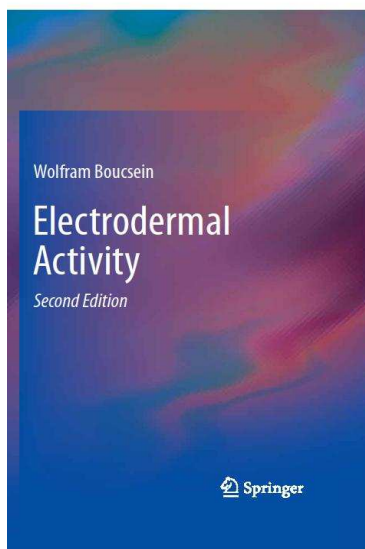


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Foreword to the Second Edition of Electrodermal Activity

As noted by David Lykken in the foreword to the first edition of this book, electrodermal activity was observed for the first time in Germany. A quarter-century later the scientific study of psychology also originated in Germany. Over time, however, the focus of psychological research, including the then new field of psychophysiology, shifted to the United States and Great Britain. This trend to the dominance of the United States and Great Britain was prolonged by the devastation of World War II and its aftermath in Germany (and elsewhere in continental Europe). Slowly at first and then more rapidly, German psychological science, including psychophysiology, recovered. For several decades German psychophysicologists have been a major force in psychophysiology. With the publication of the first English edition of this book in 1992, it became essential for electrodermal researchers worldwide again to learn from our German colleagues.

When I came into psychophysiology in the mid-1960s, electrodermal activity was the most common system studied. Because of its popularity, a large literature had emerged on the physiological mechanisms producing these changes in the electrical properties of the skin and on the best methodology for recording them. Major reviews and/or chapters had been published or soon were to be published by Peter Venables and Irene Martin, Robert Edelberg, and David Lykken. Later reviews and articles were published by Venables and Margaret Christie, and by me. A chapter in 1990 by Michael Dawson, Anne Schell, and Diane Filion was especially noteworthy for its coverage of the psychological applications of electrodermal measures.

Note that all these publications were journal articles and chapters and that most of them focused almost entirely on mechanisms and methodology. The publication of this book, first in German and then in English, provided the first book on electrodermal activity, and one that extensively covers psychological applications as well as mechanisms and methodology. Again to quote David Lykken back in 1992, "The return of German scholarship to what I shall loftily call the high table of psychophysiology is exemplified by this fine book, the most comprehensive treatise on the electrodermal system to appear in any language . . ." I completely agree with that evaluation. Professor Boucsein's outstanding scholarship has produced a book of such breadth of coverage and depth of knowledge that it stands in a class by itself as the standard reference source on electrodermal activity. Even without a second edition the book would still constitute the definitive coverage of the topic. With the incorporation of new developments and addition of some new areas, the second edition is of even greater value. Professor Boucsein has provided a great service to the field by bringing all of this literature together in one comprehensive review.

Wolfram Boucsein was educated at the University of Giessen and later became Professor of Physiological Psychology at the University of Wuppertal. He has published extensively in the area of psychophysiology.

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