Edward Bradford Titchener
(1867-1927)

- **Theoretical Orientation**
  - Although he tried to pass himself off as a loyal follower of Wundt, his conceptualization of psychology drastically differed from Wundt’s

- **Theoretical Orientation**
  - Dualist, associationist
  - Emphasized images and became a phenomenologist later in life
  - Positivist
  - Subject matter of psychology
  - **Psychology is the science of the mind**
    - **Mind = sum total of mental processes occurring during the lifetime of the individual**

- **Consciousness = Sum total of mental processes occurring at any given time**
- **Mind has the power to organize elements voluntarily**
- **But rejected Wundt’s idea of distinguishing between mediate and immediate experiences**
- **Titchener argues that there is only one experience that can be viewed on two different levels**
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- Stimulus error
  - Committed when the introspector pays attention to physical properties of the stimulus rather than the psychological sensations
- Psychology is a natural science
- Goal is description

Conceptions about conscious experience
- Consciousness is always changing
- But can be studied in more situations than allowed by Wundt

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- Introspection
  - Method by which study can be done
  - Special training and appropriate conditions can make introspection just as precise as observations of physical events
- Ontology
  - The legitimate subject matter of psychology is mental events
  - Can only be discovered through introspection
- Strategy
  - Analyze concrete mental experience into its simplest components
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- Discover how these components combine and the laws that govern combination
- Connect them with physical/bodily conditions

**Shaped American Psychology**

- Taught at Cornell in his Oxford master’s gown because “It confers the right to be dogmatic.”

**Books:**

- *An Outline of Psychology* (1896)
- *Primer of Psychology* (1898)

- While he denied women admission into his experimental group, he did admit the first female graduate students, many of whom went on to become influential in American psychology

**Structuralism**

- Aim of structural psychology was to analyze the structure of the mind, to find the elementary processes of consciousness and to isolate the constituents in the given conscious formation
- Science begins with observation
  - For Titchener, observation = introspection
    - Not informal
    - Not speculation
    - Rigorous and precise kind of observation needing training to perform
  - Subjects called reagents
    - They are like mechanical recording instruments
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- Subject matter of psychology is conscious experience
  - Dependant upon the person experiencing it
  - Content of consciousness
    - Sensations
      - Most prevalent
      - Basic components of patterns of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feels
      - Listed > 44,000 sensations
    - Images
      - Elements of ideas
      - Occur in mental processes that represent events that are not present

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- Affections
  - Elements of emotions that combine to create experiences such as happiness and sadness
- Sensations and images have 4 common attributes
  - Quality
    - Distinguishes every element from every other element
  - Intensity
    - Strength, weakness, loudness, or brightness
  - Duration
    - Course over time
  - Clarity
    - How well attended to the element is

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- Affections have the first 3
  - Feelings only vary along one dimension:
    - Pleasant to unpleasant
- Felt that he had refined and improved introspection so that the results from his laboratory were superior to those found in other labs
- He recognized individual differences in mental processes
- Principles of Synthesis
  - Once components isolated, this is the next step
  - But, he was mostly concerned with analysis, not synthesis
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- Context theory of meaning
  - Elementary mental events are devoid of meaning
  - Yet perceptions of the world have meaning
  - Meaning results from the constellation of mental events
  - Context generates meaning
  - Combines atomistic and holistic views
  - So, where does Titchener fall on this scale?

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- Psychophysiology
  - Defining the relationship between body & mind
  - Psychological parallelism
  - Causality is a myth
  - The goal of psychology is description

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- Criticisms of Structuralism
  - Use of introspection to get at conscious experience necessarily alters the experience being studied
  - Titchener had difficulty defining what he meant by the introspective method
  - Questions about precisely what the introspectors were trained to observed
  - Titchener's introspection is actually retrospection
  - Idea of unconsciousness threw a monkey wrench
  - Structuralism is artificial and sterile
  - Structuralist definition of psychology came under attack
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- Contributions of Structuralism
  - Contributed to the rapid growth of psychology in North America
  - Trained many important students who assumed leading roles in American Psychology
  - Established an elite organization of researchers
  - Wrote publications through Cornell that disseminated important research findings and theoretical speculations to psychologists
  - Offered a clear-cut conception of psychology
  - Influenced the scope of psychology
    - Reduced scope from Wundt
    - Ignored applied areas
  - Introspection, broadly defined, is still used as a basic methodology of psychology today
  - Forwarded the cause of women
  - Target of criticism

References