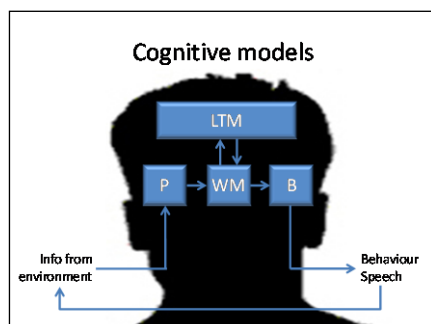


Cognitive psychology: models & methods

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss research methods in relation to psychological approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive psychology Experimental and case study methods

How do cognitive psychologists view people?



Cognitive psychologists view people as **processors of information**. People have the capacity to obtain information from their environment, store it, manipulate it and use the results to plan behaviour, whose effect on the environment can become a new source of information which influences subsequent behaviour and so on. Consequently, cognitivists see the task of psychology to be finding out what sorts of process occur between the **input** of environmental information and the **output** of speech and other behaviour. The processes that act on information when people think

cannot be directly observed. However, it is possible to make **inferences** about what is happening 'inside someone's mind' by comparing the behavioural effects of different inputs, or the behavioural effects of processing the same input in different ways. This is the idea that underpins the use of the laboratory experiment in cognitive psychology.

Experimental cognitive psychology

Experimental cognitive psychologists investigate human information processing in a wide variety of areas. They are most interested in how healthy, 'normal' minds deal with information from the environment. As the name implies, the preferred research method is the **experiment**. In cognitive experiments, researchers manipulate IVs and measure DVs. The IV they manipulate is often either the type of information people are presented with or the way in which people process that information. The DVs are performance measures which depend upon how participants have processed what was presented (e.g. the number of words they recall from a list; the numbers of targets they detect; the number of errors they make). By seeing how the IV affected the performance measure, the researchers can draw inferences about what happened when the participants processed the information.

- Review your work on cognitive psychology. Identify one experiment where the IV was the type of information the PPs were presented with and one where the IV was how the information was processed. Write a brief outline of each, explaining what the experiments showed.
- Suggest why cognitive psychologists prefer to do their experiments in laboratories.

Cognitive neuropsychology

Cognitive neuropsychologists are concerned with the relationship between information processing and brain structure and functioning. They often use a case study method, investigating people with brain injuries and looking for relationships between the nature and location of the damage and changes in how the person processes information.

- Identify and summarise one case study you learned about in cognitive psychology. Explain what the study showed and why.
- Suggest a strength and a weakness of the case study method as used by cognitive neuropsychologists