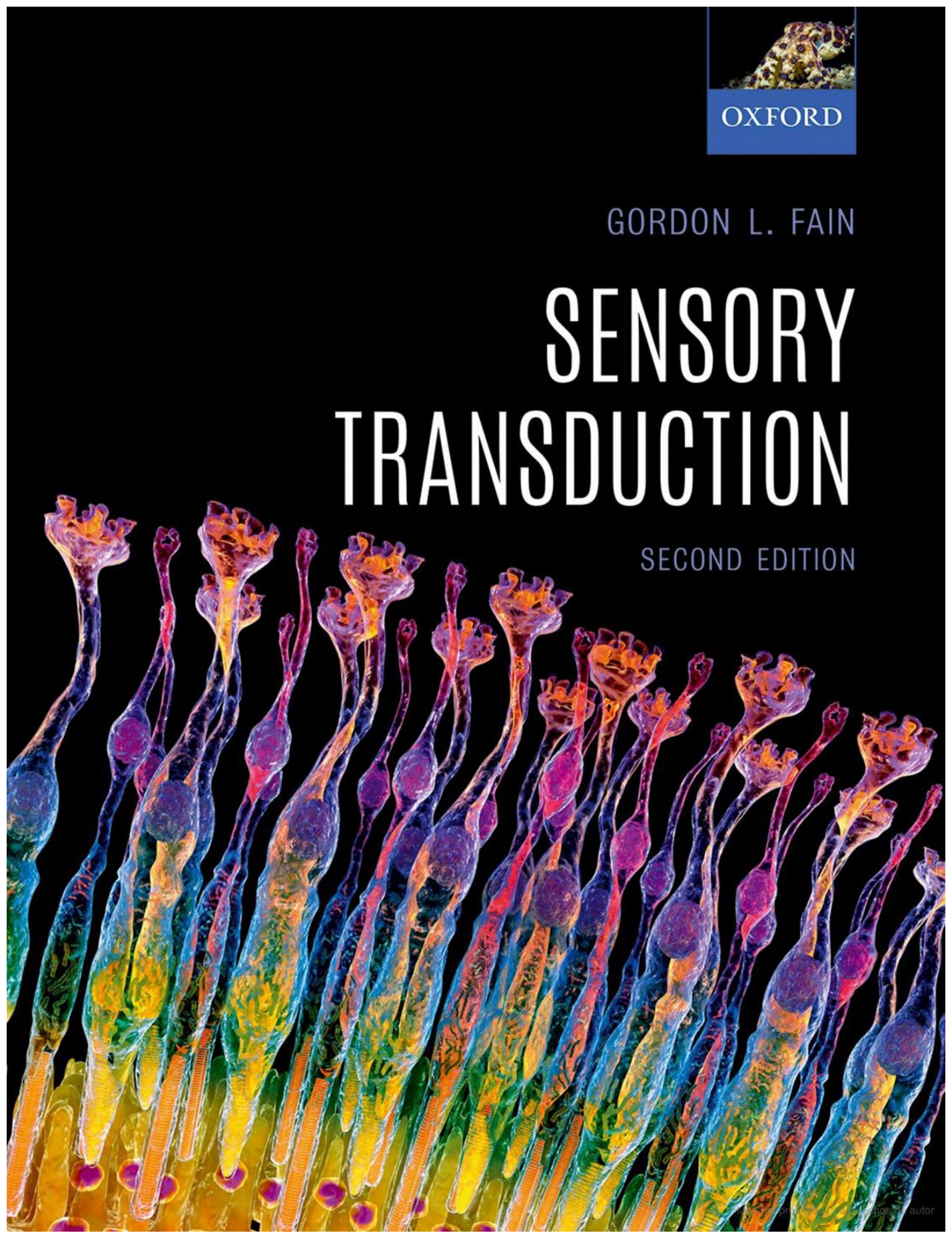
OXFORD
GORDON L. FAIN
SENSORY TRANSDUCTION
SECOND EDITION

Sensory Transduction

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Second edition

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OXFORD
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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

First Edition published in 2003
Second Edition published in 2020

Impression: 1

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019941498

ISBN 978–0–19–883502–8 (hbk.)
ISBN 978–0–19–883503–5 (pbk.)

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198835028.001.0001

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

To Tim and Nick, who are better.

παῦροι γάρ τοι παῖδες ὁμοῖοι πατρὶ πέλονται,
οἱ πλέονες κακίους, παῦροι δέ τε πατρὸς ἀρείους.
Odyssey. II: 276–277

Brief contents

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Acknowledgments (First edition)

This book could not have been written without the help of many friends and colleagues. I am particularly grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation for inviting me to spend 4 weeks at their Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, where I wrote the first four chapters of the book, and to Shelly Segal and Giana Celli, who made my visit there so enjoyable and productive. Much of the rest of the book was written during two-quarters of leave from teaching granted to me by my department and its then chair, Alan Grinnell. I also express my thanks to the staff of the library at UCLA, who helped me to locate obscure references in books and journals occasionally through interlibrary loan, and to the staff of the Balfour Zoology Library and the library of the Physiological Laboratory in Cambridge, England where I wrote most of Chapter 10. Alan Grinnell read the entire manuscript for me, and individual chapters were read by Michael Bennett, David Corey, Peter Gillespie, Roger Hardie, Sue Kinnamon, John Lisman, Hugh Matthews, John Wood, and Frank Zufall. I am deeply appreciative of all the assistance and encouragement I received from Andy Sinauer and his colleagues, and in particular from Kathleen Emerson, whose many suggestions and corrections greatly improved the book. Finally, my greatest debt is to my wife Margery, who did all the illustrations for the book, and whose patient support has made possible not only this book but almost everything else I have done during our long and happy collaboration.

Acknowledgments (Second edition)

I am extremely grateful to Ellen Lumpkin, David Corey, Jonathan Ashmore, Johannes Reisert, Emily Liman, Roger Hardie, and Michael Do, who took the time to read parts of the text and provided many helpful comments and corrections. My thanks are also due to Julie Musk who edited the text for OUP and made many helpful suggestions, and to the Helen Riaboff Whiteley Center at the Friday Harbor Laboratory, where the final work on the text and figures was done. My greatest debt is again to my wife Margery, who did all of the illustrations and was my ever-present help and counselor. This book could not have been written without her.

CHAPTER 1

The senses

Everything we know about the world comes to us through our senses. We experience the world as we do because our organs of sight, hearing, and smell are constructed in a certain way. We could not see color unless we had more than one kind of visual pigment, perceive pitch unless the peak of the traveling wave of the basilar membrane varied with position in the cochlea, or smell different odors unless the nose contained a very large number of olfactory receptor molecules of different selectivity. No biologist would say as Plato did that "the eyes and the ears and the other senses are full of deceit" (*Phaedo*, 83A), that perception is an unreliable pathway to true knowledge (*Theaetetus*, 186C–187A). We could not as a species have survived the hurly-burly of natural selection unless our senses had been and still are fundamentally faithful reporters of the world around us.

Because of the importance of our sense organs in everyday life and the enormous pleasure we derive especially from sight and sound, humans have always been curious how sensation occurs. The ancient Greeks speculated extensively about the nature of the sense organs and were occasionally quite perceptive. Aristotle recognized the five primary senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste (*de Anima*, Book 3). Plato (*Timaeus* 45B–D) wrongly supposed that the eye emits a kind of fire akin to daylight, which meets a similar fire coming from objects in the world around us. As these fires met, their motion was thought to be communicated to the soul. Aristotle argued against this notion, though he himself gave no clear idea how he thought vision did occur (Johansen, 1997). On the other hand, he recognized the fundamental importance of moisture in olfaction (see for example *de Sensu*, V; *de Anima*, VII). Moisture must be important, Aristotle reasoned, since fish can smell. How did he know? He doesn't say, and we have to suppose that he or his students had seen fish swimming toward bait. But since the sensation comes to the fish through water rather than through the air, why didn't Aristotle say that fish *taste*? What Aristotle could not have known is that fish, in addition to taste receptors in their oral cavity, have an olfactory organ that has a structure and function very much like our nose. The importance of moisture in olfaction is now absolutely clear: even in terrestrial animals, molecules must pass through the watery mucus of the nose before they can bind to and be detected by olfactory receptor cells.

Some of the most remarkable statements about sensation made by Greek and Roman authors are to be found in the first-century BC *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius, who based much of his poem on the teachings of the Greek Hellenistic philosopher Epicurus. Lucretius claimed that the distinctiveness of different tastes and odors lies in the shapes of the tiny "seeds" or particles given off to the air or into the mouth by objects tasted or smelled. He thought sweet-tasting substances had smooth round particles, and bitter substances had hooked or barbed particles. He also thought that for both taste and smell the shape of the particles must somehow correspond to apertures within the nose or palate, so that sweet tastes are perceived when smooth particles enter correspondingly

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DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780198835028.001.0001

smooth apertures. To account for the variety of taste and odor, he postulated a variety of apertures, some large, some small, some round, and others square or with many angles. This explanation is not too different from our present understanding that scents and many tastes are produced by molecules having different shapes and binding to receptor molecules with appropriately matched binding sites.

Early studies of the anatomy of the sense organs

Although Aristotle and other Greek men of learning certainly performed dissection on animals (Lloyd, 1975), the first systematic anatomical investigations of the human body were undertaken in Alexandria under the reign of the Ptolemies, during the first half of the third century BC (Longrigg, 1988). Herophilus of Chalcedon and Erasistratus of Ceos, taking advantage of a temporary relaxation of religious scruple, first began the dissection of human bodies, and it is to these men that we owe the discovery and first description of the sensory and motor nerves (Solmsen, 1961; Staden, 1989). Much of their work has been preserved—not in their own writings but in the books of Galen written four centuries later. Galen himself also carried out animal dissection (Duckworth et al., 2010), though perhaps not human dissection. Since he lacked even a magnifying glass, his descriptions of the structure of sense organs are rather crude. He understood that hearing is caused by air striking against the ear but seemed not to have noticed the tiny bones of the middle ear and missed altogether the role of the ear drum in transmitting vibrations into the cochlea. He named the principal parts of the eye, probably using terminology borrowed from Herophilus and Erasistratus, and these are the names we still use: sclera, choroid, crystalline lens. As a medical doctor, he knew that if the lens is not perfectly clear and transparent, vision is largely obstructed. He therefore supposed that the lens was the organ of photodetection, containing a "visual spirit" or πνεῦμα that passes down the optic nerve into the brain. The optic nerve as a consequence was supposed to be completely hollow, the only hollow nerve in the body.

Galen's books were probably filled with diagrams, though none has survived. The earliest schema of a sense organ we have is not from Galen himself but rather from a ninth-century AD translation of Galen into the Arab language Syriac. This translation was made by Humain Ibn Is-Hâq, who was born in Mesopotamia, studied medicine, and became an associate of the court physician of the caliph of Baghdad. The drawing in Figure 1.1A is from an English translation of Humain's manuscript (Meyerhoff, 1928). This schema of the eye had an enormous influence, not only on Arab medicine and science but also on the anatomists of the Renaissance, who continued to show the lens in the center of the eye. With a little effort, they should have been able to do the dissection more carefully, preserving the position of the lens in its proper place toward the front. What changed everything was the discovery of the laws of optical refraction and Kepler's solution of the optics of the eye. Kepler explained how images are formed and assigned the primary role in visual detection to the retina instead of to the lens (see Wade, 1998). Once the function of the lens was understood, it became possible for anatomists to do a proper dissection and find the various parts of the eye in their proper places. This is an example of *Lisman's Law*: you have to believe it in order to see it. The cross-section of the eye in Figure 1.1B was made by Descartes (1637/1987), who not only put the lens closer to its actual position but also identified the ciliary muscle and understood its role in changing the shape of the lens during accommodation.

The development of the compound microscope and improved methods for slicing and fixing tissue led to an explosion of information during the nineteenth century about the tissues of the body, including the sense organs (there are useful reviews of older literature in Polyak, 1941; von Békésy, 1960). The most important studies were surely those of the great Spanish neuroanatomist Ramón y Cajal (1911/1998). His clear drawings provided a wealth of information about the shapes of sensory receptors and other cells in sensory organs (Figure 1.2).

The physiology of sensation

These anatomical discoveries helped stimulate the first useful experimentation on the function of the sense organs. The structure of the ear and the role of the ear drum and bones of the middle ear were understood by the middle of the nineteenth century, and Helmholtz (1877/1954) postulated that sound

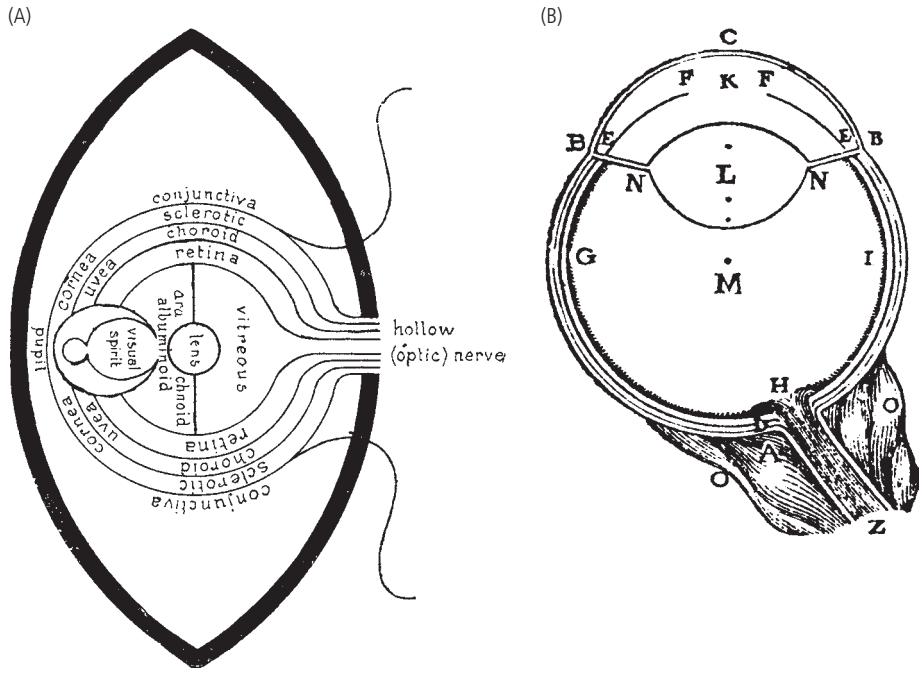

Figure 1.1 Structure of the eye. (A) Diagram of the eye from a ninth-century AD translation of Galen into Syriac by Humain Ibn Is-Hâq, in turn translated into English. (B) More anatomically correct diagram of cross-section of the eye made by René Descartes. ABCB, Cornea and sclera; EF, iris (in actual fact closer to the lens than shown in Descartes' diagram); K, aqueous humor; L, lens; EN, zonule fibers; M, vitreous humor; GHI, retina; H, optic nerve head; O, ocular muscles; and Z, optic nerve. (A from Meyerhoff, 1928; B from Descartes, 1637/1987.)

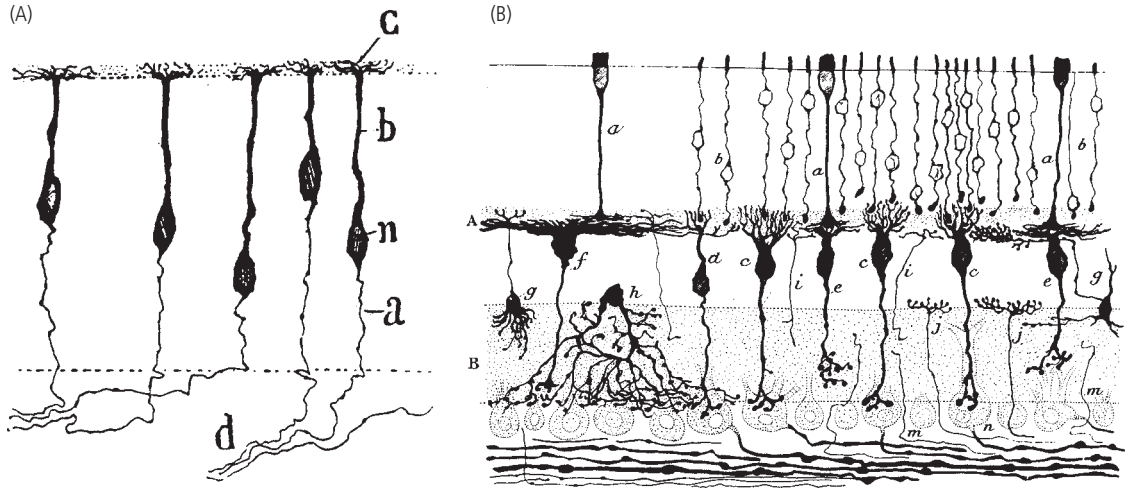

Figure 1.2 Sensory cells from the work of Ramón y Cajal. (A) Bipolar sensory neurons from mammalian olfactory mucosa. a, Axon; b, peripheral process; c, sensory dendrites; d, axon; n, nucleus. (B) Section of retina of an adult dog. A, Outer plexiform (synaptic) layer; B, inner plexiform (synaptic) layer; a, cone fiber; b, rod cell body and fiber; c, rod bipolar cell with vertical dendrites; d, cone bipolar cell with vertical dendrites; e, cone bipolar cell with flattened dendrites; f, giant bipolar cell with flattened dendrites; g, special cells stained very rarely (perhaps inter-plexiform cells); h, diffuse amacrine cell; i, ascendant nerve fibers (probably processes of cell not well stained); j, centrifugal fibers coming from central nervous system; m, nerve fiber (probably again of poorly stained cell); n, ganglion cell. (A and B from Cajal, 1893/1973.)

displaces these structures and causes the basilar membrane in turn to vibrate, with different tones producing vibration in different places. It was, however, von Békésy's actual observations of the movements of the basilar membrane that provided the first experimental evidence for the mechanism of auditory sensation in the mammalian ear (see Chapter 6 and von Békésy, 1960).

The visual pigments of the eye were also first discovered in the nineteenth century (an excellent summary of this early work can be found in Brindley, 1960), and Kühne showed that the molecule rhodopsin, or *sehpurpur* as he called it, changes color (bleaches) when exposed to light. These observations eventually led to the discovery by George Wald and colleagues that it is not the protein component of rhodopsin that absorbs light but rather a relative of vitamin A called 11-*cis* retinal, which is covalently bound to the protein (see Chapter 9 and Wald, 1968).

Some of the first electrical recordings of the responses of sensory receptors were made by E. D. Adrian, who dissected away the axons of single touch receptors from the skin and placed them over a wire electrode to record action potentials (Adrian, 1928, 1931, 1947). A typical result from Adrian's experiments is illustrated in Figure 1.3A. Pressure applied to the skin causes the frequency of action potential firing to increase (upper trace). Pricking the skin (lower trace) is also an effective stimulus but evokes action potentials in more than one kind of mechanoreceptor (note the different amplitudes of the spikes recorded by the electrode). Adrian concluded that action potentials from these receptor cells are communicated to the brain and form the basis of our sensation of touch. Using a similar technique, Hartline recorded action-potential discharges from the compound eye of the horseshoe crab *Limulus* (Hartline and Graham, 1932) and showed (Figure 1.3B) that the frequency of action potential firing depended both on the intensity and duration of the light stimulation (Hartline, 1934). These were the first single-cell responses recorded from an eye, though we now know that they were not produced by the photoreceptors themselves but rather by a cell called the eccentric cell, which receives direct synaptic input from the photoreceptors.

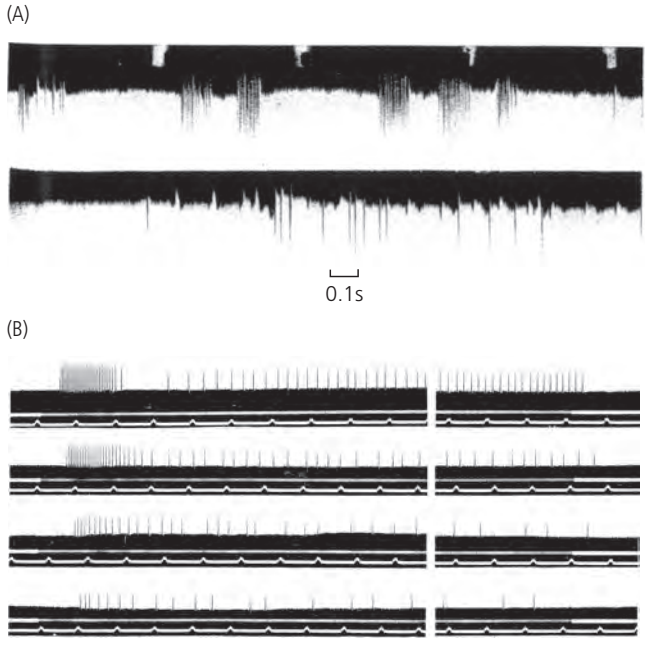

Figure 1.3 Early electrical recordings of sensory responses. (A) Action potentials recorded from single axons dissected from the cutaneous nerve of a frog. (B) Action potentials from the lateral eye of the horseshoe crab *Limulus*. Each trace gives the response to a different light intensity, which was systematically increased by an additional factor of ten from dimmest (bottom) to brightest (top). (A from Adrian, 1947; B from Hartline and Graham, 1932.)

The method of dissection of single nerve fibers is difficult and tedious and was soon replaced by recording with fine metal microelectrodes. These electrodes are made from tungsten or platinum wire exposed and sometimes gold-plated at the tip but insulated along the rest of the length with glass or plastic resin. These metal electrodes can be inserted directly into the tissue to record the small extracellular currents produced by action potentials of single cells. Metal-electrode recording from the nerve coming from the ear established many of the basic properties of auditory responses, such as their time course and dependence on the frequency of the sound (see Kiang, 1965; Evans, 1975). The recordings in Figure 1.4 were collected from a single axon from the ear and show action potentials as a function of sound intensity on the ordinate, with the frequency (pitch) of the sound on the abscissa. As the sound was made progressively weaker, the range of frequencies to which the axon responded became progressively more restricted. The nerve fiber showed greatest sensitivity to a tone near 10 kilohertz (kH), since at this frequency (called the *characteristic frequency*) a response could still be recorded even when the sound was made very weak indeed. Recordings of this kind showed that different axons in the auditory nerve have different characteristic frequencies, spanning the entire range of perceptible sound. The axons are therefore *labeled lines*, each carrying information about a different range of sound frequencies. These experiments showed that the ear must have some way of responding to sounds of different frequencies, so that the different auditory receptors can be tuned each to its own characteristic frequency.

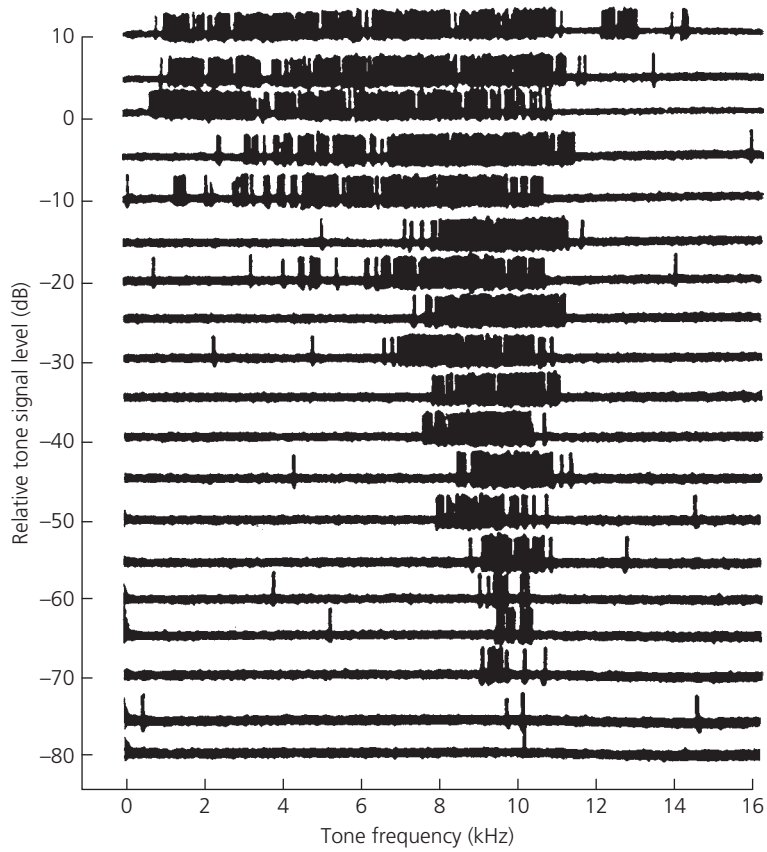

Figure 1.4 Extracellular spike recordings from a single axon from the guinea pig ear. Frequency (pitch) of sound was systematically swept from low to high for a range of different sound intensities. Frequency is plotted on abscissa and intensity is plotted on ordinate in a log scale of decibels (dB). An increase of 20 dB is equivalent to a 100-fold increase in intensity. (From Evans, 1972.)

The first extensive study with metal microelectrodes from olfactory receptors produced a completely different result (Gesteland et al., 1965). There seemed to be no consistent pattern to the responses, with many receptors responding to the same chemicals, sometimes with excitation, sometimes with inhibition. Later recordings confirmed some but not all of these conclusions. They showed that vertebrate olfactory receptors all appear to respond with excitation, producing an increase in spike frequency to stimulation with an odor. Single cells do nevertheless appear to be able to respond to a wide variety of odors. Thus olfactory receptors seem *not* to be labeled lines, at least not in the way originally supposed. I return to this matter in Chapter 7, after I have described the mechanism of olfactory transduction in detail.

These early recordings indicated that receptor cells signal the arrival of sensory stimuli by producing a change in electrical activity. What is the nature of this electrical signal? Is it produced by some change in the cell membrane potential? If so, what is the mechanism that converts the sensory stimulus into an electrical response?

A powerful tool for the investigation of these questions became available with the invention of the intracellular microelectrode in the late 1940s (Ling and Gerard, 1949). An intracellular microelectrode is made from a piece of glass tubing typically 1 mm in diameter. The tubing is melted and pulled to a fine point, in early studies by pulling the glass by hand over a Bunsen burner, but later by placing the glass in a mechanical device that heats the middle of the tubing and pulls at either end to form two electrodes, each with a fine glass tip. The bore of the electrodes is then filled with a concentrated salt solution such as 3M KCl.

The first intracellular recordings from sensory receptors were made by Hartline and collaborators, again from the compound eye of the horseshoe crab *Limulus* (Hartline et al., 1952). Figure 1.5A is from the later study of Millecchia and Mauro (1969b), also from *Limulus*. Light produces a positive-going change in membrane potential, called a depolarization. Similar depolarizing responses were recorded from many other types of sensory receptors, including mechanoreceptors (Eyzaguirre and Kuffler, 1955; Loewenstein and Altamirano-Orrego, 1958) and chemoreceptors of the nose (Getchell, 1977). It came therefore as a great surprise when Tomita and collaborators first showed that the response of a vertebrate photoreceptor to light is a negative-going hyperpolarization (Figure 1.5B and Tomita, 1965).

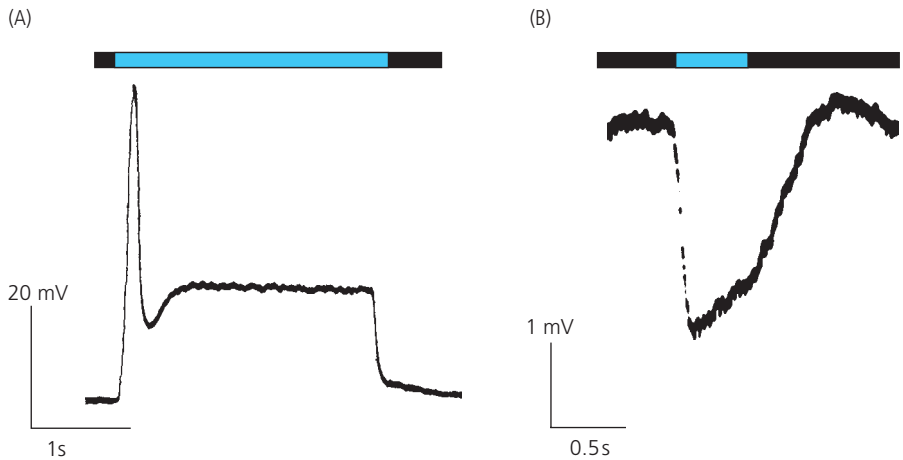

Figure 1.5 Intracellular recordings from sensory receptors. Bars above recordings show timing and duration of light flashes. (A) Depolarizing voltage response from photoreceptor of *Limulus* ventral eye. (B) Hyperpolarizing voltage response from photoreceptor (cone) of a fish. This is the first published recording of the response of a vertebrate photoreceptor. (A from Millecchia and Mauro, 1969b; B after Tomita, 1965.)

Cracking the problem: molecular physiology

Although the important observations of neuroanatomists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the first extracellular and intracellular recordings from receptor cells provided many clues about the early steps in sensory processing, they told us very little about transduction; that is, about the way the electrical signal is generated by light or odor or sound. The physical stimulus received by the sense organ is somehow translated into a change in membrane potential, which is then transmitted into the central nervous system (CNS). The nature of this process remained for a very long time a complete mystery. This puzzle has now been substantially solved for most of the senses in a variety of organisms, providing a fairly clear picture of how sensory signals are produced. These striking advances were greatly facilitated by many years of patient biochemical and electrophysiological investigation, but they were then rather suddenly accelerated by the discovery of the technique of patch-clamp recording and of methods for cloning proteins and expressing their activity.

The invention of the patch electrode by Neher and Sakmann (1976) first made possible direct recordings from the molecules responsible for the electrical activity of nerve cells (see Sakmann and Neher, 1995). A patch electrode is made from fine glass tubing like an intracellular electrode, but the tip of a patch pipette is made very smooth, either by a specialized pipette puller (Brown and Flaming, 1977) or by polishing the end of the pipette with heat under a microscope. The pipette is then pressed against the soma of a cell and slight suction is applied, usually by mouth (Figure 1.6A). The glass of the pipette may then adhere to the cell membrane to form a very tight seal, sometimes called a gigaseal, with a resistance often of the order of 10 gigaohms (10^{10} Ω) or greater. The very high resistance of this seal reduces the electrical noise of the recording and makes it possible to distinguish the opening and closing of single channels in the membrane within the orifice of the pipette (Figure 1.6B). Single-channel responses first of acetylcholine receptors (Neher and Sakmann, 1976) and then of the Na^+ channels of axons (Sigworth and Neher, 1980) were studied

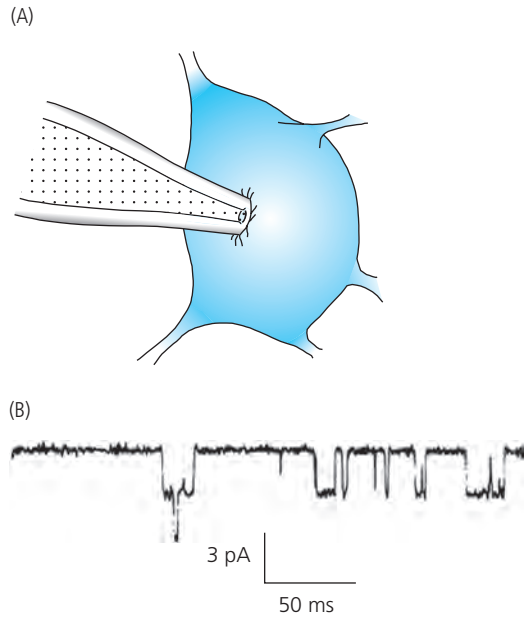

Figure 1.6 Patch-clamp recording from single channels. (A) The tip of a patch pipette is pushed against the cell body of a cell and slight suction is applied to form a seal. (B) Single-channel currents recorded from muscle acetylcholine receptors. The pipette contained 0.3 μM acetylcholine. Downward deflections indicate channel opening. At least two channels were present in this membrane patch. (B from Trautmann, 1982.)

with patch-clamp recording. In a very short time, recordings were obtained from many of the principal kinds of channel molecules of the cells of the nervous system, including those of sensory receptor cells.

Recordings made with patch electrodes sealed to the surface of the plasma membrane as in Figure 1.6 are called on-cell or cell-attached recordings. The extracellular surface of the membrane is exposed to the solution inside the pipette, and the intracellular surface is exposed to the cytosol. If the pipette is sealed in this way and then gently lifted off the cell, the plasma membrane often remains attached to the pipette, forming an excised or inside-out recording (Figure 1.7), so-called because the inside surface of the membrane now faces the outside bathing solution. Inside-out recording makes possible the study of channels that are opened or closed by the binding of some intracellular substance to the cytoplasmic side of a channel protein, such as Ca^{2+}, cyclic nucleotides, and other putative second messengers. As we

shall see, inside-out recording provided crucial evidence establishing the identity of the intracellular second messengers mediating vertebrate visual (Fesenko et al., 1985) and olfactory (Nakamura and Gold, 1987a) transduction.

If, on the other hand, a pipette is sealed onto a cell and additional pressure or a brief voltage pulse is applied, the membrane within the pipette can often be made to break, establishing a direct connection between the inside of the pipette and the inside of the cell. This method of recording is called whole-cell (Figure 1.7, left middle) and is useful for introducing small-molecular-weight molecules from the pipette into the cell. The whole-cell mode of patch clamp is also extensively used to voltage clamp small cells. I describe the method of voltage clamping in more detail in Chapter 3. Whole-cell recording has revolutionized cellular physiology, greatly facilitating the study of electrical responses of a variety of neurons such as pyramidal cells in the cortex and granule cells in the cerebellum, as well as many types of sensory receptor cells, including photoreceptors, auditory hair cells, and the chemosensory receptor cells of the nose and tongue.

A pipette in the whole-cell mode can also be lifted off the cell. As Figure 1.7 shows (lower right), the membrane will often then flip around and reseal, leaving a small patch of excised membrane whose outside surface faces the outside solution. This is called an outside-out recording. The outside-out

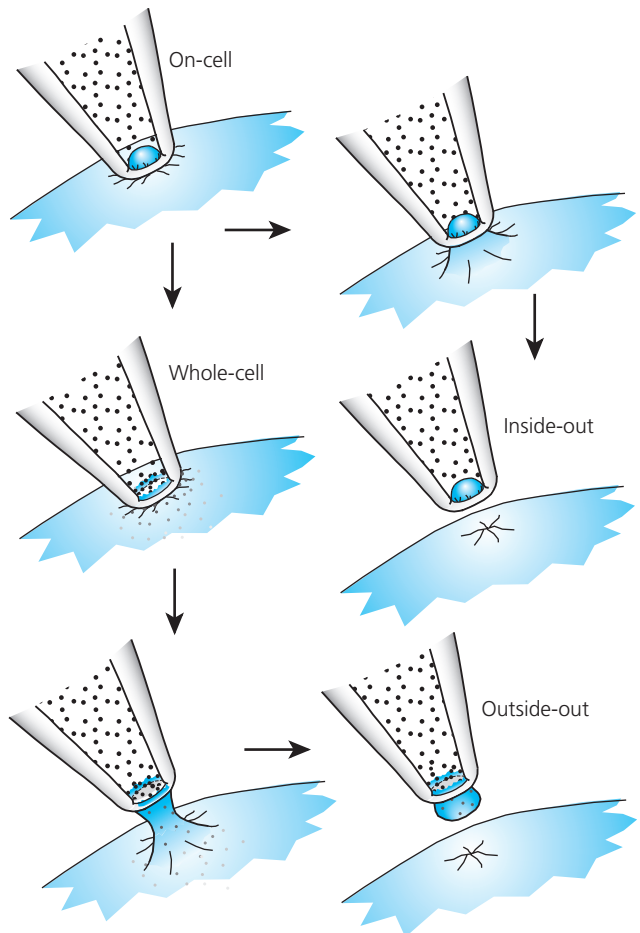

Figure 1.7 Different configurations of recording with patch-pipette technique. On-cell, whole-cell, inside-out, and outside-out recording techniques as described in the text.

mode of the patch-clamp technique has been especially useful for studying ligand-gated channels like those at synapses. These channels have an extracellular binding site for a small-molecular-weight transmitter molecule. A putative transmitter can be added to the bathing solution, and its effect on channel opening can be examined directly.

The revolution of molecular biology

The search for the mechanism of transduction was also greatly facilitated by the development of the techniques of molecular biology. Many of the most important molecules of sensory cells are integral membrane proteins, including the sensory receptor proteins of the nose and tongue, as well as enzymes of second-messenger cascades and the channels that ultimately produce electrical responses. These proteins are firmly embedded in the plasma membrane and difficult to extract and study. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the first attempts were made to isolate these important molecules from neurons and sensory cells and to sequence and study them. In a few favorable cases, it was possible to extract enough of a protein in this way to obtain its complete amino acid sequence (for example rhodopsin, see Artamonov et al., 1983; Hargrave et al., 1983; Hargrave, 2001). In most cases, however, only a very small amount of protein could be extracted—too little to be studied in detail, but enough in many cases to allow the gene of the protein to be cloned.

Many membrane protein genes were first cloned in a similar fashion (Figure 1.8). A small amount of the protein was first extracted and purified, generally with chromatography or electrophoresis. It was then digested with a protease, and a few small-molecular-weight peptides were isolated and sequenced. From these peptides, synthetic nucleotide sequences were synthesized and used to screen a library of clones, made from tissue of the animal from which the protein was originally extracted. Alternatively, an antibody was made to an isolated peptide and used to screen an expression library. From the DNA sequence of the clone, it was possible to infer the

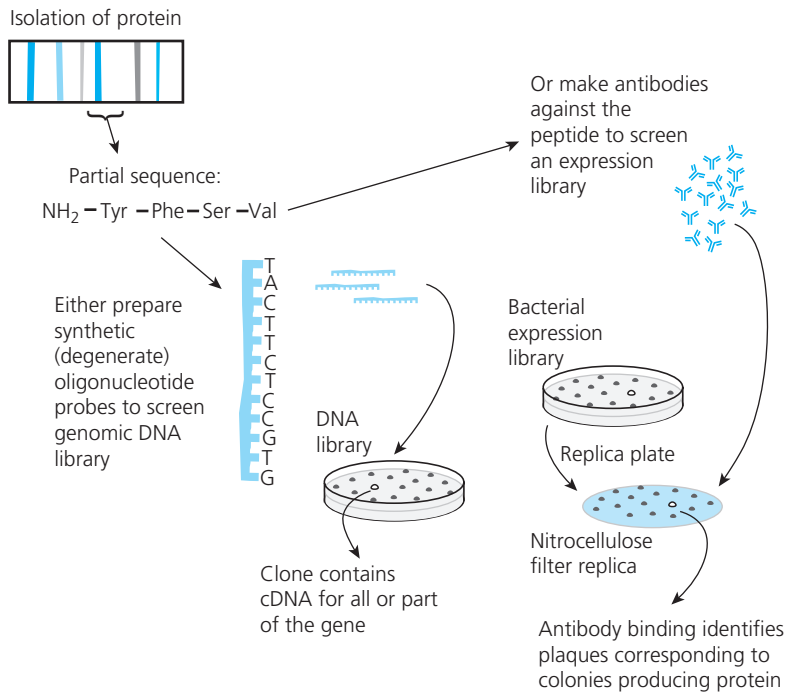

Figure 1.8 Cloning a gene from partial sequence of a protein. Method of cloning used for many of the first proteins whose genes were cloned from the nervous system. The method begins with isolation of partial sequence of a protein, which is then used to prepare oligonucleotides for screening tissue DNA libraries.

amino acid sequence of the protein. It has also been possible to identify families of related proteins within an organism and from organism to organism, by examining complete genomic sequences. We now have complete sequences of the genomes of many model organisms such as the fruit fly *Drosophila*, the mouse, and the zebrafish, as well as of hundreds of other species, from sponges to *Homo sapiens*.

Ultimately, the identification of a DNA sequence as that of a functional protein rests upon the demonstration that the DNA in question can direct the synthesis of a molecule with biological activity. This task can be done by *expressing* the protein. The DNA of the identified clone can be used to make complementary RNA (cRNA), which is then inserted, for example, into an oocyte of the frog *Xenopus* (Figure 1.9A). The oocyte can then be used for voltage-clamp studies of the expressed protein. Alternatively, and now more commonly, the DNA from the clone can be incorporated directly into the DNA of a cultured cell by a process called transfection (Figure 1.9B). DNA packaged into a plasmid or viral vector can be introduced into the cell by a variety of methods, for example by exposing a cell to lipid vesicles containing the DNA, or by giving high-voltage pulses of electricity to pierce holes in the cell membrane. The DNA can then become incorporated into the genome of the cell, and the cells are cultured to select those expressing the DNA of interest. If properly linked to promoters or other regulatory elements, the DNA is transcribed into RNA, which is in turn translated into protein. A stable population of cells may be produced in this way expressing the protein of interest. Transfection is often more convenient than RNA expression in oocytes, because cultured cell lines provide an excellent starting point for producing large quantities of expressed protein for structural or other studies, as well as a convenient preparation for patch-clamp recording.

From the amino acid sequences of the proteins we had our first clues about the structure of the molecules. Many of the most important proteins mediating sensory transduction are integral membrane proteins with extensive sequences lying within the hydrophobic interior of the lipid bilayer. From the sequence alone, reasonable guesses can be made about which amino acids lie within the membrane and which are more likely to face the cytoplasmic or extracellular solution (Figure 1.10). Some amino acids (such as valine and isoleucine) are hydrophobic and much more likely to be surrounded by lipid or other protein, whereas others (such as aspartate and lysine) are hydrophilic or even charged and much more likely to be surrounded by water. By a process known as hydropathy analysis, the sequence of amino acids can be used to make inferences about how the protein folds, indicating the parts of the sequence that are integrated into the membrane and those that are exposed to the intracellular or extracellular solution. Antibodies to specific sequences can then be used to localize parts of the protein on one side of the membrane or the other. Sequences can be identified as substrates for glycosylation or phosphorylation, or can be shown actually to be glycosylated or phosphorylated. These identifications are often helpful in indicating regions that are intracellular or extracellular, because glycosylases and protein kinases only add sugar groups or phosphates at sites accessible to one side of the membrane or the other.

Finally, membrane proteins either isolated or expressed as in Figure 1.9 can be used to form crystals suitable for X-ray crystallography, from which the complete three-dimensional structure of the protein can be determined. Membrane proteins are in general more difficult to crystallize than soluble proteins, but with continued effort crystals were obtained at about the same time for ion channels and G-protein receptors (Doyle et al., 1998; Palczewski et al., 2000). These methods have given us extensive information about mechanisms of ion movement through potassium (Jiang et al., 2003b; Long et al., 2005a, 2005b, 2007) and sodium (Payandeh et al., 2011; Catterall, 2012; McCusker et al., 2012) channels, as well as protein conformation changes producing activation in rhodopsin (Deupi et al., 2012) and other G-protein receptors (see Erlandson et al., 2018).

Structures of near atomic resolution can also be obtained by a newer method called cryogenic electron microscopy (cryo-EM). The protein of interest is expressed in either bacteria or a cell line, and it is then isolated and distributed onto an EM grid. The grid is plunged into liquid ethane and then into liquid nitrogen, to freeze the sample rapidly so as to prevent the formation of ice crystals. The regularities

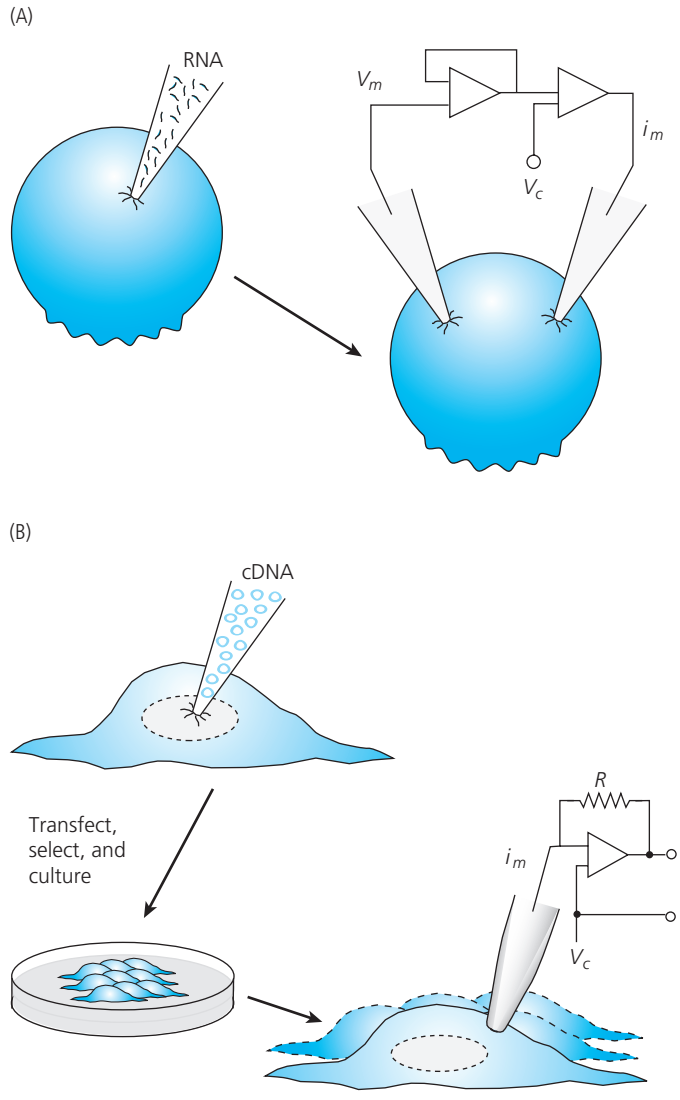

Figure 1.9 Common methods of gene expression for recording electrical activity of ion channels and other membrane proteins. (A) Injection into a *Xenopus* oocyte, which can then be studied by voltage clamping. (B) Transfection. DNA incorporated into a plasmid or viral vector is introduced into the cell by electroporation, Ca^{2+} shock, or direct injection in the nucleus (as shown). The cell line may then be used for patch-clamp recording. V_m, Membrane potential; V_c, command potential; R, feedback resistance of patch amplifier; i_m, membrane current.

of the structure of the frozen particles can then be used to determine the structure of the protein. Large proteins, proteins in solution, and proteins with significant structural heterogeneity can now be visualized with this method.

The techniques of molecular biology can also provide essential information about the function of sensory proteins. Experiments of this kind have been especially informative for receptors that use second-messenger cascades, such as those in the eye and nose. The cloning, for example, of the genes of the family of receptor proteins mediating olfactory transduction in the nose (Buck and Axel, 1991) has led to remarkable insight into the organization and mechanism of transduction in this tissue, which I describe in considerable detail in Chapter 7. Similar

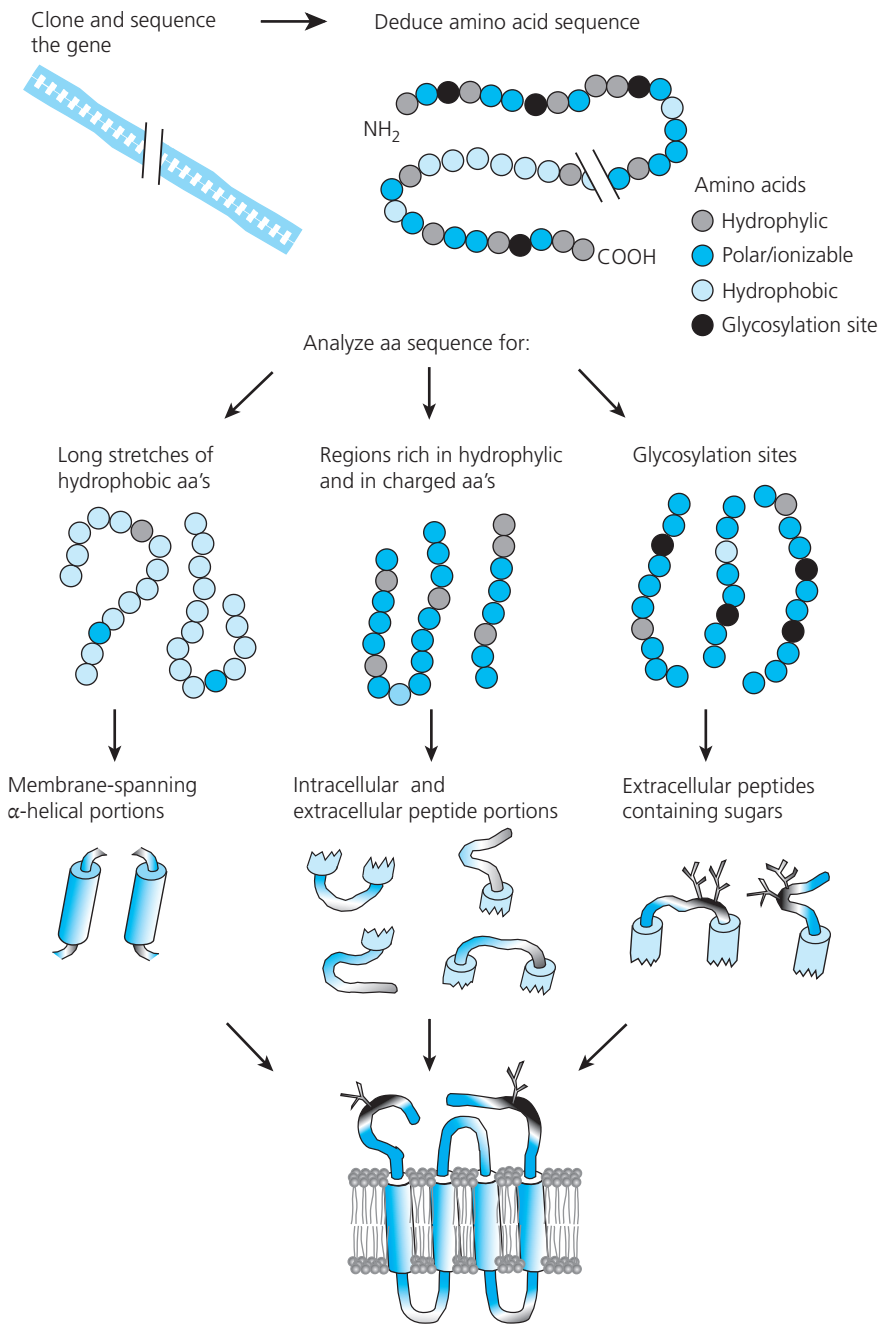

Figure 1.10 Analysis of hydropathy and the folding of membrane proteins. The amino acid sequence of a membrane protein can be used to make inferences about protein structure, as described in the text.