

Wladyslaw Sluckin Room

Professor Sluckin was a founder member of the department and Head of the Department of Psychology 1973-84

A little History

- **1921** Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland University College founded
- **1927** University College Leicester (**1931** Dr FI Attenborough Principal)
- **1957** University of Leicester
- **1959** Decision taken to open a Department of Psychology
- **1960** **Professor SGM (Gillmore) Lee** (Bedford College) first professor of psychology
Dr Wladyslaw (“Wladek”) Sluckin (Durham) appointed Lecturer in Psychology to assist Lee in opening department
- **1966** Wladek promoted to a personal chair
- **1973** Lee dies suddenly aged 52
- **1973-84** Wladek Head of Department of Psychology
- **1984** Wladek retires. **Prof. Martin Herbert** succeeds as HOD
- **1985** Wladek dies aged 66 of oesophageal cancer
- **1991** First **Sluckin Lecture** by Professor Patrick Bateson (Cambridge)

Some Pictures



Gillmore Lee was from South Africa, had served in the RAF during the war, and came to the UK because of apartheid

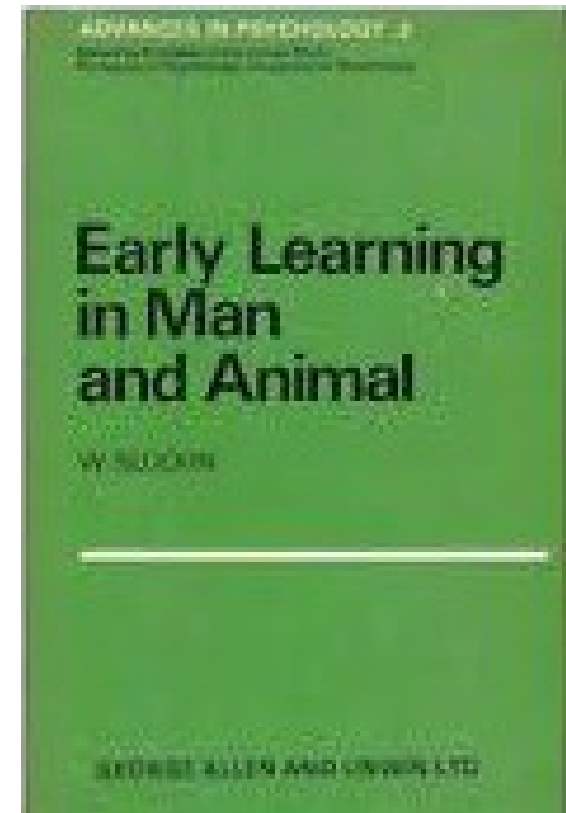
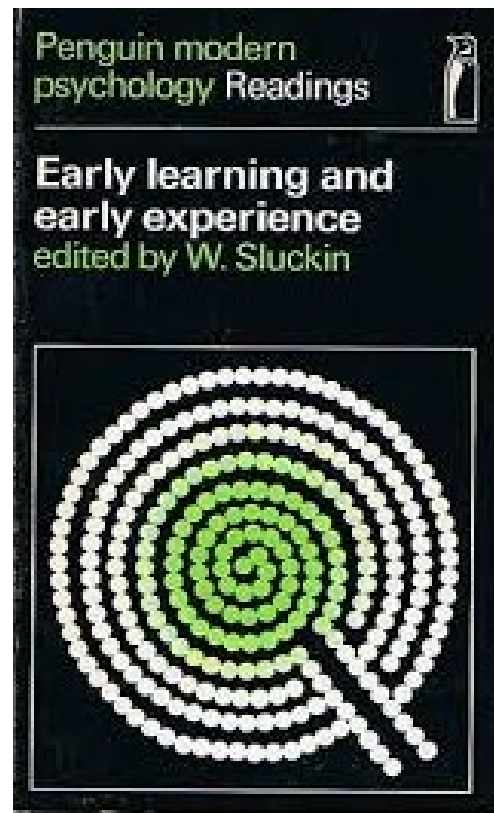
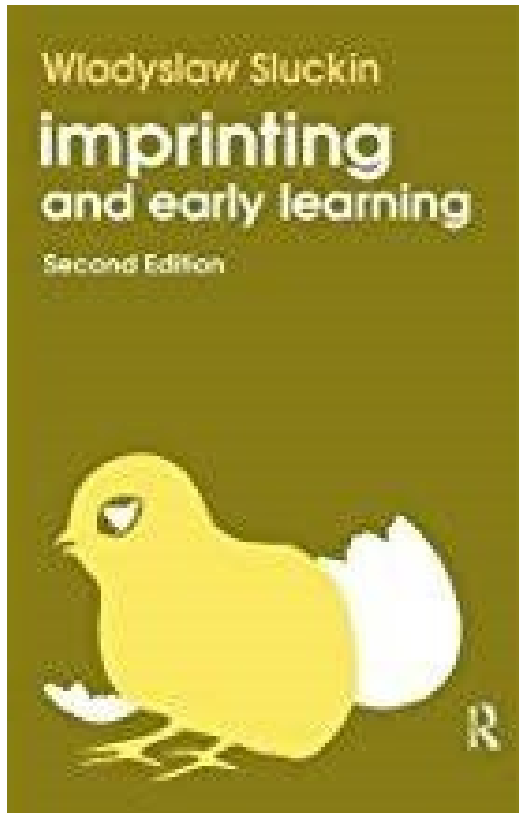


Wladek Sluckin was from Poland, arriving in the UK as a student in 1937, and staying as a result of the war



The Department of Psychology, January 1964

(L to R): **Professor Lee** (in academic gown!), **Gordon Evans** (Chief Technician), **Keith Taylor** (Research Assistant, later Professor in Melbourne, Australia), **Roy Davies** (Lecturer), **Ann Taylor** (Lecturer), **Michael Ball** (Technician), **Margaret Frape** (Professor's Secretary), **Wladek**, **Derek Wright** (Lecturer in Educational Psychology)



Wladek was best known for his work in early learning....

These are only three of his books

IMPRINTING

This classic picture, taken about 1970, shows Wlodek in the department with some chicks (or maybe they were quail!), who had been misled into imprinting on him



Note for non-psychologists: Imprinting

A method of early learning in which the organism follows another large organism it sees during a critical period shortly after birth. As this is usually mother, this is a evolutionarily successful rule of thumb.



W.H. Thorpe FRS (1902-1986),
University of Cambridge

Wladek first became interested in early learning about 1956 after hearing a lecture in Durham by the great British biologist William Homan Thorpe.

His experimental work in this area began shortly afterward, but as so often, it took some time to achieve something publishable:

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Vol. XIII

1961

Part 2

IMPRINTING AND PERCEPTUAL LEARNING

BY

W. SLUCKIN* and E. A. SALZEN†

From the Department of Psychology, University of Durham

Filial responses are first considered by reference to the initial stimulus situations. Findings on variability in responsiveness of chicks are reported and discussed. Facilitated responsiveness subsequent to visual stimulation is reported. The concept of critical period is examined in the light of other workers' and our own findings; it is concluded that imprinting ends as a result of its own action rather than through the effects of fear. Following responses are further considered by reference to the influences of early experiences and the act of following upon the occurrence and strength of subsequent responses. The degree of attachment to a moving object tends to be proportional to the amount of experience. Individual chicks were allowed to spend several hours following a box in a runway and their ability to discriminate between familiar and unfamiliar moving objects and static environments was studied. Strong evidence for imprintability to environment has been found. Imprinting phenomena are discussed in terms of perceptual learning.



This paper was published after Salzen left for Liverpool and Sluckin for Leicester. Salzen (b 1930) later became professor of psychology at the University of Aberdeen. Their mutual departure from Durham coincided with difficulties with the Head of Department, whom they felt was bossy and interfering.

PSYCHOLOGY

January 4, 1964

NATURE

Flocking of Domestic Chicks

NEWLY hatched nidifugous birds do not behave as if they recognized their own kind as such. On the contrary, they react in the same way to a very wide range of stimulus objects by approaching them and by giving 'pleasure' notes when near them. Thus the birds become attached to the stimulus objects. Such imprinting normally occurs to parents or parent-substitutes. However, Collias¹ suggested that simultaneous imprinting to siblings could account for the socialization of young birds. This suggestion was also made later by Weidmann² and by Gray³, and has been implied by other students of imprinting.

If the flocking of young birds depends not on an innate mutual recognition mechanism but on early exposure to their own kind, then the birds' early experiences should result in their tending to return to familiar companions, be they similar young birds or any other stimulus object. This we set out to investigate, using domestic chicks hatched in the laboratory. The chicks were removed

Table 3
(sec) spent in different regions of the runway by birds reared without food or water

Within 1 ft. of stimulus chick	In neutral region	Within 1 ft. of moving box
538*	62	—
519*	81	—
514*	86	—
—	53	547*
—	61	539
—	78	522*

* to break through mesh screen.

to be that flocking or socialization of well depend largely on the learning

K. F. TAYLOR
W. SLUCKIN

Department of Psychology,
University of Leicester.

¹ Collias, N. E., *Auk*, **69**, 127 (1952).

² Weidmann, U., *Z. Tierpsychol.*, **15**, 277 (1958).

³ Gray, P. H., *J. Psychol.*, **46**, 155 (1958).

Imprinting in Guinea-pigs

CLASSICAL imprinting of precocial birds has been studied in the laboratory for some 20 years. Suggestions have also been made over a similar period about the imprinting of precocial mammals, but no systematic experiments specifically concerned with imprinting have been reported so far. Although Shipley's study of guinea-pigs¹ referred to imprinting, in reality it was concerned with the approaches and following responses of these animals to moving objects. Imprinting involves more than that, namely an attachment to a given figure, and this can be readily assessed in a discrimination test². The experiment reported here describes imprinting in young guinea-pigs, judged in terms of the animals' preference for familiar, compared with strange, objects.

Twenty-four guinea-pigs which were born in the laboratory were taken away from their mothers at 5–7 days of

in animals which must already be strongly attached to another figure, the mother. The fact that such later imprinting can take place suggests that much further research is needed to determine the sensitive periods, if any, for this and other forms of early learning in guinea-pigs as well as in other precocial mammals.

I thank Mr Dugald MacArthur for constructing the apparatus, and Miss Elizabeth Tetlow for collecting most of the data.

W. SLUCKIN

Department of Psychology,
University of Leicester.

Received October 1; revised October 25, 1968.

¹ Shipley, W. U., *Anim. Behav.*, **11**, 470 (1963).

² Sluckin, W., *Imprinting and Early Learning* (Methuen, London, 1964).

³ Baron, A., Kish, G. B., and Antonitis, J. J., *J. Genet. Psychol.*, **100**, 355 (1962).

⁴ Salzen, E. A., and Meyer, C. C., *Nature*, **215**, 785 (1967).

NATURE, VOL. 220, DECEMBER 14, 1968

Q. J. Expt. Psych. 31, 701-710 (1979)

CHICKS' RESPONSES TO FAMILIAR STIMULI IN UNFAMILIAR ENVIRONMENTS

W. SLUCKIN, J. C. BERRYMAN, A. MAYES* AND D. MANN

*Department of Psychology, and Adults Education
University of Leicester, Leicester LE1 7RH, England*

The aim of the present experiments was to find out how imprinted chicks respond to familiar figures in unfamiliar settings. Experiment I showed that chicks individually imprinted with a coloured stationary disc did not readily approach it when later confronted with it in a larger pen—a confirmation of an earlier finding. Experiment II showed a similar disruptive effect when the chicks were individually presented with a stationary object (a ball) in a pen differing in colour from the original one. Experiment III, however, in which chicks were imprinted to a moving ball, showed unattenuated imprinting when testing took place in a strange environment. It was concluded that the disruptive effect of neophobia can be overcome when a high degree of figure salience ensures powerful imprinting.



Julia Berryman (L) arrived in Leicester in 1969 as a graduate research assistant, and later registered for a PhD under Wladek's supervision. Later she was Senior Lecturer in the Department of Adult Education, retiring in 2005.

Clare Fullerton (R) (d 2015) was a postdoctoral research fellow in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Dick Porter came as a visiting postdoc after his PhD at Wayne State University (Michigan) and subsequently left for a professorship at Vanderbilt University, Nashville Tennessee. For the last 20 years he has worked and lived in France.



ELSEVIER

Animal Behaviour

Volume 20, Issue 2, May 1972, Pages 221-227

Cliff descent as a measure of attachment strength in chicks

Richard H. Porter, Clare Fullerton, Julia C. Berryman

Toward the end of his career, Wladek branched out from his main study of early learning in animals.

He was known for his generous attitude to younger members of the department.

Here is a joint paper with a younger member of the department who later became himself well-known:



A.M. Colman, M. Walley and W. Sluckin,
British Journal of Psychology 66, 481-486 (1975)

481

PREFERENCES FOR COMMON WORDS, UNCOMMON WORDS AND NON-WORDS BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

BY A. M. COLMAN, M. WALLEY AND W. SLUCKIN

*Department of Psychology, University of Leicester and Northampton College of
Education*

In the first experiment, groups of 6-7-year-old, 10-11-year-old and 18-20-year-old subjects were presented with aesthetic choices between common words and unfamiliar non-words. All groups displayed a preference for real words but this tendency was significantly more pronounced in the intermediate age group than in either the younger or the older groups. In the second experiment, a group of 18-21-year-old subjects displayed a significant preference for uncommon words over common words, while groups of 7-year-old and 9-10-year-old subjects overwhelmingly preferred the common words. These results indicate an inverted-U function relating familiarity and liking, and this provides a parsimonious interpretation of the preferences of subjects of all ages.

Wladek's life before Leicester and Psychology

- 1919** 20 March: born in Warsaw
(Father is eventually an industrialist with a metal factory)
- 1937** Comes to England to study English
- 1938** Student of Electrical Engineering at Queen Mary College
- 1939** War starts. Family money cut off
- 1940** QMC evacuated to Cambridge
- 1941** Meets Alice Klaus. Fails B.Sc. Final exams
- 1941** Starts work as power station engineer in Leeds
- 1942** (15 May: marries Alice Klaus).
Resits final exam, receives ordinary degree
- 1943** Bored by being Power Engineer. Resigns without new job



Wladek aged about 2 with his
parents Chaim and Celina
Warsaw 1921



Wladek and Alice
Cambridge about 1944

Wladek's life before Leicester and Psychology (2)

- 1943:** Bored by being Power Engineer. Resigns without new job
Employed as sales assistant in radio shop in Huntingdon
Gets into row with boss at Radio shop. Hits boss
Fired from Radio shop
Called up by Polish army. Fails to show up for enlistment
Volunteers for British army
Starts work in Cambridge Electrical Company
Job labelled “reserved occupation”. Rejected by British army
- 1945:** War ends. Moves to London. Alice trains as Psychiatric Social Worker at LSE. Series of odd jobs as electrician.
- 1946:** Thinks of starting up as manufacturer of electrical equipment. Creates test models of ammeters. Fails to get up in the morning. Enterprise fails.

Wladek's life before Leicester and Psychology (3) UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

1946 Thinks of starting up as manufacturer of electrical equipment. Creates test models of ammeters. Fails to get up in the morning. Enterprise fails. **Big rethink about career and future**

1947: Starts work as a correspondence tutor for Cleaver-Hume press
Applies to Birkbeck College London (evening classes) to study philosophy.

Course full. Rejected

After discussion with Alice applies to study Psychology.

1947-50: Evening study of psychology at Birkbeck under
Professor C.A. Mace (1894-1971).

1950: B.Sc. II(i), Birkbeck



Life as a refugee

Then as now, life for people displaced by war and deprivation was not straightforward.

At the end of the war, most of Wladek's family at home were dead.

Wladek and Alice thought very seriously about returning to Poland. By 1946 it was clear that life in Poland was not good, either economically or politically

Wladek and Alice were not Zionists and were not attracted by Palestine.

The **Polish Resettlement Act 1947** gave citizenship to Polish ex-servicemen

In 1949 Wladek and Alice became British.

In 2010, Alice was awarded an OBE for services to mental health.



NATURALISATION.

LIST OF ALIENS to whom Certificates of Naturalisation have been granted by the Secretary of State, and whose Oaths of Allegiance have been registered in the Home Office during the month of August, 1949.

The date shown in each case is the date on which the Oath of Allegiance was taken.

Skidelsky, Arcadius; Russia; Schoolmaster; 49D, Claricade Gardens, London, W.2. 21 July, 1949.

Sluckin, Wladyslaw; Poland; Electrical Engineering Tutor; 234, Cavendish Road, Balham, London, S.W.12. 20 August, 1949.

Sluczak, Sara (known as Sonia Sluczak); Germany; Machinist; 49, Dunsmure Road, London, N.16. 3 August, 1949.

Wladek's life before Leicester and Psychology (4)

1950: B.Sc. II(i), Birkbeck

1951: Research Assistant, University of Durham

1953: Lecturer in Psychology, University of Durham

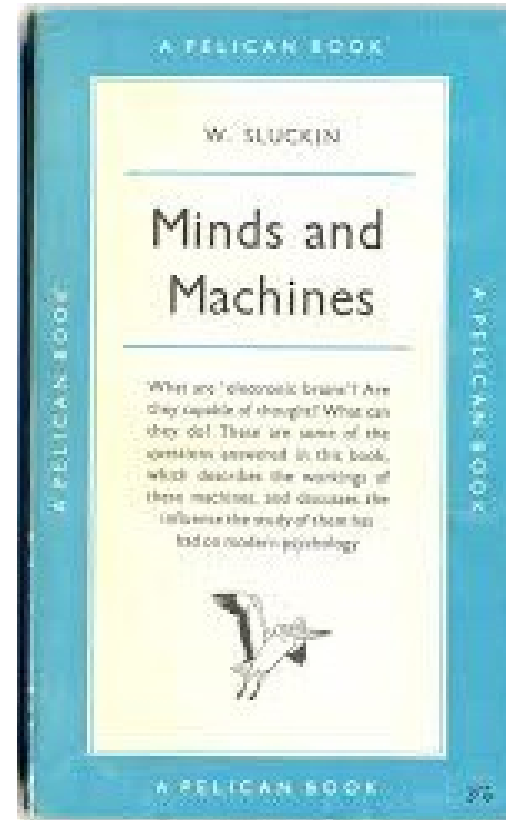
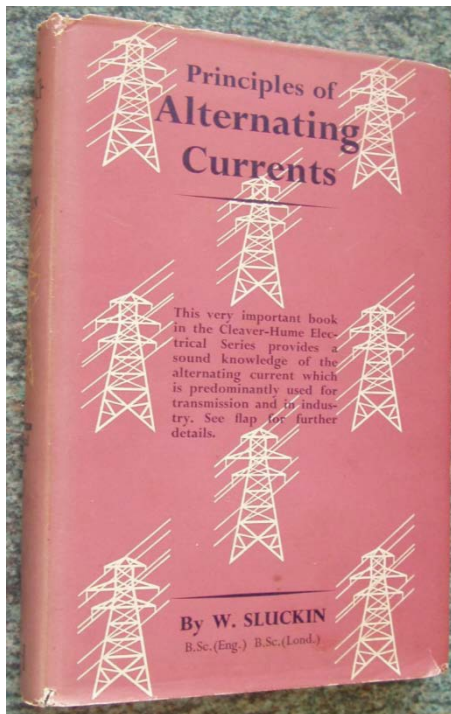
1955: Ph.D, University of London

“Criteria and circumstances of occupational success in cooperative employment in Newcastle-upon-Tyne”

Two early texts.

Principles of Alternating Currents (1951) was written as part of his tutoring work for Cleaver-Hume.

Minds and Machines (1954) was written at the suggestion of Alec Mace. It is an early popular exposition about artificial intelligence.





By 1984 under Wladek's leadership the department had grown substantially.

Some faces are still recognisable from 1964.

Front row (Centre Left, **Uli Weidmann** Centre Right, **Robert Thomson** (d 2017) and **Martin Herbert** (d 2017))

OBITUARY

PROFESSOR WLADYSLAW SLUCKIN

Contributions to experimental psychology

Professor Wladyslaw Sluckin who was Head of the Psychology Department at Leicester University from 1973 to 1984 died on May 22. Originally an engineer, he made notable contributions to experimental psychology and published prolifically.

Wladyslaw Sluckin came to England to study engineering just before the War and completed his training at London University in 1942. Cut off from his native Poland, where his parents died in the Warsaw rising, he worked in industry, helping to manufacture electrical equipment for the forces.

After the war he moved into technical education and his first book on *Alternating Currents* was a product of this phase. Wishing to broaden his education he studied psychology in the evenings at Birkbeck College and graduated in 1950.

He was offered a post at Durham University where a new degree in psychology was being introduced and Sluckin was responsible for the laboratory and for teaching statistics.

Between 1951 and 1960 he completed a PhD. and began publishing in two different fields - the use of computers in psychological theory and the experimental study of early learning in animals.

Apart from an introductory textbook on statistics (with T G Connolly) his main book at this time was *Minds and Machines* (Penguin 1954) - a completely new topic in psychology at that time.

In 1960 he was invited to Leicester University to help Professor S G M Lee found a new department of psy-

chology. He was given a personal chair in 1965 and became head of the department on the death of Lee in 1973.

His books *Imprinting and Early Learning* (1964) and *Early Learning in Man and Animals* (1970) contained not only his own significant researches but were reviews of the literature in this field which became authoritative. He also contributed to the writing and editing of *Introducing Psychology* (Penguin 1970 and 1982) in which a number of Leicester colleagues contributed.

Later he became involved in child psychology and experimental aesthetics. With his wife Alice Sluckin and his successor as head of Leicester's department, Martin Herbert, he produced *Maternal Bonding* in 1983, a book which has led to a radical shift in thinking about mother-infant relationships. He also edited the *British Journal of Psychology* for several years.

A charming, modest, delightfully reasonable and kind man Sluckin was universally respected and liked by a wide range of psychologists - in Canada, USA and Australia where he held visiting fellowships and professorships, as well as in Britain.

A student of the late Alec Mace at Birkbeck, Sluckin displayed something of the philosophical interests of his mentor - as well as being a rigorously painstaking scientist in his experimental work.

A serious illness marred his last term at Leicester and rendered his retirement sadly brief.

He leaves a widow and two sons.

This obituary was written by Wladek's close friend and colleague Robert Thomson, who died aged 95 in May 2017

Rob was an Oxford-trained philosopher. He had been Wladek's colleague in Durham, before being recruited by the Leicester psychology department in 1963.



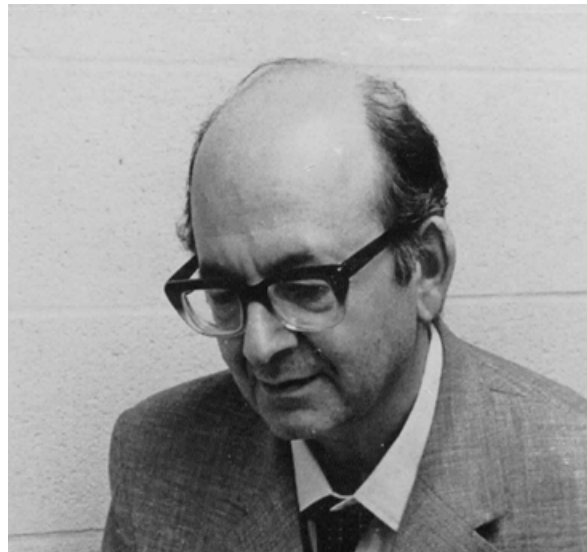
I'm not sure what Wlodek would have made of the present combination of disciplines

Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour

He was a great opponent of reductionism

He would have regarded the “...psychology and behaviour” as a tautology

Those were different times. It was much harder to disentangle what was going on inside the brain



The whole Sluckin family is grateful to the University, the School of Psychology, and all donors for the honour and recognition they have bestowed on Wladek over the years

He was strongly committed to learning and scholarship as well as research.

We hope that students will have the opportunity to practice all three in this building and in this room.