

This Week's Citation Classic

Mowrer O H. Learning theory and personality dynamics.
New York: Ronald Press, 1950. 776 p.
[University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL]

The 24 chapters comprising this book consist of a wide-ranging collection of previously published and unpublished papers, most of which had been well received. The topics covered range from 'Enuresis—a method for its study and treatment' to 'The life and work of Edgar Allan Poe.' [The Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicates that this book has been cited over 285 times since 1966.]

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May 27, 1981

"My first 19 published papers dealt with vestibulo-ocular functions and spatial orientation. However, upon receiving an appointment at the Yale Institute of Human Relations in the fall of 1934, my interests shifted to the Institute's major objective, which was the integration of psychology, psychiatry, and the social sciences. The first paper I wrote and published in this new setting was entitled, 'A stimulus-response analysis of anxiety and its role as a reinforcing agent' and appears as Chapter 1 in *Learning Theory and Personality Dynamics (LTPD)*. It was particularly concerned with the conceptual interrelationships between learning theory and psychoanalysis and generated a large number of researchable hypotheses. Most of the ensuing chapters represent avenues of inquiry which, in one way or another, were suggested by this first paper. These include animal and human research on the

psychology of fear and expectancy, experimental analogues of psychoanalytic dynamisms, systematic learning theory, the development and function of language, personality theory, and the nature of psychopathology.

"One of the reasons LTPD has been widely cited and remained in print for more than 25 years is the diversity of empirical data and conceptual innovations it contains. It has also provided the foundation for much of the work I have reported in subsequently published books.¹⁵

"In many ways, the most interesting and important aspect of LTPD is the light it throws upon the intellectual ethos and excitement that prevailed at the Institute of Human Relations during the middle and late 1930s. In this period the Institute was the 'psychological capital' of the world, as indicated, for example, by the fact that between 1934 and 1940, six of the persons who were then graduate students, research fellows, or junior staff members were later to become presidents of the American Psychological Association. Yet, paradoxically, the Institute of Human Relations narrowly averted failure.

"The original plan was to establish the Institute by bringing together, in a rather elegant, specially constructed new building, distinguished senior members of the various disciplines which were to produce a kind of scientific and scholarly hybrid vigor by interaction and integration. However, the hoped-for symbiotic relationships did not develop until a special seminar was started, in which junior staff and graduate students, as well as the senior staff members, participated. This was precisely the leaven needed to activate the Institute's high potential and avoid what might otherwise have been a serious fiasco."

1. Mowrer O H. Learning theory and behavior. New York: Wiley, 1960. 555 p.
[Citation Classic. Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences (5): 16, 4 February 1980.]
2., Learning theory and the symbolic processes. New York: Wiley, 1960. 473 p.
3., The new group therapy. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1964. 262 p.
4., Morality and mental health. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967. 669 p.
5., Psychology of language and learning. New York: Plenum Press, 1980. 294 p.