To appear in:

Corr, P. J. (2017). Encyclopedia entry: Philip J. Corr. Carducci, B. J. (Ed.), The Wiley Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences: Vol. II. Research Methods and Techniques of Assessment. London: Wiley.

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Word Count: 1,340

**Abstract**

Philip J. Corr, educated at the University of London, and now Professor of Psychology at City, University of London, UK, works in personality neuroscience with a focus on fundamental systems of emotion and motivation. He is most identified with the reinforcement sensitivity theory (RST) of personality, which provides the neuropsychological bases for three systems: *Behavioral Approach System* (BAS), *Fight-Flight-Freeze System* (FFFS), and *Behavioral Inhibition System* (BIS). Along with colleagues, he has elaborated RST and applied it to a range of domains (e.g., behavioural economics) to show how its systems pervade the psychological landscape. Philip has published well over 150 papers and book chapters, and is the single author of two books, and the editor of three others. Although making no claims for originality or innovation, Philip sees his research as being incremental, paving the way for others to make truly long-lasting contributions to personality science.

Keywords:

Approach-Avoidance Conflict, Emotion, Genetics, Individual Differences, Motivation, and Neuroscience

**Encyclopedia Entry**

Philip J. Corr, Professor of Psychology at City, University of London, has ploughed a number

of scientific furrows since receiving his doctorate in 1994 from the Institute of Psychiatry

(IoP; now the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, at King’s College

London, UK), where he researched the biological bases of personality, contrasting Jeffrey

Gray’s and the world famous Hans Eysenck’s theories – at the time Philip could not have

imagined that he would, some twenty years later, publish a biography of this most remarkable

of psychologists (Corr, 2016). Since his doctoral days, Philip has sought to make incremental

progress in the general area of personality and individual differences. He has single and co-

authored well over 150 papers, many book chapters, and is the author and editor of five

books. Philip relishes the opportunity to work and publish with colleagues around the globe,

especially younger ones in the early steps of their career – he remembers well the support and

guidance that was of such importance in his own academic development from, amongst

others, such luminaries as Jeffrey Gray and Hans Eysenck. Philip held previous professorial

appointments at University of East Anglia and Swansea University, both in the UK.

Philip has won several awards, starting with the Early Career Development Award (2001), from the *International Society for the Study of Individual Differences* (ISSID), where later he washonoured by being elected by Society members to the offices of Member of the Board of Directors, and then President-Elect (2013-2015) and President (2015-2017). In the UK, Philip co-founded the *British Society for the Psychology of Individual Differences* (BSPID), in which he is currently joint elected President.

Philip’s research interests are in the general area of personality neuroscience, including its extension to, amongst other things, behavioural economics. Specifically, his personality neuroscience research concerns individual differences in fundamental systems of emotion and motivation that underlie approach and avoidance behaviour, and their conflict. He believes that such fundamental systems hold wide-spread importance across the whole landscape of psychological phenomena.

Philip has worked extensively with the Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (RST) of personality, and in 2008 he edited a book by this title. He has worked alongside Professor Neil McNaughton (Otago University, Dunedin, NZ) on developing this neuropsychological approach to personality, first formulated by Professor Jeffrey Gray in the early 1970s (e.g., Corr & McNaughton, 2012). This theory proposes that at the basis of personality – and its links to internalising and externalising mental disorders -- are three systems: one positive, the *Behavioral Approach System* (BAS); and two negative, the *Fight-Flight-Freeze System* (FFFS) and the *Behavioral Inhibition System* (BIS). The BAS is activated by appetitive (attractor) stimuli; the FFFS by aversive (repulsor) stimuli; and the BIS by conflicting stimuli (e.g., co-activation of FFFS and BAS). This general theoretical framework has increasingly been seen as offering an integrative model for the neurobiology of personality and, also, psychopathology. A theoretically faithful questionnaire of revised RST has been developed by Philip and Andrew Cooper (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK; Corr & Cooper, 2016). This questionnaire which was some 10 years in the making attests to the doggedness of Philip’s research strategy; and, where appropriate, the desire not just to publish to get a quick academic ‘fix’.

Philip has applied his neuroscience-informed individual differences approach to many specific areas of psychology, including: psychopathology (Corr & McNaughton, 2015); consciousness (Corr & Morsella, 2015); perfectionism (Stoeber & Corr, 2015); laterality (Beaton, Kaack, & Corr, 2015); social attitudes (Corr, Hargreaves-Heap, Russell, Tsutsui, & Seger, 2013); gambling (Corr & Thompson, 2013); psychopharmacology (Perkins, Ettinger, Weaver, Schmechtig, Schrantee, Morrison, Sapara, Kumari, Williams, & Corr, 2013); psychophysiology (Andersen, Moore, Venables, & Corr, 2009); health psychology (Kalogreades & Corr, 2011); creativity (Burch, Pavlis, Hemsley, & Corr, 2006); occupational performance (Corr, McNaughton, Wilson, Burch, & Poropat, 2017); and neuroimaging and genetics (Ettinger, Corr, Mofidi, Williams, & Kumari, 2013). A major recent theme has been to work towards integrating personality and (especially behavioural) economics (Ferguson, Heckman, & Corr, 2011).

Much of Philip’s work combines an experimental approach with individual differences in personality and cognitive variables. This follows the course of trying to combine these two major schools of psychology, as outlined by Cronbach’s, 1957, *American Psychological Association* Presidential Address. This scientific perspective contends that a truly unified psychological science needs properly to consider both sides of this perspectival scientific coin. To achieve this end, there needs to be a revival of the generalist in psychology, which Philip’s research typifies.

It is to be doubted whether Philip’s work will be remembered for making any long-lasting contributions to psychological science, but he hopes that it will encourage and inform though who, one day, may well.

See Also

wbepid0223 Behavioral inhibition/activation, personality correlates of

wbepid0303 Jeffery A. Gray

wbepid0011 Hans Eysenck

wbepid0029 Biological models of personality – neurological

wbepid0028 Biological models of personality- psychophysiological

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**Further Reading**

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**Biography**

**Dr. Philip J. Corr** is Professor of Psychology at City, University of London, UK. His research interests are in the general area of personality neuroscience, specifically individual differences in fundamental systems of emotion and motivation that underlie approach and avoidance behaviour, and their conflict. In addition to extending this perspective to applied fields (e.g., occupational performance and behavioural economics), this research is especially important in the understanding of morbidity in clinical disorders – for example, McNaughton, N. & Corr, P. J. (2016). Mechanisms of comorbidity, continuity, and discontinuity in anxiety-related disorders. Development and Psychopathology, 28, 1053-1069. Further information: www.philipcorr.net