

# Psychology as a Social Science

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# Psychology as a Social Science

To E. A. H., C. B. H., and R. H., who  
helped me become a passive spectator  
of psychology.

To C. G. McC., R. B. Z., and the  
anonymous subjects who helped  
me become an active participant  
in psychology.

# Preface

Psychology textbooks, like television shows, never really begin without a commercial, waivers and disclaimers, and a careful assignment of credits. If you already know that this book is an introductory psychology text for use in courses with a strong emphasis on personality and social psychology, if you do not have to be warned that you might stumble across an error or shortcoming somewhere within these pages, and if you recognize that this book was made possible only by the efforts of many wonderful people, then go on to page 1 and let the effort speak for itself. Otherwise, pause with me for these brief messages.

## *One Commercial*

As a result of rapid growth in the field, many psychology departments have split their introductory course into two or more courses that can be taken alone, concurrently, or sequentially. Typically, one such course stresses personality and social psychology. This book is precisely geared for that course—and for any other introductory psychology course whose instructor chooses to emphasize such topics as personality, human development, and interpersonal relations.

Because this text was written for instructors with a particular orientation, it omits some material traditionally associated with introductory texts. Such topics as physiological psychology, psychophysics, and memory-drum experiments receive little or no emphasis. (However, in this text you will find extended discussions of such topics as interpersonal processes, the concept of self, psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, personality assessment, and the ways in which psychologists attempt to deal with salient social issues.) In other words, this book is not a compendium of facts about all kinds of behavior. But within the treated topics, selected issues are dealt with in somewhat more depth than is common. By discussing these topics in a direct, conversational style, I hope to give the reader an appreciation of the psychologist's perspective and how he studies people in a scientific way.

Let there be no confusion. The topics covered are considered by some to represent the "softer" fields of psychology. I, personally, am an experimental social psychologist with an emphasis on "experimental." You will find in this book a strong accent on controlled observation. Where feasible, studies of interesting content are featured, but no experiments have been cited simply because they are "fun" or "cute." Similarly, certain classic studies with important results have not been excluded because their content is drab or dry.

The main dilemma I faced in preparing this somewhat specialized but nonetheless introductory text was the same one I encounter in teaching the somewhat specialized but nonetheless introductory course. For some students the material provides a first contact with psychology; others have already completed an introductory course stressing the biological bases of behavior. I chose to assume that the student opening this text is completely unacquainted with psychology. But when I deal with topics most likely to coincide with those covered in other introductory courses (such as certain issues within perception, learning, and motivation), I stress examples that I consider unlikely to overlap with those previously encountered. Thus this text does not contain extended references to Pavlov's dogs, but it does explain how principles of classical conditioning can produce or modify significant human behavior.

### *One Thousand Pardons*

Now, it may be that this book is not entirely perfect. In fact, it contains some known errors of omission and, quite likely, some unknown errors of commission. As for errors of omission, even within the relatively constrained limits of the social science orientation, vast quantities of worthwhile material had to be excluded. Some readers are sure to feel that some alien-sounding

topics received overemphasis, whereas pet topics were underplayed. I have not attempted to give equal coverage to all positions. Instead, for most issues, space is devoted to one or two explanations, either because I consider them unusually promising or interesting or because they integrate the material with that presented elsewhere in the text. As for sins of commission, suffice it to say that any resemblance between the present work and fiction is purely accidental.

### *One Million Thanks*

It gives me great pleasure to make public and explicit my warm personal regards for the many people who have helped with this project. My own teachers, from Santa Barbara City College, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the University of Michigan, have contributed both directly and indirectly. Especially prominent in my own intellectual career have been Drs. Robert Zajonc and Charles G. McClintock; those of you who are familiar with their work are sure to detect their influence at certain points in this text.

( The faculty and students of the psychology department at U.C. Davis have been particularly supportive. For the most part, to single out specific people for acknowledgment would only do the others an injustice. However, very special help has come from three people: my colleague Mike Kellicutt, who did the photography, and former students Rick Crandall and Carolyn Quirici, who served as student reviewers and general assistants and, most importantly, helped straighten out the references and glossary.

Brooks/Cole has been really great. I have enjoyed working closely with Bonnie Fitzwater, Terry Hendrix, and Jack Thornton from general headquarters and with local drummers Pat Farrant and Gary Greene. Brooks/Cole gave me the best tools that an author could hope for: themselves, consulting editor Ed Walker, and a panel of prepublication reviewers representing a variety of colleges, universities, and orientations. Frank Blume, of San Bernardino Valley College, Don Johnson, of West Valley College, Marty Rogers, of Sacramento State College, Jim Geiwitz, of the University of California at Santa Barbara, and Bob Eichinger, Management Consultant, put tremendous efforts into their reviews, making them both motivational and informative. Linda Marcetti, Konrad Kerst, and the other people on the production staff have been entirely helpful. In a class by herself is Micky Stay, who, like me, had the pleasure of agonizing over each and every word.

*Albert A. Harrison*

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# I

## An Orientation to Psychology

Hearing a person in distress, a young woman angrily grumbled "Why does everything have to happen to me?"

Tell me, child. Why do Americans plant trees?

*For shade and beauty.*

And why do Russians plant trees?

*To block the view and to make work for the prisoners.*

"Oh, God. I shouldn't be hurting this man," the middle-aged businessman taking part in an experiment moaned—and then continued with his task of inflicting painful electric shocks on another participant.

春如前

李以(打)受  
徐承愛

Fiction? Not at all, although the complexity and variety of human thoughts and actions as reflected in the above true examples can stretch the imagination. But surprising or not, anger at seeing someone else hurt, assigning Americans and Russians different motives for their landscaping, and acting in violation of the stern dictates of the conscience are not accidental events.



There are underlying regularities between cause and effect, and under appropriate conditions any one of us is likely to act in similar ways.

In this text, I will discuss the psychologists' search for regularities in actions and reactions and the theories they have evolved to account for the regularities thus far uncovered. Sometimes you will read of psychologists' pronouncements about the startling or unusual things people say and do, but mostly you will read of their probes into forms of activity that we think of as common and natural. You may find your attention drawn to some human activities you never noticed before, and perhaps you will come to discard some of your favorite notions.

Chapter One gives a brief idea of what psychology encompasses, what the different kinds of psychologists do, and how to distinguish psychologists from other professionals with similar-sounding titles.

After these initial bearings, Chapter Two starts right off with a hard look at the scientific tools psychologists use for making the observations on which they base their contentions. The word *science* has been used to dignify everything from gasolines to bowling balls, and as a result the term has lost much impact. But by calling my book *Psychology as a Social Science*, I show that many psychologists choose to follow the rules of science. In Chapter Two these rules will be made explicit within the framework of psychology. Remember, though, that neither God nor the American Psychological Association has decreed that psychologists must be scientific. So, from time to time throughout the text, you will read of interesting speculations that are clearly identified as such.

Many factors have been identified that help us to understand regularities in human conduct. Some of these factors come from inside the person and some from without. Some, like cells, are very small, whereas others, like societies, are very large. In Chapter Three I will describe some of these contributants to behavior, ways of classifying and relating them, and how they interplay with one another. Part One, then, is intended to give you an orientation to the field of psychology, to the rules of scientific psychology, and to the forces that act on man.