

# This Week's Citation Classic

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Nunnally J C. *Psychometric theory*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1967, 640 p.  
[University of Chicago, Chicago, IL]

The book is intended to be a comprehensive text on psychometric theory, substantive findings in the area, and related methods of statistical analyses. It was specifically intended for graduate students in their second year of training in psychology, education, and other behavioral sciences. However, it has also proved to be useful to people in various disciplines such as engineering, various medical specialties, and other areas. [The *Science Citation Index*® (SCI®) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*™ (SSCI™) indicate that this book has been cited over 425 times since 1967.]

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"Of course I am extremely gratified that *Psychometric Theory* has been adopted so widely throughout the behavioral sciences and purchased by so many professional people; also, I am quite flattered that the book is being listed as a 'Citation Classic' My original motivation for writing it springs from the same source as that of so many authors—namely, I could not find a comprehensive textbook for the graduate course in psychometric theory that I had been teaching for over ten years. Many of the topics that come under the heading of psychometric theory are highly technical, difficult for the average graduate student to understand, and the major methods and theories are scattered throughout dozens of different journals. Consequently, both in self-defense and in an effort to help befuddled graduate students understand a very wide variety of topics which are essential to their professional development, I made an effort to

bring all of the major theories and methods together in one comprehensive text. The book covers the gamut of what I consider to be the most important topics in psychometric theory for graduate students and practicing behavioral scientists.

"Although a large part of psychometric theory concerns mathematical methods, I realized that the average graduate student would not understand complex mathematical treatments of the topic. Consequently, I made every effort to 'talk out' the mathematical aspects of the problem rather than present detailed mathematical derivations. At the same time, I made every effort to 'load' the book with references to technical articles and monographs where the more mathematically minded person could obtain an in-depth understanding of the mathematical arguments. I think that this effort to 'talk out' the mathematical arguments has been one of the major reasons that the book has been popular with students and professional people. A second feature of the book which I think has added to its popularity is that I made every effort to give interesting examples whenever possible and made efforts in other ways to create interest in what would otherwise be a very dry, unpalatable topic for most readers.

"Because a decade had passed between the first edition of the book (1967) and when I began revising it,<sup>1</sup> I found that there was a massive amount of literature which I needed to master before I could adequately write the second edition. It actually took me longer to revise the book than it did to write the original one. I suspect that the sheer amount of work which an effort of this kind requires has discouraged any other person in psychology from trying to put together a thoroughly comprehensive coverage of the field of psychometrics. For the benefit of anyone who wants to try his hand at writing a book that covers this much technical ground in an understandable and palatable way, let me wish him good luck."

1. Nunnally J C. *Psychometric theory*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1978. 701p.