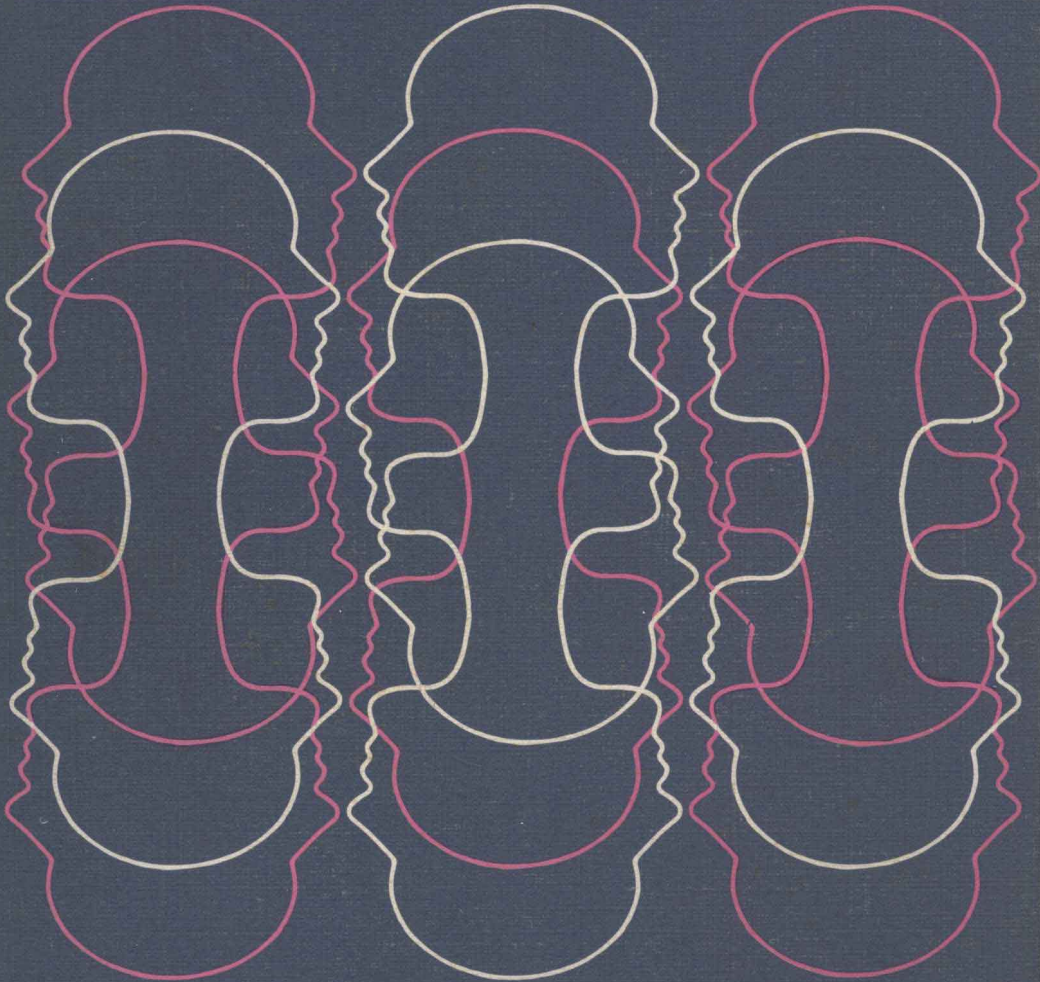


Psychology & Social Problems

**An Introduction to Applied
Psychology**



**Edited by
Anthony Gale and Antony J. Chapman**

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

An Introduction to Applied Psychology

Edited by

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FOREWORD

Charles D. Spielberger

Applications of psychology currently touch the lives of countless people. Nearly everyone has a relative or friend who has taken a psychological test or sought help for vocational or personal problems from a counsellor or psychotherapist. Indeed, as society has become more complex, and people have gained greater freedom and control over their lives and careers, the range of services offered by psychologists to both individuals and institutions has greatly expanded.

Given the pervasive influence of applied psychology in everyday life, understanding psychological principles and their applications has become a necessity for the enlightened citizen. In *Psychology and Social Problems*, Professors Gale and Chapman provide an authoritative and comprehensive introduction to applied psychology that will prove invaluable to the undergraduate student. To assist them in covering the massive subject matter, they have called upon highly qualified experts from different areas of applied psychology, and challenged them to examine their respective fields within a common framework that serves to integrate otherwise diverse domains.

Meaningful applications of psychology must be based on a sound scientific foundation. Consequently, ethical application of psychological principles to social problems must await the development of relevant theory that has been tested by empirical research. In addition to a thorough knowledge of scientific facts and theory, practitioners of applied psychology must also have the requisite personal qualities that will enable them to work comfortably and effectively with a wide range of clients.

While philosophers and theologians have speculated about human nature for many centuries, psychology is a relatively young scientific discipline, and applications of psychological principles are even more recent. The establishment of psychology as an experimental science is generally credited to Wilhelm Wundt, who founded the first permanent laboratory of psychology at the University of Leipzig in 1879 (Boring, 1957). Applied psychology owes

a special debt to Sir Francis Galton of Great Britain, whose creative genius inspired and stimulated early investigations of individual differences.

In 1884, at an international health exhibition, Galton established an anthropometric laboratory, which many historians of psychology consider the first laboratory of applied psychology. Galton designed numerous instruments for making anthropometric and psychometric measurements. For the sum of threepence, an interested citizen could obtain accurate measurements of height, weight, breathing power, hearing, colour sense, strength of pull, and many other individual human abilities and characteristics. At the closing of the exhibition, Galton's laboratory was transferred to London's South Kensington Museum, where it was maintained for six years. During the operation of the laboratory, data were collected on more than nine thousand persons.

For historians of psychology the year 1890 marks the beginning point for applied psychology (Boring, 1957; Napoli, 1981). In that year, James McKeen Cattell, an American psychologist working at the University of Pennsylvania, coined the term *mental test*, and published the results of the first psychological testing programme. Strongly influenced by the work of Galton, who had previously developed a number of procedures that would now be called mental tests, Cattell was motivated by the very practical goal of selecting those applicants for admission to the university who had the best chance for success.

Cattell received his doctorate from Leipzig in 1886, and was well trained in Wundt's approach to experimental psychology, which involved seeking general laws about the structure of the mind. But, like Galton, Cattell considered individual differences to be the crucial variables in his experiments. The particular characteristics measured in his testing programme included reaction time, colour vision, keenness of hearing, sensitivity to pain, remote memory, and other qualities that reflected quickness of mind.

There is little current interest in Wundt's structuralism, but students of psychology must be aware of important differences in orientation between psychologists who search for general laws of behaviour and those whose major concern is in the measurement of individual differences. Psychologists who work in university settings are more likely to employ experimental methods to investigate general processes whereas applied psychologists are more likely to use psychological tests in the assessment of individual differences in their clients or patients. By the mid-1950's these differences in orientation were sufficiently pronounced for Lee J. Cronbach (1957) to refer to them as 'The two disciplines of scientific psychology', in his Presidential Address to the American Psychological Association.

Between 1890 and the First World War, psychology emerged as a respectable academic discipline in the universities of Europe and the United States. This period also witnessed important applications of psychology in clinical,

industrial and educational contexts. Psychologists began to administer tests in institutions for the mentally retarded and in industrial settings where they were used in the selection of job applicants. A significant milestone occurred in 1896. The first psychological clinic was established by Lightner Witmer at the University of Pennsylvania in response to a school principal's request for assistance in helping an elementary pupil with a serious educational problem.

Applied psychology was also stimulated by advances in measurement and statistics. In addition to his many contributions to the psychology of individual differences, Galton was a pioneer in the development of statistical methods. He was among the first to utilize the bell-shaped, normal probability curve in describing the distributions of measures of human, social and biological characteristics, and to work out statistical methods for quantifying the relationship (correlation) between paired measures. Karl Pearson, Charles Spearman, Godfrey Thomson and Cyril Burt in Great Britain, and L. L. Thurstone in the United States, also made distinguished early contributions to the statistical foundations of psychological science and to the measurement of general intelligence and primary mental abilities.

The growth of applied psychology was greatly accelerated by the First World War, in which psychologists constructed tests for screening new recruits, and for classifying and selecting men for specific military jobs. The Army Alpha Test, a standardized measure of mental ability developed by the United States Army, was administered to more than 1.7 million men in the most massive testing effort ever undertaken up until that time. After the war, many American psychologists completed their enlistments working in Army rehabilitation hospitals, where they were involved in evaluating and treating individual patients, and thus extended the range of applications in clinical settings where few psychologists had previously worked.

Curiously, even the Great Depression of the 1930's contributed to the development of applied psychology. Massive unemployment, resulting in reduced numbers of academic positions, stimulated directors of USA graduate training programmes in psychology to assist their students in finding employment in applied settings, and to provide courses and appropriate field experiences to prepare them for such work.

The Second World War provided a major turning point for the widespread acceptance of applied psychology. Once again, psychologists became heavily involved in developing tests for screening and classifying military personnel, but had much more to offer in these fields, and others as well. In the United States, for example, the most prestigious experts in personnel evaluation and psychological testing contributed to the construction of the General Classification Test, which was administered to more than 9 million men. Perhaps the greatest success achieved by psychologists during World War II was in the selection of pilots. The utilization of psychological tests greatly reduced the failure rate in aviation training programmes, as compared

with previous selection procedures based on educational requirements, psychiatric interviews, and physical examinations.

Hopefully, the preceding brief overview of the historical development of applied psychology will prove helpful in understanding current applications of psychology to a variety of social problems. In their introductory chapter, Gale and Chapman discuss the nature of applied psychology. They identify its core characteristics and make a convincing case for applied psychology as a unitary discipline that must be based on a broad foundation of psychological theory and research. They also describe what applied psychologists do in their work, examine the complicated moral and ethical problems that are encountered in applications of psychology to social problems, and give a number of meaningful examples of the interventions that they practise in a variety of environmental settings. The reader will find the *Checklist* for evaluating the outcomes of psychological interventions especially helpful in reviewing individual studies.

The contents of this volume give ample testimony to the continuing growth and vitality of applied psychology. Individual chapters provide a coherent analysis of fifteen different problem areas in which applied psychologists currently work. Clearly, the boundaries for the application of psychology to the solution of individual and social problems have been greatly expanded, and can no longer be defined in terms of the traditional professional activities of clinical, industrial and educational psychologists.

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PREFACE

This volume results from a belief that Applied Psychology should be regarded as a unitary discipline. Ours is a radical approach to Applied Psychology, and we begin by examining the definition of social problems, moral implications for the practice of psychology, and issues intrinsic to the evaluation of interventions. A common analytic framework is then used for each of the 'social problems' addressed. Hence contributions are sectioned as follows:

- The extent of the problem
- Concepts of the person and models of human behaviour
- Individual assessment
- The immediate social and emotional environment
- The wider social and organizational environment
- Types of intervention
- Is psychological intervention successful?
- Methodological and practical problems
- Problems of ethics and confidentiality
- The role of other disciplines and professions
- Future prospects

They conclude with annotated readings and reference lists.

Our approach helps to avoid the outmoded and unhelpful classifications apparent in more traditional texts: we believe, for example, that it is misguided to limit the use of psychological tools and instruments to the contexts in which they were originally developed. By demonstrating the unity of the discipline we seek to curtail and counteract the unfortunate fragmentation of psychology into sectional interests and divisions, into 'pure/applied', 'mechanistic/humanistic', 'social/biological' and 'phenomenological/behaviourist' psychology. Most of all we hope to show psychological practitioners, and potential practitioners, that Applied Psychology is best recognized as a single discipline. Whatever the 'applied problem' practitioners must select a strategy for intervention on the basis of information derived from *all* available sources of knowledge. Only then can they be confident that their intervention will be appropriate to the individual client or organization. The problems we have chosen to highlight are conspicuous examples of good contemporary practice.

Psychology and Social Problems was prepared for use by students at universities and colleges studying for first degrees in psychology and as a source of additional reading for courses in child development, educational psychology, organizational and social psychology, and clinical psychology. Much of the material will also be of interest to students of medicine, education, and the paramedical and caring professions. The lists of further readings following each chapter will enable the student to extend individual study through readily accessible books and review articles.

In preparing the final manuscript for the printer, we acknowledge with gratitude the help of Claire Jolly.

ANTHONY GALE
ANTONY J. CHAPMAN
August 1983

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CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

Anthony Gale and Antony J. Chapman

Textbooks in applied psychology typically come in two varieties. One describes *techniques* which psychologists have devised; for example, mental tests, behaviour modification, job description, individual psychotherapy and group work. The other describes the work of different categories of *psychological professional*, the clinical, educational, community, industrial and prison psychologist. *Psychology and Social Problems* adopts a different approach. We think it useful to apply a psychological analysis to what applied psychologists do in their working lives. Such an analysis reveals many common features in applied psychological practice. Indeed we consider that most of the skills and techniques available to psychology could and should be deployed in a variety of contexts. They are not the preserve of a particular branch of expertise, and the particular titles which psychologists hold ('educational', 'clinical' and so on) owe more to historical accident and the nature of the funding agencies for which psychologists work than to actual differences in practice.

It may well be that a job description or job profile reveals that psychologists in different contexts apply certain skills at the expense of others. Thus a clinical psychologist working in a large psychiatric hospital may spend a good deal of time with *individuals* yet devote little time to the promotion of organizational change. Conversely the industrial psychologist may work as a *change agent* to facilitate efficiency in working groups and not be expected to offer individual *counselling* or *personal welfare* advice. But it is the values and priorities which operate in the working context which determine the job profile of the psychologist. Individual counselling and welfare work in a factory could well lead to increased productivity, reduced interpersonal frictions and increased personal satisfaction with work. Organizational changes in an institutional setting might well lead to improvements in staff morale and performance and the delivery of personal services to residents. But at

present psychologists are rarely called upon to discharge such functions *in those contexts*.

A Psychological Analysis of Applied Psychological Skill

Our analysis of applied psychological skills and attributes leads us to identify the following core or common characteristics. As illustrated above, not all the skills are applied equally in different working situations.

- Psychologists are concerned with bringing about *change*.
- Typically the implementation of change is seen to be associated with a desire to improve the *quality of life* of other individuals.
- Psychologists are trained in special procedures and techniques for purposes of *observation, measurement* and *report*.
- They are presented with *problems* which are multiply determined and need to be analysed into their constituent parts.
- Psychological knowledge and emphasis shifts over time; thus psychologists need to be aware that the contemporary preferred *model of man* and *conceptions of the person* will influence the ways in which the psychologist and Society deal with the individual.
- Psychologists work within *organizational* settings, where characteristics of the organization may influence the ways in which people treat each other.
- The psychologist has no self-evident right to make decisions for others; yet the majority of the psychologist's working time is spent in dealing with people. Contemporary definitions of *the person* incorporate the view that individuals should be no less free to make choices about their own lives, than are psychologists.
- Clients are people who belong to *families* and other personally significant *emotional networks*; such networks will influence the ways in which clients perceive the world and their own roles within it.
- Clients also have other *affiliations* – for example, of a religious, political or ideological nature – whose values will be of personal significance to them. Again, it might be difficult to understand the *client's view of the world* without setting the client's problem within those contexts.
- Life is stressful and psychologists and their clients can be subject to *stresses* and *strains*; the psychologist needs to devise methods of coping and is expected to assist clients in the development of personal coping skills.
- Psychological interventions typically involve *education and training* and, in many cases, an attempt to transfer to the client personal autonomy and responsibility for change.
- Like other professionals, psychologists have a responsibility to *evaluate the efficacy* of the strategies devised to promote change.