

This Week's Citation Classic

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Bandura A. *Principles of behavior modification.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969. 677 p. [Stanford University, Stanford. CA]

This volume presents basic psychological principles governing human thought and behavior within the conceptual framework of social learning. This theory emphasizes the prominent roles played by vicarious, symbolic, and self-regulatory processes in psychological functioning. [The *Science Citation Index*[®] (SCI[®]) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*[™] (SSCI[™]) indicate that this book has been cited over 1215 times since 1969.]

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"Theories of human behavior were undergoing major changes at the time I was writing this book. Interest in traditional psychodynamic approaches was declining as their deficiencies were becoming increasingly apparent. Behavioristic formulations emphasizing peripheral mechanisms were giving way to cognitively-oriented theories that explained behavior in terms of central processing of information. However, because of their major concern with internal mental operations, the information-processing models neglected the issue of how knowledge is converted to effective courses of action.

"The program of research I was pursuing at the time was aimed at broadening the scope of experimentation to human potentialities that were receiving comparatively little attention. The prevailing theories were concerned almost exclusively with how behavior is acquired and modified through

direct experience. Our investigations focused on the determinants and processes by which human thought, affect, and behavior are markedly influenced by observing the behavior of others and its effects for them.

"People are not only perceivers, knowers, and actors. They are also self-reactors with a capacity for self-direction. Recognition of people's self-directing capacities provided the impetus for research on self-regulatory functions in which people serve as the principal agents of their own changes. These are only a few of the conceptual issues addressed in the volume.

"I have always subscribed to the view that the adequacy of a psychological theory should ultimately be judged by the power of the procedures it generates to effect psychological changes. A sizeable portion of this volume is therefore devoted to a discussion of how methods derived from principles of social learning can be used successfully to promote cognitive, emotional, and behavioral change.

"A responsible social science must concern itself not only with advancement of knowledge, but also with the social consequences of its applications. The ethical and value issues involved in the application of social learning procedures to achieve personal and social changes are examined in some detail. A psychological technology operates within the values, ideologies, and power structures of a social system. Major attention is devoted to institutional applications of psychological knowledge because it is at the institutional level that the value premises of psychological practices become most controversial.

"I suppose the reason for the sustained interest in this volume is that it provided a unified conceptual framework within which to study diverse psychological phenomena and it specified procedures for effecting change."