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In McGuire, W.J. Constructing Social
Psychology. New York, NY: Cambridge
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Foreword

William J. McGuire is among the most original and influential thinkers of psychology's first century. He began his career at Yale University in the 1950s where he studied with Carl Hovland, completing his first research within the dominant tradition of learning theory. Even in his earliest papers, there is evidence of a master experimenter at work: aesthetic designs, meticulous analyses, and complex interactions predicted with precision, revealed that his use of learning theory was a tool to study the issues that most excited him concerning human thought and its complex functioning in social contexts.

After a postdoctoral fellowship at University of Minnesota with Leon Festinger, Bill spent the next several years at other great universities. At University of Illinois, he entered into a bet (with a colleague who was perpetually anxious about tenure) that he would not publish a paper until he was tenured. The evidence is in his curriculum vitae: Ten papers appeared in 1961, the year after he received tenure. Among the most notable of these contributions is a highly influential and counterintuitive idea concerning attitude change. Using the metaphor of medical immunization, Bill's genius was to suggest that small doses of a persuasive message would increase resistance to further attitude change instead of reducing it. His programmatic research on immunization against persuasion remains a model of a creative idea flawlessly executed. Bill demonstrated that ephemeral human thought processes can be described by the same laws previously considered to be true of physical and biological systems.

In the following decades, Bill continued his empirical research on attitudes, focusing on social influence processes and on the construction of effective persuasion campaigns. Academic psychologists deeply respect the originality of his theories and the elegance of his methods. Marketing researchers know and admire his creativity and boldness in speaking about attitude change and persuasion as it af-

fects their discipline. During the middle years of his career, Bill continued his empirical research while writing exquisite reviews of attitude theory and research that simultaneously informed his peers and introduced novice students to the wonders of social psychology. He also wrote more popular, inspirational pieces that are read and re-read and for which he is beloved. One article stands out for its role in rejuvenating social psychology at a time when the field was considered to be in crisis regarding its identity and mission. In a paper presented at an international congress in Japan, Bill used the metaphor of the yin and yang of social psychology. Describing the opposite yet synergistic ways of conducting research Bill eloquently pointed out the many converging paths to truth. To social psychologists, the "yin and yang" paper offered new inspiration about their discipline and its future. Its appeal was the presentation of a view of what social psychology in all its richness could be, in language that was at once strong and inspirational. It remains among the most widely read papers even decades later, long after the field has emerged from its crisis.

Intellectual contributions come in many forms, and Bill is owed an enormous debt for his heroic service as editor of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, the premier publication in the field. His love of his field and the individuals who produce its work are exemplified in the sheer quantity of work he did as editor from 1965–1975 (personally handling 350 manuscripts a year for *JPSP*). He continues to review with zest, in a tradition of which he remains the best exemplar; detailed reviews (sometimes approaching the length of the manuscripts themselves) of exceptional quality, known also for their supreme charity and support, especially to young scientists.

In the late 1970s, Bill McGuire began a program of research to map the topography of the phenomenal self. He faulted the field for its reliance on reactive methods that forced research participants to respond to questions in formats fixed by the investigator. This time, his maverick strategy led him to study children of various ages who supplied him jewels of data in response to his simple query: "Tell me about yourself." The papers on self-concept showed the advances that are possible when an investigator dares to break away from the established method of a discipline and has the courage to opt for labor intensive methods. Many regard Bill's research on the self as among the most creative studies of uncensored human thought ever conducted.

There are many, many other accomplishments that mark this great and admired career. It remains a thrill for Bill's colleagues to watch

him and his wife and collaborator, Claire Vernick McGuire walk to school each day, run experiments, analyze data, and write about their discoveries. At age 73, Bill remains not only active but dauntingly productive. He travels regularly to "hardship posts" in London and Paris, joking with local colleagues that his fame is an inverse function of the square of the distance from New Haven.

William McGuire's thoughts and words transformed psychological science in deep and permanent ways. His work embodies a rare confluence of experimental rigor, creativity, and aesthetics. Fortunately for us, he chose social psychology as the discipline in which to do his life's work. We are honored to have been able to persuade him to publish his writings in a single volume; they appear here with bridging sections and commentary provided by him. With great pride in the brilliance of our field as revealed in the thoughts and words of this genius who spent much of his life analyzing the thoughts and words of others, we offer you the writings of William J. McGuire.

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