

Psychology in Action

Second Edition



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SECOND EDITION

Psychology in Action

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Psychology in Action

TO THE STUDENT: A Study Guide for the textbook is available through your college bookstore under the title *Studying Psychology in Action, Second Edition* by Karen Huffman, Mark Voy, Barbara Williams, and Judith Vernoy. The Study Guide can help you with course material by acting as a tutorial, review, and study aid. If the Study Guide is not in stock, ask the bookstore manager to order a copy for you.

To our families and friends,
who have loved and supported us,
and to our students, who have taught us,
we dedicate this book.

Preface

Welcome to the study of psychology. We, the authors, are students as well as teachers of psychology and hope to share with you the fascination we have found in the study of human and animal behavior. After years of teaching the introductory psychology course and paying close attention to the comments of our students, we have developed strong ideas about what a textbook should (and can) accomplish. Students have asked: “Why do texts have to be so cluttered and confusing?” “Am I responsible for all the material in the boxes, margins, and at the beginning and end of the chapters?” We asked ourselves: “Why do texts seem to be either condescendingly easy or overly difficult and encyclopedic?” “Can a text be both comprehensive and comprehensible, scientific yet practical, classic in foundation yet contemporary in application?”

1. Learning as an Activity

These are but a few of the questions that initiated our interest in writing this text. But our primary goal is to write a text that promotes learning as an *activity* of the student. Hence the title, *Psychology in Action*. Most texts encourage the reader to be passive. Research, however, shows that learning is greatly facilitated when the learner is an active participant. We have made every effort to engage the reader to participate with us in studying psychology.

Indeed, the study of psychology should not be just a one-way activity wherein the student receives a body of knowledge. Our title, *Psychology in Action*, also signifies actively applying psychological principles and research findings to aspects of life around us.

2. Critical Thinking Activities

“Critical Thinking” is a term that is currently receiving considerable attention from textbook authors. We have noticed that texts advocating critical thinking limit its implementation to exhorting students to think critically without giving them any specific suggestions or activities that will lead to critical thought. For example, if a student’s ability to empathize is limited, what activities can be performed to improve this important component of critical thinking? Frequently, the student is put into a passive role as the recipient of vague exhortations to be empathetic.

Using the most recent research on critical thinking, we have developed highly focused exercises in each chapter to help students practice critical thinking skills. Each exercise is labeled “Critical Thinking: Psychology in Action.” For example, in Chapter 5, the reader learns how to distinguish fact from opinion using the topic of drug use and abuse. Chapter 12 offers practice in recognizing illegitimate appeals to emotion. Additional specific exercises and activities that promote critical thinking are provided in the student study guide and the instructor’s manual, which are available from the publisher.

An explanation of the 21 basic elements that are necessary for critical thinking are introduced and explained in the Prologue.

3. The Scientific Method in Action

The scientific method is an excellent example of critical thinking in action. One of our primary goals in writing this text is to enhance the reader’s appreciation of psychology as an empirical study of human experience and to demonstrate the advantages of the scientific method over speculation and “common sense.”

Throughout the text, the reader is exposed to the successes and failures of the empirical method of discovery. By actively encouraging readers to evaluate research findings and to imagine themselves as participants in classic experiments, we have attempted to present the scientific method as an exciting voyage of discovery and an opportunity to practice critical thinking. Readers will discover how the tool of empiricism will help them think more clearly about popular media claims, EST, subliminal advertising, “brainwashing,” and the dangers of electroshock therapy.

4. SQ3R Learning Activities

To overcome the passive-learner syndrome, we have structured the entire text to employ the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) technique. Each chapter follows this format beginning with an outline that provides a survey of the major topics. To encourage questioning, we have included overview questions at the end of each chapter’s introductory vignette and have included questions our students have asked us as part of the ongoing discussion of the text.

Reading is facilitated by the clear and concise explanations. In addition, we have eliminated boxed essays. Many students feel that these boxed essays break up the continuity of the text. Placing specific studies or applications in special areas also conveys the impression that these topics are less important than the rest of the material. If something is worth discussing, we integrated it into our presentation.

To encourage recitation and review, we offer “Review Questions” after each major section. Again, these “Review Questions” provide an opportunity for active participation and provide the correct answers printed upside down for immediate feedback. Finally, each chapter concludes with a “Review of Major Concepts.”

Some educators recommend writing as an additional “R” (SQ4R). The reader is encouraged to write brief summary notes while reading the chapter material. The student study guide that accompanies this text was specifically designed to encourage this fourth “R.” Both the SQ3R and SQ4R methods are explained in greater detail in the study guide.

5. Glossaries

In addition to the SQ3R techniques, we have incorporated other learning aids that are known to increase comprehension and retention. New and important terms are identified with boldface type and are immediately defined in the text and in the margin of that page. In addition, there is a complete cumulative glossary at the end of the text. These aids alert readers to important terms and concepts while providing a useful review tool and increasing overall comprehension.

Note to the Student

We hope you will enjoy reading our second edition of *Psychology in Action*. As the name implies, we believe that psychology is, and should remain, a vital science that is practical, fascinating, and fun to learn. You will be the best judge of how well we have reached our goals. Please send us your comments, complaints, and questions while you are reading the text. We value your opinion and would appreciate your feedback.

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Note to the Instructor

We want to make your teaching time as exciting and rewarding as possible. We thought that the best way to do this was to create a student-centered, readable text that covers the material so clearly that students can achieve a high level of comprehension. Instead of using valuable class time to clarify the text, you will be free to present your own special topics, invite guest speakers to class, and allocate time for small and large group discussions. In other words, you can use class time for other learning activities.

Supplements

Psychology in Action is accompanied by a host of carefully crafted ancillary materials that will facilitate active learning.

Studying Psychology in Action is a student study guide that provides learning objectives, key terms, and multiple-choice practice tests for each chapter. “Critical Thinking: Psychology in Action” sections provide more focused exercises for practicing skills essential to critical thinking. Selected application sections show the student how text material can be used to lose weight, remember names, and so on. In addition, the guide includes detailed information on the SQ3R method and helpful information concerning study habits, test taking, and general college success.

Teaching Psychology in Action, a guide for the instructor, provides chapter overviews, film lists, learning objectives, key terms, lecture lead-ins, lecture extenders, and suggested classroom activities and demonstrations. “Critical Thinking: Psychology in Action” sections provide exercises and discussion formats to help your students practice skills that lead to critical thinking. The “lecture organizer” section is integrated with the chapter outline and page referenced to the text to make it easy for the instructor to illustrate or expand on major topics in each chapter.

Testing Psychology in Action includes at least 100 multiple-choice items for each chapter. These test items are separated into two sections. One contains factual and the other contains application items. The test bank is available in both printed and easy-to-use computer formats. The computerized test banks are available for both Macintosh and IBM PC compatible computers.

Two sets of *Transparencies* are available. One set is made up of more than 95 illustrations from the text. The other set is comprised of 100 transparencies that provide extra scope with illustrations on topics that aren’t covered in the text. This set is accompanied by a 100-page instructor’s guide.

The *Discovering Psychology* videotapes aired on Public Television are available to instructors who order at least 100 copies of *Psychology in Action*. A complete instructor’s manual shows how these tapes can be used in the classroom to enhance material in the text.

Wiley Computer Tutor Study Software. Available for IBM PC compatible computers, this software game is the fun way to study. The game can be played by one to five players. The game quizzes the players on the content of the text, keeps score, and identifies the winner. All incorrect answers are explained.

The *PSYCHOID* simulation software is available for IBM PC compatible computers. This easy-to-use, interactive software leads the student through a number of exercises, demonstrations, and activities that reinforce concepts in the text. For example, the sensation unit asks students to discriminate between the varying pitches of paired tones to illustrate the concept of thresholds.

We hope that these supplements will help both beginning and experienced instructors enrich their classroom presentations and create the lively environment that is Psychology in Action.

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Prologue

CRITICAL THINKING—Psychology in Action

*A great many people think they are thinking
when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.*

WILLIAM JAMES

Think critically? That's what others don't do, isn't it?

KIRK MONFORT

Although the ability to think critically has always been important, it is now imperative. For the first time in history, the human race has the capacity to destroy itself. The choices we make regarding nuclear weapons, preservation of the natural environment, and the world's rapidly expanding population will affect future generations and all people who currently inhabit this planet.

On a more personal level, people today are facing choices about such life and death matters as surrogate motherhood, sustaining coma patients on respirators, and fetal tissue transplants. Even when relaxing with a snack in front of the television set, viewers are bombarded with misleading statements by advertisers and politicians and by emotional appeals on subjects ranging from racism and homelessness to the latest carcinogen.

There is no shortage of information available on many of these issues. Today's college student has easy access to mountains of information. When assigned a research project, students can go beyond traditional local library resources by using a personal computer and modem to search thousands of daily newspapers, research journal articles, and encyclopedia services.

The problem for modern college students is not a lack of data but knowing what to do with the "information explosion." Information must be interpreted, evaluated, digested, synthesized, and applied in a logical, rational manner. In short, the student must be a critical thinker.

What is "critical thinking"?

Critical thinking has many meanings, and some books have dedicated entire chapters to its definition. The word *critical* comes from the Greek word "kritikos," which means to question, make sense of, to be able to analyze. *Thinking* is the cognitive activity involved in making sense of the world around us. *Critical thinking* is "thinking about our thinking so that we can clarify and improve it" (Chaffee, 1988, p. 29).

To understand critical thinking better, study the following list of processes that comprise it. As authors of this text, we have incorporated many of these elements into every facet of this book. Each of the critical thinking exercises is devoted to step-by-step training in one aspect of the process. *Psychology in Action* invites active use of this list as a way to improve critical thinking.

While all of us employ some form of these intellectual behaviors, the list can be used to identify areas that need strengthening through practice. They may also suggest additional opportunities for critical thinking in aspects of life where strong emotional reactions to the issues have previously hampered the application of the critical thinking process.

THE CRITICAL THINKING PROCESS

Affective Components — the emotional foundation that either enables or limits critical thinking.

- *Valuing truth above self-interest.* You must hold yourself and those you agree with to the same intellectual standards to which you hold your opponents.
- *Accepting change.* Critical thinkers remain open to the need for adjustment and adaptation throughout the life cycle. Because critical thinkers fully trust the processes of reasoned inquiry, they are willing to use these skills to examine even their most deeply held values and beliefs, and to modify these beliefs when evidence and experience contradict them.
- *Empathizing.* Noncritical thinkers view everything and everyone else in relationship to the self. They fail to understand or appreciate another's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, as critical thinkers do.
- *Welcoming divergent views.* Since critical thinkers value examining issues from every angle, they know that it is especially important to explore and understand positions with which they disagree.
- *Tolerating ambiguity.* Although formal education often trains students to look for a single "right" answer, critical thinkers recognize that many issues are complex, intricate, and subtle, and that complex issues may not have a "right" answer. They recognize and value qualifiers such as "probably," "highly likely," and "not very likely."
- *Recognizing personal biases.* Using your highest intellectual skills to detect personal biases and self-deceptive reasoning, you can then design reasonable procedures for self-correction.

Cognitive Components — the thought processes actually involved in critical thinking.

- *Thinking independently.* Critical thinking is autonomous, independent thinking. You do not passively accept the beliefs of others and are not easily manipulated.
- *Defining problems accurately.* A critical thinker identifies the issues in clear and concrete terms, to prevent confusion and lay the foundation for gathering relevant information.
- *Analyzing data for value and content.* By carefully evaluating the nature of evidence and the credibility of the source, you will recognize illegitimate appeals to emotion, unsupported assumptions, and faulty logic. This will enable you to discount sources of information that lack a record of honesty, contradict themselves on key questions, or have a vested interest in selling a product or idea.
- *Employing a variety of thinking processes in problem solving.* Among these are the ability to use each of the following skills: *inductive logic*—reasoning that moves from the specific to the general; *deductive logic*—reasoning that moves from the general to the specific; *dialogical thinking*—thinking that involves an extended verbal exchange between differing points of view or frames of reference; and *dialectical thinking*—thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view.

- *Synthesizing.* Critical thinkers recognize that comprehension and understanding result from combining various elements into meaningful patterns.
- *Resisting overgeneralization.* Overgeneralization is the temptation to apply a fact or experience to situations that are only superficially similar to the original context.
- *Employing metacognition.* Metacognition, also known as reflective or recursive thinking, involves a review and analysis of your own mental processes—thinking about your own thinking.

Behavioral Components—the actions necessary for critical thinking.

- *Delaying judgment until adequate data is available.* A critical thinker does not make “snap judgments.”
- *Employing precise terms.* Such terms help you to identify the issues in clear and concrete terms that can be objectively defined and empirically tested.
- *Gathering data.* Collecting up-to-date, relevant information on all sides of an issue is done before making decisions.
- *Distinguishing fact from opinion.* Facts are statements that can be proven true. Opinions are statements that express how a person feels about an issue or what someone thinks is true.
- *Encouraging critical dialogue.* Critical thinkers are active questioners who challenge existing facts and opinions and welcome questions in return. Socratic questioning is an important type of critical dialogue where the questioner deeply probes the meaning, justification, or logical strength of a claim, position, or line of reasoning.
- *Listening actively.* Critical thinkers fully engage their thinking skills when listening to another.
- *Modifying judgments in light of new information.* Your previous judgments can be abandoned or modified if later evidence or experience contradicts them.
- *Applying knowledge to new situations.* When critical thinkers master a new skill or discover an insight, they are able to transfer this information to new contexts. Noncritical thinkers can often provide correct answers, repeat definitions, and carry out formulae, yet remain unable to transfer their knowledge to new situations because of a basic lack of understanding.

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