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## “Introduction” to Perspectives on Anxiety, Fear, and Panic

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## Introduction

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In recent years the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation has returned explicitly to the theme of motivation. The 43d volume is no exception. In the spring of 1995, leading researchers and theorists came together in Lincoln, Nebraska, to offer their perspectives on anxiety, panic, and fear. Clearly, the theme of this year's symposium is closely tied to motivation.

The last 15 years have seen an explosion of research on anxiety-related topics, particularly within clinical psychology. Two themes from this research are evident in this year's symposium. First, it is increasingly clear that it is appropriate to consider anxiety, panic, and fear as separate but related constructs, as reflected in the volume title. Izard and Youngstrom, Gray and McNaughton, and Barlow, Chorpita, and Turovsky build a strong case that fear is a basic emotion that humans share with many animal species. Fear appears to have specific neural-chemical pathways and can be isolated from other emotions, such as sadness or interest, on various psychological measures. Barlow and his colleagues argue that panic is an inappropriate activation of the fear response in the absence of danger, literally a "false alarm." Using Gray and McNaughton's terminology, panic represents the activation of the neuropsychological fight/flight system, but anxiety is associated with a separate neuro-

psychological circuit known as the behavioral inhibition system. Finally, several of the authors suggest that anxiety represents a combination of emotions of which fear is but one. Izard and Youngstrom report that anxiety is often composed of interest, excitement, guilt, and shyness, in addition to fear. Barlow and his colleagues, who prefer the term "anxious apprehension," emphasize the future orientation inherent in anxiety. This recognition of the distinction among the three constructs represents more than technical nomenclature. It has important implications for understanding normal and abnormal manifestations of anxiety, panic, and fear as well as for the development of pharmacological and psychosocial interventions.

The second major theme in anxiety-related research that is also evident in the symposium is the multidimensional nature of anxiety, panic, and fear. By exploring the emotional, neuropsychological, conditioning, and cognitive aspects of anxiety-related phenomena, the first four chapters provide the building blocks for Barlow's comprehensive theory, which is presented in the fifth chapter. As the reader will see, however, each chapter also draws on the work of the other authors—an indication of the extent to which the authors recognize the interrelatedness of their perspectives.

Izard and Youngstrom open the volume with a review of Differential Emotions Theory as applied to the symposium topic. At a time when cognitive theories and therapies have been highly influential, Izard and Youngstrom remind us of the importance of emotion and argue cogently for the primacy of emotion over cognition under some circumstances. They also offer intriguing insights into how culture and gender may influence the expression of fear-related emotions.

In the second chapter, Gray and McNaughton update Gray's theory as presented in his 1982 book on the neuropsychology of anxiety. Gray's original theory is summarized early in the chapter, followed by an update and revision based on more recent research. Readers familiar with Gray's work will recognize the septo-hippocampal system, known as the Behavioral Inhibition System, that appears to form the neuropsychological substrate of anxiety. Acknowledging the increased importance of the phenomena of panic in the last 10 years, Gray and McNaughton outline the role of the central gray, medial hypothalamus, and amygdala in the fight/flight system.

In what for many readers may be the most surprising chapter in the volume, Mineka and Zinbarg update us on what modern conditioning theory contributes to our understanding of anxiety, fear, and panic. Traditional learning explanations of anxiety-related phenomena have been discounted in favor of more cognitive models in recent years. Mineka and Zinbarg argue strongly that this discounting fails to recognize advances in learning theory that offer parsimonious, testable hypotheses about the etiology and treatment of anxiety disorders. Outdated "Stress-in-Total-Isolation Anxiety Models" (SITIA) are compared with "Stress-in-Dynamic-Context Anxiety Models" (SIDCA) using concepts such as preparedness, temperament, and compound and contextual cues in order to address the shortcomings of SITIA models.

The application of experimental cognitive psychology paradigms to anxiety, panic, and fear has yielded substantial information about the information-processing aspects of anxiety-related disorders that were previously unavailable with self-report measures. McNally offers an excellent overview of this burgeoning body of research while placing it in the context of important experimental cognitive theories about the nature of the human information-processing system. Information-processing research has sometimes been accused of relying on alluring, computer-driven, experimental paradigms in the absence of cogent theory or even an understanding of what processes are tapped by the paradigms. Thus McNally's discussion of this research within an established theoretical framework is a particularly significant contribution.

The volume concludes with an updated and condensed version of Barlow's 1988 theory of emotional disorders. Barlow, Chorpita, and Turovsky draw from work on emotion, neurophysiology, attributions, learning, ethology, attention, and child development to describe how the inappropriate activation of fear (e.g., a panic attack) can trigger a cascade of events that eventually becomes a clinical anxiety disorder. Within the model, Barlow and colleagues outline how internal or environmental cues can initiate a feedback loop of negative affect, attentional shifts, increased arousal, and possible behavioral disruption and/or avoidance. Barlow and colleagues extend the model to include other disorders of emotion such as anger, depression, and mania which are thought to represent inappropri-

ate activation of other basic emotions—anger, sadness, and excitement, respectively.

During the Symposium Discussion and Integration Session, Dianne Chambless, the discussant, highlighted several themes that appear across the various papers and warrant further research. First, as mentioned by all of the authors, an individual's perception of the controllability of internal and external events appears to be central to our understanding of anxiety-related phenomena. Second, the notion of "unconscious" has resurfaced as a legitimate topic of research, although, as McNally pointed out, contemporary discussions of "processing without awareness" differ substantially from the psychoanalytic notion of an unconscious laden with symbolic content. Third, the role of the human information-processing system in anxiety, panic, and fear was acknowledged by all of the authors as well. Although this may simply reflect the current dominance of cognitive models, it seems likely that any comprehensive understanding of anxiety, panic, and fear must consider how the processing of external and internal stimuli affects neuropsychological events, emotions, and behavior.

It seems clear that anxiety, panic, and fear are complex phenomena that require a multidimensional approach ranging from neuroanatomy to conditioning. Like the proverbial blind person grasping the tail of the elephant, we will have difficulty understanding the true nature of these phenomena if we limit ourselves to a single perspective. I hope this volume encourages students, researchers, and clinicians to broaden their understanding of anxiety, panic, and fear.

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank the people who were helpful in making this year's symposium a reality. First, I am grateful to the volume contributors for preparing excellent presentations and strong, scholarly manuscripts for publication here. Dianne Chambless was an outstanding discussant, making numerous insightful and stimulating points. Although she elected not to contribute a chapter to the volume, her involvement is apparent in nearly all of the other chapters. I appreciate the invaluable assistance of Claudia Price-Decker, Rebecca Barnes, and their staff in organizing this symposium. They took care

of a myriad of organizational details so that everything went smoothly. Without the enthusiasm and support of the graduate and undergraduate students on my research team, this symposium would never have occurred. I also want to thank my colleagues in the Department of Psychology for the opportunity to chair this prestigious event and for their ongoing support. In particular, I appreciate the guidance of Richard Dienstbier, the series editor, who always found the time to answer my questions. Finally, I would like to dedicate my work on this 43d Nebraska Symposium to my mother, Lorraine Izetta Nelson Hope (1920–1994). She taught me what is important in life.