  - 3.2 Higher-order DNA regulates other DNA 520
  - 3.3 An error in brain development 521
  - 3.4 Development-controlling genes 521
  - 3.5 Gene programming: beyond the central dogma 522
  - 3.6 The environment can restructure chromatin in the cell nucleus 522
  - 3.7 Learning as an epigenetic process 524
- 4.0 Neurons and glia as signaling cells 524
  - 4.1 Neurons and synapses as on/off switches 524
  - 4.2 Chemical self-regulation 525
  - 4.3 Membranes, ion channels, and axonal spikes 526
- 5.0 Synaptic transmission: from production to clean-up 528
  - 5.1 The big two: glutamate and GABA 528
  - 5.2 GABA: the major inhibitory transmitter 529
  - 5.3 Neuroglia may also process information 531
  - 5.4 Production, release, and disposal of neurotransmitters 531
  - 5.5 Synaptic release 532
  - 5.6 Synapses and receptors are traffic control points 533
  - 5.7 Receptors detect signaling molecules 534
  - 5.8 Ion channels that are opened by other molecules 535
  - 5.9 Cleaning up the synapse: deactivation, diffusion, recycling 538
- 6.0 Neuromodulators 539
- 7.0 Learning 541
  - 7.1 The hippocampal complex 542
  - 7.2 Glutamate, GABA, LTP, and LTD 543
  - 7.3 Glutamate synapses as early models of synaptic learning 543
  - 7.4 Epigenetics of learning 548
  - 7.5 Neurotrophic factors in learning 549

8.0 Summary	549	2.3 Positron emission tomography (PET)	568
9.0 Chapter review	552	2.4 Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)	570
Chapter appendix	553	2.5 MRI – a tool for the future	582
 		2.6 Optical imaging	583
<b>Appendix: Methods for observing the living brain</b>		3.0 Multimodal brain imaging	583
<i>Thomas Ramsøy, Daniela Balslev, and Olaf Paulson</i>		3.1 Simultaneous imaging from different sources	585
1.0 Historical background	555	3.2 Imaging genetics	586
1.1 Correlating brain and mind	555	4.0 Concluding remarks	588
1.2 Recording brain activation	557	 	
2.0 Methods	557	<i>References</i>	591
2.1 Electroencephalography (EEG)	559	<i>Glossary</i>	617
2.2 Magnetoencephalography (MEG)	563	<i>Index</i>	637

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# Preface

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Keeping up-to-date with cognitive neuroscience is much like surfing the Big Wave at Waikiki Beach. New findings keep rolling in and maintaining a stable balance is a big challenge. It is exciting, fun, and, at times, a little bit scary. But we keep climbing back on our mental surfboards, to catch the coming rollers of advancing science. This book aims to provide an overview of the emerging science of mind and brain in a way that is accessible to students and interested readers at all levels.

For the Second Edition a number of new features have been added.

- 1 A new chapter on the *Genes and Molecules of Cognition* (Chapter 16) introduces essential new developments in the molecular basis of cognition. Neurons build links with other neurons by expressing proteins, directed by the genetic (and epigenetic) apparatus of the cell. Thus the molecular level has become essential for understanding learning, language, perception, thinking, and other basic functions. This chapter presents ‘genes and molecules’ in readily understandable ways.
- 2 A complete revision of the chapter on *Consciousness and Attention* (Chapter 8) takes into account the last ten years of research. New recording methods have led to remarkable breakthroughs. For example, brain rhythms have been shown to carry both conscious and unconscious information. The Second Edition is fully up-to-date on these findings.
- 3 A major revision of Chapter 12, *Goals, Executive Control, and Action* has been included. The frontal lobes have been called ‘the organ of civilization’ but they have long been viewed as mysterious. Many of the traditional puzzles are now clearing up, as this chapter explains, with a presentation of the current view of the organizing principles of the prefrontal cortex.
- 4 Individual scientists are presented in text boxes called *Frontiers in Cognitive Neurosciences*. These leading scientists from around the globe present their views about new directions and important findings in their discipline within the broader field of Cognitive Neuroscience:
  - Nelson Cowan, PhD, University of Missouri
  - David Eagleman, PhD, Baylor College of Medicine
  - Gerald Edelman, MD, The Neurosciences Institute
  - Paul Fletcher, PhD, University of Cambridge
  - Angela Friederici, PhD, Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Science
  - Christopher Frith, PhD, Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging
  - Christof Koch, PhD, Division of Biology, California Institute of Technology
  - Stephen L. Macknik, PhD, Barrow Neurological Institute
  - Susana Martinez-Conde, PhD, Barrow Neurological Institute
  - Aniruddh Patel, PhD, The Neurosciences Institute
  - Charan Ranganath, PhD, University of California, Davis
  - Michael Rugg, PhD, University of California, Irvine
  - Jenny Saffran, PhD, University of Wisconsin, Madison
  - Larry Squire, MD, University of California, San Diego School of Medicine
- 5 A new Glossary of technical terms has been added. Since vocabulary is one of the great challenges in learning cognitive neuroscience, we expect the Glossary to be a basic tool for students and instructors.

- 6 A new Mini-Atlas of the Human Brain has been added in pullout form at the front of the book. Knowing one's way around the brain is the first step in understanding the mind-brain sciences. But the brain is simply enormous in complexity and topographical knottiness. In the First Edition we used illustrations from *Gray's Anatomy* and other Elsevier/Academic Press sources to create a lavishly illustrated text. The Second Edition adds a Mini-Atlas to give newcomers even more support to explore the landscape of the brain – a compass and map of the territory.
- 7 The Appendix on Brain Imaging Methods has been completely updated by an expert in that field, Dr. Thomas Ramsøy of the University of Copenhagen.

As Christopher Frith, Michael Posner, and others have written, we are seeing a marriage of the cognitive and brain sciences, building on historic advances over the past few decades. Cognitive and perceptual mechanisms that were inferred from behavior can now be observed more directly in the brain, using a variety of novel brain imaging methods. For the first time, we can observe the living brain in real time, doing what it has evolved to do over hundreds of millions of years. The result is astonishingly rich, combining psychology and biology, medicine, biochemistry, and physics. Yet most scientific studies use well-established psychological concepts and methods. As a result, we are now seeing how psychology and brain science complement each other in surprising and gratifying ways. The field of *cognitive neuroscience* is becoming a basic educational requirement in psychology, biology, education, and medicine.

Cognitive neuroscience has been difficult to cover in a single course. Many instructors discover that they spend most of the term explaining the brain, with little time left for integrative topics. While understanding the brain is vital, an exclusive focus on anatomy can defeat the instructors' objectives.

This text approaches that challenge in several ways. First, the body of the text follows the gentlest learning curve possible, running along familiar lines: sensory perception in vision and audition, working memory, attention and consciousness, memory, executive functions, language and imagery, problem solving, emotion, social cognition, and development. The brain is introduced step by step, with gradually increasing sophistication. To make sense of the material we use a *functional framework* throughout the book. This widely accepted set of ideas allows us to see our major topics

in a single schematic diagram, which grows in depth and detail over the course of the book. The functional framework can be seen from different perspectives. For example, memory stores may be viewed from an active working memory perspective; or perception, cognition, and control may be seen as playing upon permanently stored information in the brain (Chapter 2). The framework helps either way.

A website for teachers and students is available at <http://textbooks.elsevier.com> via a free registration. Supportive materials for teachers include all figures and captions from the book in powerpoint format, as well as instructional video and multimedia files. Student materials include chapter reviews, quizzes, figures, and videos. The support site will be dynamic. Materials will be added and changed as warranted by new advances, and the authors are happy to consider additional ideas and suggestions for new supportive materials.

Instructors may present the chapters in any order that suits their goals. For advanced students, Chapters 4 and 5 on brain imaging and anatomy may be covered lightly. For introductory courses those chapters are essential and may be supplemented with the more challenging appendix (by Thomas Ramsøy and colleagues). The appendix can also be used as a convenient reference sources.

A full range of brain disorders are covered, from HM and the case of Clive Wearing (Chapters 2 and 9), to blindsight, visual neglect, face blindness and other visual deficits (Chapter 6). Chapter 11 on executive function covers disorders of undercontrol and overcontrol. In certain disorders, motor and cognitive control is not directly impaired at all; it seems as if patients are just not willing to act. At the other pole, patients sometimes spontaneously imitate another person's actions as if they cannot stop themselves. Such patients may stand up impulsively when the examining physician stands up. Disorders of overcontrol and undercontrol reveal basic aspects of human executive functioning.

Some disorders have close psychological analogs. Professional musicians, like pianist Van Cliburn, are sometimes unable to inhibit their tendency to sing along with instrumental playing. Highly trained experts can lose some executive control over automatic behaviors, especially if they are working under mental workload. On the opposite side, a classic symptom of severe depression is that patients seem unable to initiate and pursue actions. Brain regions involved in such 'purely psychological' deficits are often implicated in similar organic disorders. We see another striking



simplification of the evidence, giving readers a chance to understand unifying principles rather than scattered facts.

Psychological topics are often simplified by brain evidence. For example, the verbal part of classical working memory – the capacity mentally to rehearse numbers and words – is now thought to be a part of our normal language capacity. Baddeley (2003) has emphasized the discovery that silent rehearsal activates the well-known speech regions of cortex. Thus the ‘phonological loop’ of traditional working memory is no longer seen as a separate cognitive feature, but rather as a silent way of using speech cortex. Similarly, Kosslyn and others have shown that visual imagery makes use of a subset of the cortical areas involved in normal visual perception (2004). Even more surprising, visual attention appears to be closely related to eye movement control. Athletes and musicians use the sensorimotor brain to engage in silent mental practice. Thus ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ processes seem to involve overlapping regions of the brain, a major simplification of the evidence.

While cognitive neuroscience does not always simplify things, it does so often enough to allow us to organize this text along recurring themes. This makes the material easier to teach and understand. It allows us to explore a wide range of basic topics, including emotion, social cognition, and development.

The companion materials are designed to enrich student learning by way of vivid classroom demonstrations, images, and learning points, using Powerpoint presentations and movie clips. A number of phenomena in the text can be best illustrated by way of experiments and movie clips. For example, a patient is shown with locked-in syndrome, able to communicate only by means of eye movements directed at a keyboard display. For comparison, we show patients who look superficially the same, but who are suffering from true coma.

At the end of each chapter, review questions and brain drawing exercises are designed to help students learn interactively. We particularly emphasize drawing and coloring exercises as a way to grasp the knotty three-dimensional organization of the brain.

This text covers some frontier topics in the ever-changing vista of cognitive neuroscience. One popular topic is the relationship of ‘the mind’ as we experience it and ‘the brain’ as we observe it: i.e. the historic topic of consciousness and its brain correlates. Alan Baddeley recently noted that, ‘Perhaps the greatest change over the last twenty years within cognitive

psychology and cognitive science . . . has been the acceptance of consciousness as a legitimate and tractable scientific problem’.

The renewed acceptance of consciousness has changed research in perception, memory, and attention, as seen in pioneering work by Endel Tulving, Daniel Schacter, Gerald Edelman, Francis Crick, Christof Koch, and numerous others. While some textbooks have added chapters on consciousness, we believe that the topic has now become so pervasive that it needs to be addressed throughout. As *Science* journal recently noted in its 125th anniversary issue, consciousness is now thought to be one of the major unsolved problems in biological science. While much remains to be learned, psychologists have long studied conscious processes under such headings as ‘explicit cognition’ and ‘focal attention’. Those constructs are all assessed by the behavioral index of accurate report, which has been taken to signal conscious events since the beginning of psychophysics, some two centuries ago. Thus ‘consciousness’ can be seen as an umbrella label, much like ‘memory’ and ‘perception’, with a number of subtopics like subliminal perception, autobiographical memory, and focal attention.

Voluntary control is also back on the forefront of research, sometimes under the rubric of ‘strategic control’ and ‘executive functions’. In the brain, voluntary and non-voluntary functions can be clearly distinguished anatomically and physiologically. Robust differences also appear in functional brain imaging and behavior. Finally, the notion of executive control appears to be moving toward new insights on the ‘self’ of everyday life, as studied in social and personality psychology.

All these topics show a striking convergence of behavioral and brain evidence.

The brain basis of emotion and social relationships is developing as well. ‘Mirror neurons’ are involved with the ability to perceive intentions in others; unconscious ‘threat faces’ can stimulate the amygdala; and conflicting aspects of self-control are apparently played out in competing impulses in prefrontal cortex.

Cognitive neuroscience is challenging; it is also one of the most important frontiers in science. Students will be rewarded with a new depth of understanding of human nature, one that has never been quite as clear and convincing as it is today.

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# COGNITION, BRAIN, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

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