

How do European and

MOST psychological research in the world is carried out in Europe and the United States. It is often assumed that any distinctive differences there may once have been between the approaches taken by European and American researchers have decreased or even disappeared. There is undoubtedly a grain of truth in this assumption. However, while recognising that I run the risk of glossing over differences in approach within these cultures, I would like to argue that there are still some important differences.

My starting point is the notion that all psychological research can be placed somewhere along a continuum. At one end, we have research characterised by full implementation of the experimental approach. The independent variables in such research are controlled, and the dependent variables are measured with



MICHAEL W. EYSENCK offers his viewpoint on the differences between European and American psychology.

precision. The disadvantage is that such research often de-emphasises theoretical issues. At the other end, we have research focusing on theoretical issues. The disadvantage is that such research often lacks experimental rigour, in the sense that the experimental method cannot be implemented fully. In my opinion, more American than European research is at the well-controlled but theoretically limited end of the continuum, whereas more European than American research is at the theoretical but poorly controlled end.

Where do these differences come from?

A major reason is that behaviourism has had a more lasting impact on American psychology. Methodological behaviourism emphasised empiricism, and its central thrust was on observable stimuli and responses. Another reason is that psychology in many European countries developed out of philosophy, which helps to explain the theoretical emphasis of much European psychology, and its greater reliance on rationalism.

I will focus on four lines of support for the above contentions. First, let us consider those psychologists who have

THE refrain that most heavyweight journals are America-centric is a familiar one. Reading the American Psychological Association's league table of journals and the peers who will ultimately judge your research, it seems Europeans have a justifiable grievance. The editorial board of the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* is exclusively American; the *Journal of Applied Psychology* has 54 American associate editors and three from the rest of the world; *Psychological Review* has 30 Americans and nine non-Americans. The BPS's own flagship journals have a less ethnocentric bias (*BJP* has eight UK associate editors and six others; *BJSP* has 19 UK, 4 US and 11 non-UK European).

The reason for the American bias, on the face of it, is obvious: there are more Americans undertaking psychological research. As Donald Hebb, the first Canadian President of the APA, noted in 1960, 'to a great extent, American psychology today is psychology' (Hebb,

1960, p.735). While progress over the past 40 years means one can argue with Hebb's conclusion, a more intriguing question is whether the perceived bias is a numerical one or a philosophical one. Do European and American research efforts differ at a more serious, epistemological level?

Most European research does have origins in the philosophy of Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Berkeley and Mill. American research, however, has a less rich historical background of its own to draw on; hence the emergence and triumph of behaviourism from the 1920s onward. But there are other differences in focus between the two regions, which have important consequences for learning, research and the development of psychology.

Several publishers have recognised these differences and identified a need for a European version of their workhorse introductory texts. Some publishers have started from scratch: Eysenck's *Psychology: An Integrated Approach* (1998) is an original,

European-flavoured collection of chapters by recognised European authors. According to Eysenck in his preface, he wanted a text which 'combines the accessibility and good production values of American texts with more sophisticated coverage and an approach which encourages students to think for themselves'. The last point is an important one.

I spent most of 1998 working on a European edition of an American introductory text (Carlson *et al.*, 2000). When the proposal, and later the draft chapters, were sent to our editorial board (a mixture of well-known UK and non-UK European psychologists), the response to the question about whether there is a need for a non-American text was almost uniform. Most remarked that American texts are not taxing enough for a European readership; some made the point that American texts spoon-feed without evaluating the material they presented. To be fair to the Americans, some texts do make an attempt to engender a sense of inquisitiveness in their students. Sadly, this often takes the form of a question relegated to a margin (a more metaphorical than literal positioning). Little solid evaluation takes place within the text. A complaint from our advisory panel was that some of the American heavyweights



NEIL MARTIN on why and how European publishers are taking on the American heavyweights.

US psychology different?

revolutionised theorising in an area. Within abnormal psychology, Freud is the first name that comes to mind, in developmental psychology it is Piaget, and in cognitive psychology it is probably Broadbent. In similar fashion, psychologists such as Tajfel and H.J. Eysenck have greatly altered theoretical views in social and personality research respectively. It is no coincidence that they are all European psychologists.

Second, consider social psychology, the area in which the differences between European and American psychologists are most pronounced. In essence, the American approach is theoretically and empirically simpler, emphasising the importance of individual information processing to explain social phenomena. In contrast, European social psychologists adopt a more complex theoretical approach that is harder to test empirically. This approach is more distinctively social, focusing on

collective concepts such as 'culture' and 'ideology', in addition to the individual ones favoured by American researchers.

Third, the greater emphasis of the Americans on what is directly measurable can be seen in the field of personality research. Many American researchers (e.g. Costa and McCrae) have focused on personality assessment, arguing that what is of central importance is to develop good measures of personality. In contrast, H.J. Eysenck argued that we also need a theoretical understanding of the genetic, physiological, and other underpinnings of individual differences in personality. For many years American researchers (for example, social learning theorists such as Bandura) emphasised the part played by environmental factors and ignored genetic factors. If you think I am exaggerating, simply look at any American textbook on personality from the 1960s or 1970s. For

instance, the terms 'genetics' and 'heredity' do not appear in the index of either Maddi (1976) *Personality Theories* or Janis *et al.* (1969) *Personality: Dynamics, Development, and Assessment*. Even in 1986 Mischel published *Introduction to Personality: A New Look*, which allocated only three pages to genetic factors. Perhaps his look was not new enough.

Fourth, and most speculatively, there is evidence from research within cognitive psychology. Two of the main approaches are cognitive neuropsychology (based on studying cognition in brain-damaged patients) and cognitive neuroscience (based on studying cognition with neuroimaging techniques). When I was revising the textbook I co-authored with Mark Keane, I was struck by the fact that research within cognitive neuropsychology is more theoretically driven than is research based on neuroimaging. There are, of course, various possible explanations for this state of affairs. However, it may be relevant that cognitive neuropsychology started as a predominantly European enterprise (e.g. Coltheart, Marshall, Warrington), whereas neuroimaging is predominantly associated with the United States.

Finally, I would like to point out that I am not arguing that American psychology is inferior to European psychology. It is extremely important for researchers to develop complex theoretical ideas, but it is also very important to carry out well-controlled and replicable studies. The optimal approach to research would involve combining theoretical understanding with full use of the experimental method, and there are encouraging moves in that direction on both sides of the Atlantic.

■ Professor Michael W. Eysenck is Head of Department at Royal Holloway, University of London. E-mail: M.Eysenck@rhul.ac.uk.

present psychological material as fact when the reality is a lot less clear-cut. I have some, but not complete, sympathy with this view. An introductory text should present the body of knowledge that a discipline has accrued and then suggest ways in which it is incomplete and how it can be expanded. The best advice I was given as an undergraduate was to question everything; you can take this to the extreme, but adopted sensibly it leads to better understanding. In our book we did this by evaluating material directly in the text where appropriate, and introducing large sections in each chapter called 'Psychology in action' and 'Controversies in psychological science'.

In addition to hoping that the level of sophistication is pitched appropriately, most European textbooks have one other card up their sleeve. This card is ensuring that non-American work is well represented and this is probably the most serious fault with American-based introductory textbooks. Admittedly, you will find references to Galton, Broadbent, Eysenck (*père and fils*), Baddeley, and so on but large chunks of important research conducted by psychologists in Europe is routinely ignored. Research in language, face processing, cognitive neuropsychology, occupational psychology, health psychology

and memory is often overlooked. This also occurs in books targeted at a specific readership. A recent American text, trumpeted as a definitive introduction to forensic psychology, featured no research by Davies, Gudjonsson, Bull, Canter, Memon or Bruce (to name a few).

Many psychologists would argue that it is equally lamentable to adopt the American or the European approach. What is needed is an international outlook, not one limited to disparate geographical chunks. European psychologists value seeing their work considered respectfully and now have a number of heavyweight alternatives to the American-dominated introductory heavyweights. It seems that, at the most fundamental psychological level, we all need to feel wanted. New European developments go some way to meeting this need.

■ Dr G. Neil Martin is Principal Lecturer in Psychology at Middlesex University. E-mail: n.martin@mdx.ac.uk

References

- Carlson, N.R., Buskist, W., & Martin, G.N. (2000). *Psychology: The science of behaviour. European adaptation*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Eysenck, M.W. (1998). *Psychology: An integrated approach*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Hebb, D.O. (1960). The American revolution. *American Psychologist*, 15, 735-745.

YOUR VIEWS

Do you think European psychology is distinctive? If so, what do you see as its strengths and weaknesses? Is further integration of European psychology a desirable and achievable goal, and what role should the Society play in this? Send in your views on any aspect of the European issue to the letters page, on psychologist@bps.org.uk.

European unity

What is the role of EFPPA in advancing European psychology, and why is there a need for such an organisation?

EFPPA was founded in 1981, and it now covers 31 European countries. The members are national psychological associations or federations, one from each country. All 15 European Union members are included plus 16 other European countries. The head office is located in Brussels.

The general aim of EFPPA is promoting high quality and ethics in the training and the practice of the profession. This is for the benefit of the clients, European citizens and the psychologists themselves.

Worldwide there are about 500,000 people with a psychologist's training. One out of three of the world's psychologists live in Europe. EFPPA member associations together have 130,000 members. In addition the European psychology students have just recently joined EFPPA; the European Federation of Psychology Students' Associations (EFPSA) has about 80,000 members. Our profession is growing very quickly: it has been estimated that the number of psychology students is already around 200,000 in Europe.

The profession is growing also in diversity. Psychology is being applied in very different settings, from health care to social services, from environment and traffic to the usability of new technology. As a profession, we need to have unity among this diversity. It is important for the strength and identity of the profession and science of psychology. We need to have one common European organisation which represents psychology to the European Union and European governments.

The 31 European psychological associations also need EFPPA as a platform for co-operation. It is essential to share views concerning the standards of the psychologists' education, the ethical

MONIQUE ANDERSON interviewed Tuomo Tikkanen, President of the European Federation of Professional Psychologists Associations (EFPPA), to hear about European psychology and the role of EFPPA within it.

matters of the profession, the development of psychological methods, the funding of psychological research, and so forth.

EFPPA has some basic documents and policy statements, which can be found at www.efppa.org. Of special importance are *Optimal Standards for Professional Training in Psychology* (1990), outlining the basic features of the training of a European psychologist, and *The Metacode*



of Ethics (1995), stating the basic ethical principles which the European psychologists and psychological associations must respect in their activity. The Nordic countries have adopted a common code of ethics, based on the EFPPA metacode.

What are the main goals of EFPPA in terms of the training of psychologists?

At this moment in time several goals are particularly important. Firstly, to promote high-level university education as the guarantee of quality. In Bologna, June 1999, the ministers of education from 29 European countries adopted a declaration supporting a European Higher Education Area. The aims of the declaration are

clearly well-meaning, but it is difficult to know how they will be implemented.

In its policy statement to the European Union and the European governments, EFPPA expressed the view that the three-year university education (bachelor's degree) is insufficient for both scientific and professional purposes: it is merely a starting level of the psychologist's training. For professional psychological purposes, the scientific and practical training together should last at least six years. Both the core programme and the advanced studies should be provided within a university or an equivalent institution of higher education. Usually, the university degree at this level is the master's degree, and in all European countries where licensing and legal regulation of the profession of psychology has been properly arranged, this is the required level of education. EFPPA has decided on the requirements for training in psychology in *Optimal Standards for Professional Training in Psychology* in 1990.

For the future, EFPPA is creating a Europsychologist's diploma which would be granted to all psychologists in the EFPPA member associations with a training in psychology that fulfills the EFPPA standards. This would be a new, revolutionary step for the profession. Since the European Union will not regulate the profession, we will do it ourselves.

A European diploma for psychologists is necessary for the achievement of several important goals: to provide reliable, high-quality professional services for European citizens; to allow free movement for psychologists in Europe; and to ensure that the training level for the profession is equally high in all European countries. Also it seems that a European standard is necessary in order to promote the development of adequate national legislation and statutory registration concerning both basic and specialisation training in psychology.

Tuomo Tikkanen is based at the Finnish Psychological Association, Bulevardi 30 B 3, 00120 Helsinki, Finland.
E-mail: Tikkanen@psyli.fi

The European Commission has earlier indicated that it does not plan to issue a Directive concerning the training of psychologists. Therefore, a Europsychologist's diploma can be developed and granted by EFPPA. A project has already been launched for this purpose. Universities, university networks and psychological associations in 12 European countries participate in this project in co-operation with EFPPA and funded by the European Union. The project co-ordinator is the ex-President of EFPPA, Ingrid Lunt.

The granting of the diplomas could start around 2003–2004. Naturally, the Europsychologist's diploma would need to be accepted both on the national level (that is, in all European countries) and by the European Union. This is a great challenge for the profession and for our organisations. [For detailed information on the Europsychologist's diploma, see www.europsych.org.]

And your goals in terms of the status of the profession?

EFPPA aims for a stronger status of the psychological profession. This means promoting and defending the rights of psychologists by:

- promoting regulations and laws in European countries concerning the use of the title 'psychologist', the practice of the profession, the psychological services, their accessibility to the European citizens, and their financing;
- spreading wider public knowledge of psychology and psychologists;
- creating more visibility for EFPPA in Europe and the psychologists in all member countries;
- improving the financing of the psychological services, both public and private.

In many countries this means that EFPPA demands for the profession of psychology an equal status to that of the medical profession. Equality should be manifest in the training, the financing, the legislation and the practical status of the profession. In many European countries, the profession of psychology is still in the shadow of the medical profession – and psychologists do not, for instance, have the possibility to become leaders of the health organisations.

EFPPA is also committed to keeping science and profession together. In psychology they are intertwined in many ways: unlike many other professions, psychology has grown out of science. The

medical profession, for example, existed long before any real science of medicine.

The basic competence for the profession is created through scientific education in the universities. Science in turn is challenged by the problems that practitioners face in the 'real life' of human beings. The success and credibility of psychology as a profession relies greatly on the close link between scientific research and practical application.

EFPPA as a whole will be developed as a joint organisation of academic and practical psychology, as the present statutes of our organisation clearly indicate. EFPPA aims to promote the development of psychology and its practical application, covering both science and profession. It has been proposed that the name of the organisation should change to the European Federation of Psychologists Associations to cover both groups.

How can interested psychologists become involved in EFPPA?

EFPPA is a federation of national psychological associations; it has no individual members. The best way to be involved is through your own national psychological society or association.

EFPPA does have several committees, task forces and working groups, but the members to these groups are usually nominated by the national psychological associations. The standing committees are ethics, European legal matters, psychotherapy, and testing. A special committee has been established concerning psychological research and its funding: the Committee on Scientific Affairs. The task forces are disaster and crisis psychology, psychology in the educational system, and traffic psychology.

The reports of these committees and task forces are available to all psychologists on the EFPPA website. This also has the contact information, e-mail addresses and websites of all the 31 European psychological associations.

Is there a way for interested students to get involved in European activities?

The European students have established their own organisation, the European Federation of Psychology Students Associations. EFPSA is an affiliate member of EFPPA.

You can easily join the activities of the EFPSA. It arranges annual congresses, summer schools and student exchange. It also has a mailing list which you can join and a travel network. [See www.efpsa.org.]

I was personally able to be present at the last EFPSA congress in April in Budapest. The theme of the congress was 'The psychology and prevention of racism, xenophobia and ethnic discrimination'. Recent events in southeastern Europe were a focus of discussion. It was wonderful to see students from 32 European countries present, including all the countries that made up the former Yugoslavia.

Can you explain a little about this month's VIIIth European Congress of Psychology?

The European Congress takes place every two years. It aims to bring together European psychologists, researchers and students from different areas to exchange views and ideas beyond the narrow research and application fields. One of the main themes of the congress is 'Linking science and profession'.

This year, celebration will also be the one important aspect of the congress. The BPS is celebrating its centenary and EFPPA its 20 years of activity.

How do you see the future of European psychology?

The future of psychology in Europe looks definitely bright. In many countries the profession is growing extremely fast. The governments and private companies will invest more resources for the education of the profession and for psychological research. The application of psychology is growing in the traditional fields of health, social and occupational and expanding to the less traditional areas of environment, economy and technology.

It is, however, always a bit problematic when a science and a profession grows fast and in diverse directions. In some countries the development is well established and legally regulated. In other countries the development is more fragile. Some countries still lack sufficient European-level standards for training.

We need to keep European psychology united and strong. Only then can we achieve our goals. We have to take special care of our co-operation both in Europe and in EFPPA, and especially in countries where there are many organisations.

If we keep together and united, the future of psychology in Europe looks bright. It will witness a Europe with a growing respect for and insight into the psychological aspects of human life.

■ *Monique Anderson is an undergraduate at the University of Leicester.*