

# Using Facebook to Spread Perceptual Control Theory

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International Association for Perceptual Control Theory Conference  
Via Zoom  
8-9 October 2020

## Abstract

This presentation provides an example of how Facebook can be used to promote Perceptual Control Theory and share its concepts among lay and professional populations around the world. Topics discussed include sample posts, the targeting of audiences, the attraction of followers, advertising on Facebook, my use of a professional designer, and related costs.

## Introduction

I have three online sites: One is a personal Facebook page, another is a website that highlights my book *Your Behavior*, and the third is a Facebook business page. This paper focuses on the Facebook business page and how it is used to (a) help spread the word about Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) and its major concepts, and (b) to advertise my book which highlights PCT.

I set up the Facebook business page (that I'll refer to from now as the "business page" or "the page") during the summer of 2017 with the help of an online specialist. Since then I have been using the page to promote *Your Behavior* and PCT by reproducing quotes and Highlights from the book as well as sharing other information of possible interest to viewers including free publications available at my website ([richardpfau.com](http://richardpfau.com)). Starting from zero, the business page now has over 1,700 followers. Postings and advertisements reach these followers and thousands of other people each month.

The image below shows what the top of the business page looks like.



## Sample Posts and Advertisements

Different kinds of posts are made to the business page. Each month I usually I post two quotes and one Highlight from the *Your Behavior* book. These are mostly those in which:

- Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) is mentioned directly
- Concepts central to PCT are shared, but PCT is not mentioned
- Other quotations from *Your Behavior* or matters concerning psychology are made, or
- The book *Your Behavior* is advertised.

The following sections explain and give examples of each of these kinds of posts.

### Posts and Advertisements in which PCT is Mentioned Directly

The following are examples of posts in which PCT is mentioned directly. The first, shown below, indicates PCT's application to management.<sup>i</sup>

#### A Senior Manager's Use of PCT at Intel

"When managers interface with people...with sensitivity and competence, then their effectiveness...increases dramatically. Since managers get paid to accomplish organizational goals through the influence they have with others, it is clear to me that applying PCT significantly increases the skill set a manager can use to accomplish goals."

James Soldani ("How I Applied PCT to Get Results," 2016)

Note: PCT refers to perceptual control theory.

[facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/](https://facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/)



Here is one aimed at showing PCT's relevance to religious and moral thinking.

**Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) and the "Golden Rule"**

"The golden rule... enjoins us to take into account others' interests, needs, tastes, wishes, desires" (Jeffrey Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 1996, p. 126).



This is fully consistent with PCT views about how conflict results from attempts to arbitrarily control others. As a result, "we can apparently say that PCT provides a neurological explanation for religious, ethical, and moral thinking as to why others should be treated with respect and love!" - Richard Pfau (Conference Paper, 2018, pp. 11 & 13)

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This one indicates PCT's ability to explain different types of behavior.

**Explaining Behavior**

Perceptual Control Theory (PCT)

"allows one to explain phenomena as simple as moving a finger or blinking an eye, to matters as complex as going to church, honesty, and composing a song."

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 210-211)



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This post is a Highlight from the *Your Behavior* book. It, like other posts, is aimed first at attracting the reader's attention so that they read more and learn something relevant to PCT.

### Highlight 3.10

### Why Do People Spy?

Believe it or not, it's mainly because of MICE!

The intelligence community has an acronym for helping it understand why people spy. It is "**MICE**." MICE refers to the references of spies that affect what they do. Here's what the letters stand for:

- **M** is for money, to live better, satisfy greed, or deal with debt.
- **I** is for ideology, including political opinions, and cultural or religious beliefs.
- **C** is for coercion, such as blackmail or threats against one's family.
- **E** is for ego and feelings of importance or excitement.

Some people also add an R to form **MICER**, with the last letter being:

- **R** for revenge and grievances toward a workplace, organization, or country.

As you may realize, the intelligence community's thoughts are compatible with PCT and recognition of the importance of a person's references in affecting what they do. People spy mainly to achieve perceptions that match one or more of their reference levels: for money, for their ideological principles, to avoid unpleasant circumstances because of coercive threats, to obtain thrills and boost their egos, and sometimes for revenge.

For more details look at [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) under the heading "Motives for Spying" and see Herbig and Wiskoff, *Espionage Against the United States*.

- Richard Pfau Ph.D. (*Your Behavior*, p. 44)

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The following is aimed at people who have an interest in and some understanding of psychology.

“The idea that we control our perceptions, not our actions, runs counter to the popular views of most people.... The traditional view of behavior is that it is the end of a process that starts in the environment or within the body. This leads to the illusion that ‘inputs’ cause actions. The PCT view...is that rather than being a result of input, behavior is your body’s way of controlling its sensory inputs to keep them at their reference levels—levels required for you to live or that were otherwise established as preferences since your conception.”

- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 204)

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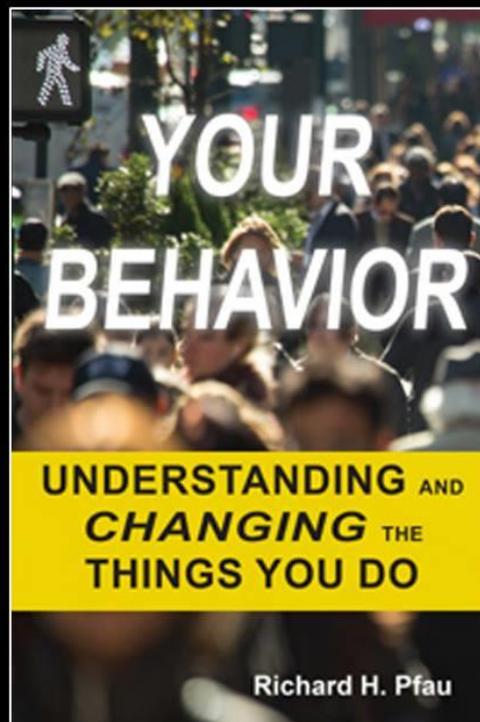


This one is aimed at selling the book.

Because it meets the criteria of good theory so well, Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) has been used in *Your Behavior* to help you understand why you do the things you do. As Peter Lipton has written in the *Oxford Handbook of Causation* (2009, p. 629), “Better explanations explain more types of phenomena, explain them with greater precision, provide more information about underlying causal mechanisms, unify apparently disparate phenomena, or simplify our overall picture of the world.” PCT does these things quite well—as Chapter 9 of *Your Behavior* indicates.

Available on Amazon.

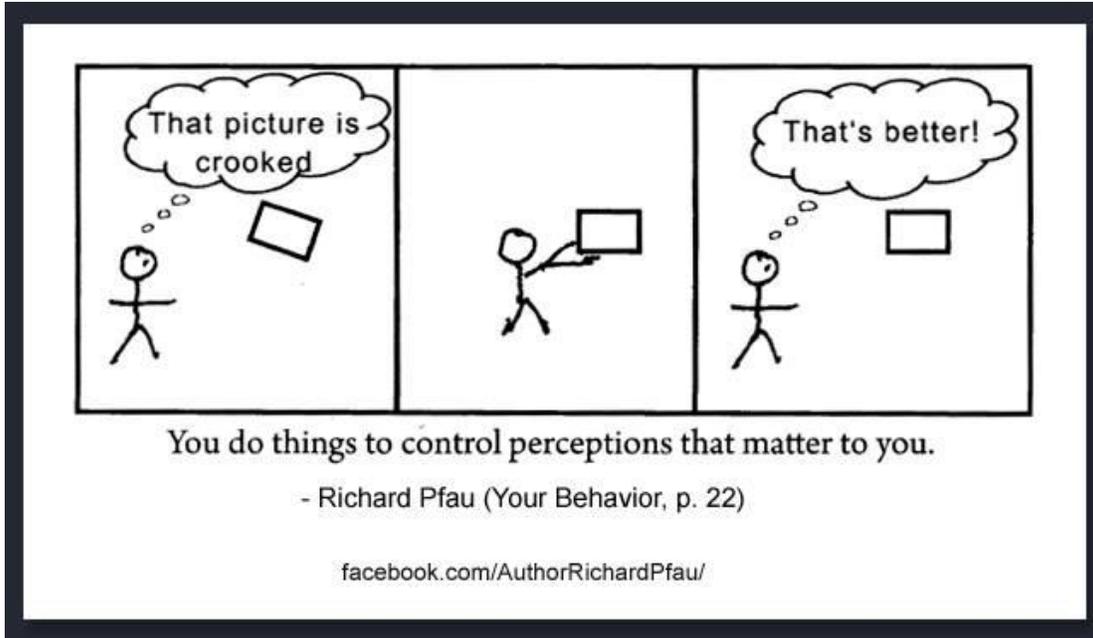
<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1557789274>



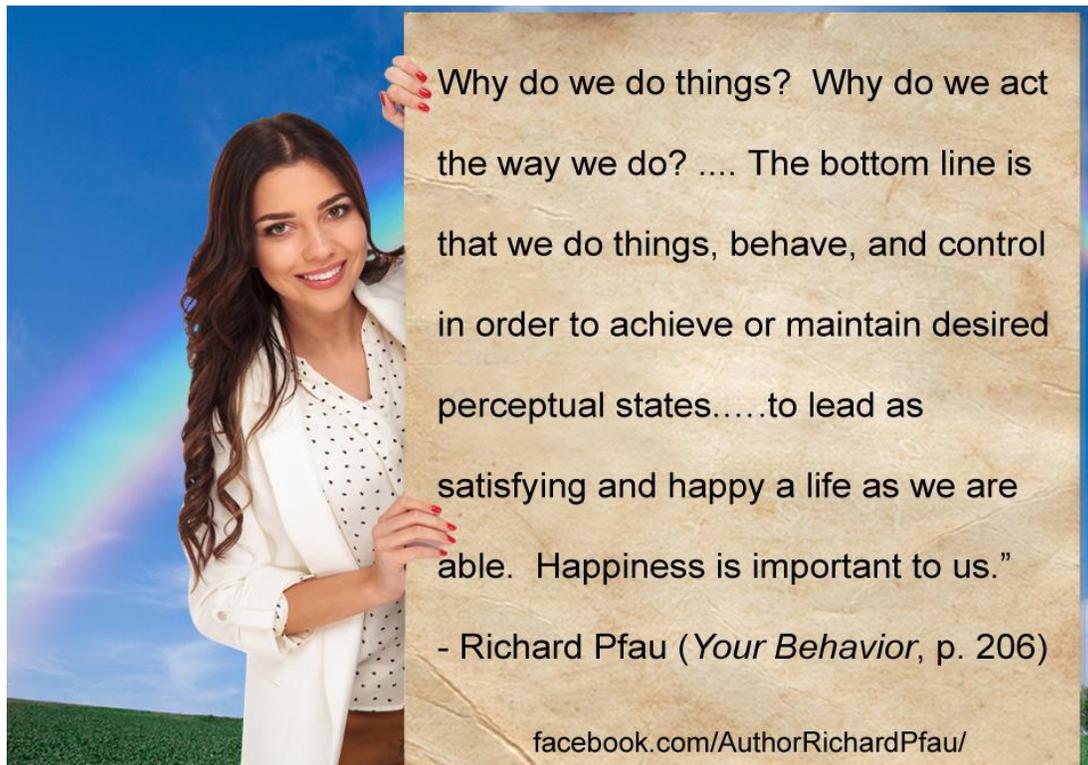
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## Concepts Central to PCT are Shared, but PCT is Not Mentioned

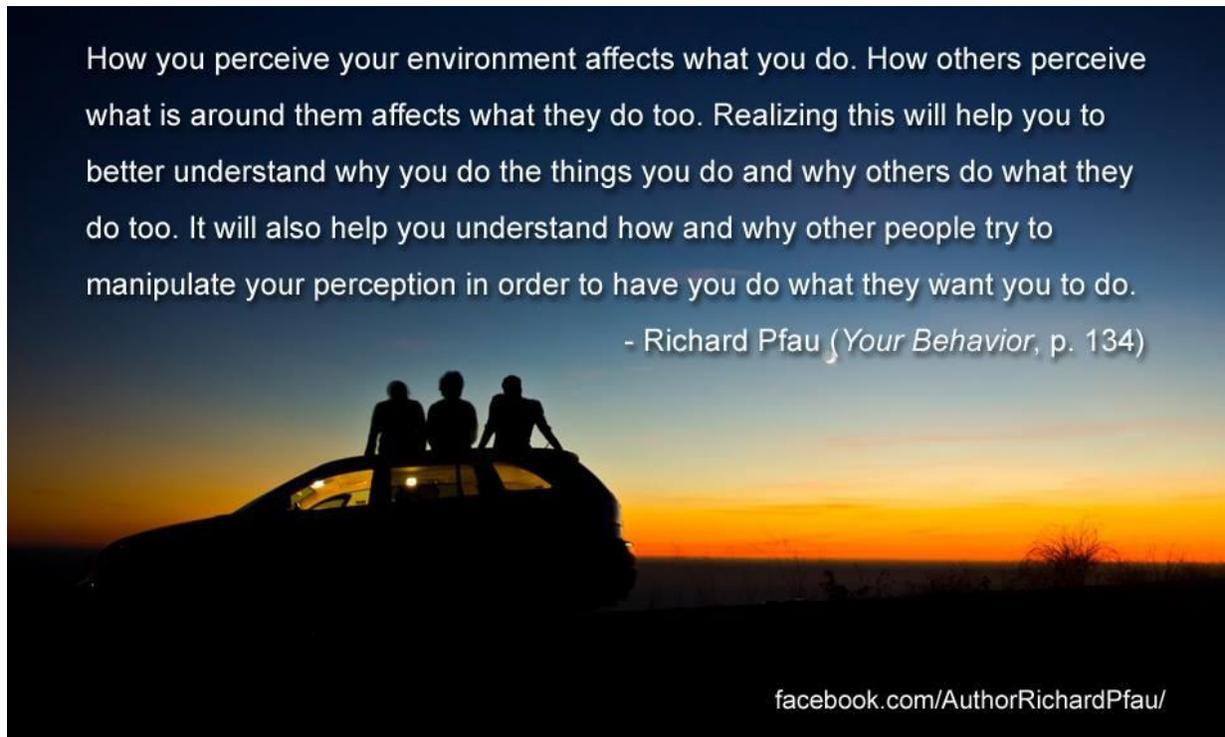
The following posts introduce viewers to concepts central to PCT. The first focuses on the control of perception. It was quite popular (i.e., it had many “engagements”).<sup>ii</sup>



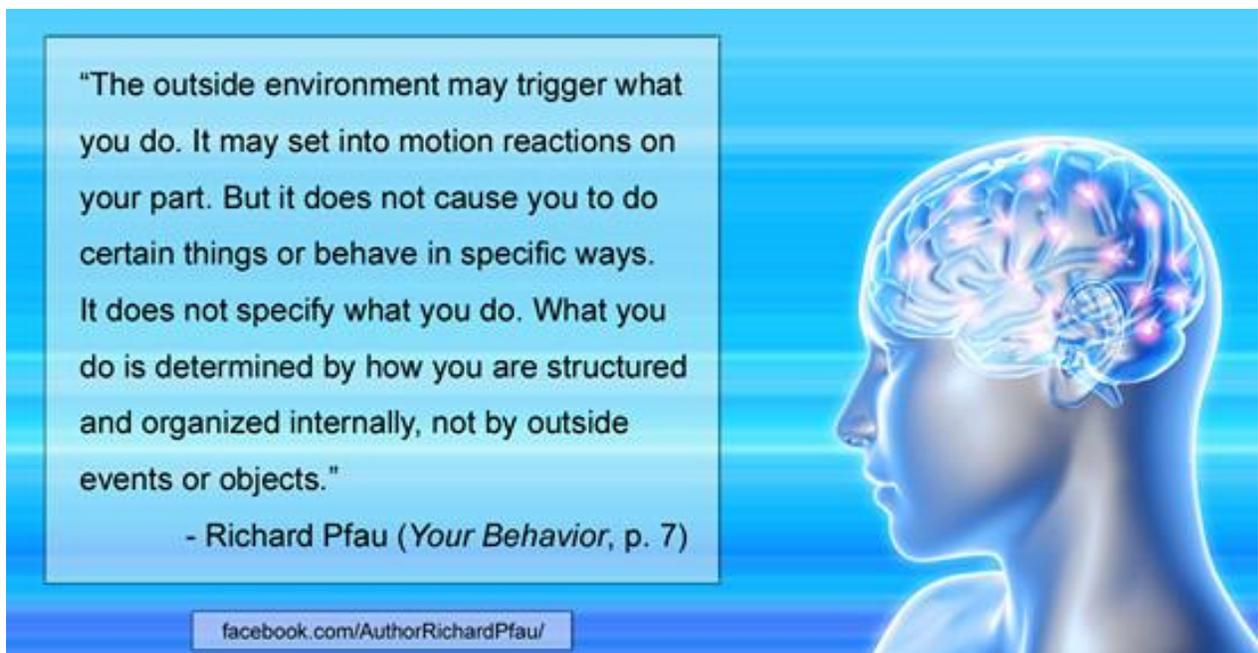
The following post also focus on controlling or maintaining perception.



This one too deals with one's own perception as well as understanding why other people do what they do, including their attempts to manipulate "you" (the viewer).



The importance of one's internal organization and structure (as conceptualized by the concept of autopoiesis and PCT) is introduced by this post.



The example shown below is aimed at encouraging viewers to actively respond to the ideas presented. As with all Facebook posts, space was provided under this one for “Comments” from viewers along with the option for me to “Reply” to comments made – something that I often did.



### **A Question: Can we control what other people do?**

Highlight 6.10 (pg. 114) of my book "Your Behavior" states, "It appears that while people can influence one another, they cannot really control what someone else does—at least without producing conflict. This is because what someone does is controlled by their internal structure and organization, not by their outside environment...."

Similarly, according to William Powers: "People control their own experiences. The only way you can truly force them to behave as you wish is through the threat or actuality of overwhelmingly superior physical force...."

And E. Ford writes: "You can't really change another person, only yourself."

**What do you think?**

**Can we control what other people do or only influence their actions?**

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The approach on the previous page represents a “Call-to-Action”. Such a call can help you connect better with people. The first line is aimed at catching viewers’ attention so that they feel compelled to read onwards to the end. At that point they are encouraged to do what you ask in your call to action.<sup>iii</sup> In addition to providing space for comments, other options provided by Facebook to encourage action by viewers of Ads include adding a Button labelled “Learn More”, “Shop Now”, “Apply Now”, “Contact Us”, “Download”, or “See Menu”. If used, viewers who click on the button are then taken to a relevant URL address that you would provide.

## Other General Posts from *Your Behavior*

In addition to posts that mention PCT or present ideas central to PCT, the business page contains other quotations and Highlights from *Your Behavior*. For example, here is a popular one – i.e., popular in the sense that it was widely viewed, shared, and commented upon by viewers.

When Changing Behavior, Prepare to Deal with Slips, Errors, and Lapses



If you are trying to change anything but a simple behavior, you may have setbacks and make mistakes. The way to respond is to use them as learning opportunities. Think about why the relapse or mistake occurred, learn from the experience, and try to avoid doing it again. One good if-then plan that you should have is that “if” I have a lapse, “then” I will try to learn from what happened and continue striving toward my goal. - Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, pp. 270-271)

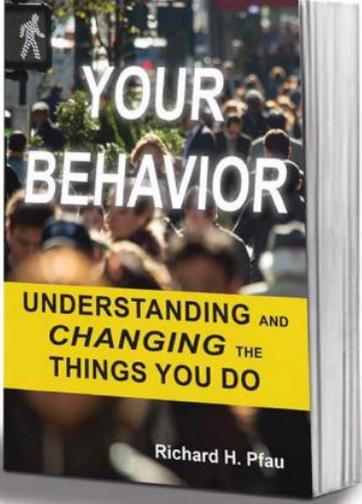
[facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/](https://facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/)

## Direct Advertising of *Your Behavior*

Business page users can also pay for advertisements. Here's one that I prepared with the help of the Digital Designer who I nearly always use when preparing something to post.

“You are naturally structured and organized to sense, learn, and deal with your environment in ways that help you to survive. *You are a survivor!* How you are structured and organized to help you survive is one of the themes of this book.”  
- Richard Pfau (*Your Behavior*, p. 6)

facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/



Since this was an Ad, I included a “Learn More” button below it that was linked to the book at Amazon.com (i.e., at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1557789274>).

## The Process of Preparing Posts and Advertisements

Each month, I usually post two quotations with images and one Highlight from the book. Sometimes other posts are made of possible interest to Followers and other viewers. Preparation of posts that have images go through the following process.

### Step 1: Choice of a quotation or theme

To start, I usually go through *Your Behavior* to find a quote or idea to use.

### Step 2: Choice of an image to use

Then, I use iStock to choose a suitable photo. Going to [www.iStockphoto.com](http://www.iStockphoto.com), I search for images under the lowest cost “Essentials” category using one or more key words from the quote or idea. Often, I will also include a keyword in the search such as “copy space” and/or “white background” to find images having suitable space and backgrounds on which to place the quote. I choose 3 or 4 apparently suitable images and send them and the quotation or other text chosen to the Digital Designer to obtain his opinion about which image is the most suitable. Sometimes, if the Designer thinks that none are appropriate, he will find and suggest other images to use.

### **Step 3: Obtain the image**

The image finally chosen is then ordered from iStock. Images selected from iStock's "Essentials" category cost \$12.00 USD plus tax. After downloading and saving the image, I send a copy of it to the online specialist.

### **Step 3: The Digital Designer drafts a posting**

The Designer then prepares a draft of the quotation and image together and sends it to me. Sometimes he prepares two or three possibilities. I choose one, check the text for accuracy, and let him know of any corrections to be made.

### **Step 4: Post on the business page.**

After final agreement of the layout and accuracy of the text, I ask the Designer to post the final product to the business page.

### **Step 5: Boost or advertise the post (an optional step)**

Posting an item to the business page does not cost anything. However, it is seen by only a small percentage of Followers that Facebook sends it to and by other people who visit the site. To ensure that all of the page's followers see it, I have been boosting posts for a fee. Typically, I will boost a post to followers and their friends for 4 days at a cost of \$3.00 USD per day. Besides followers and their friends, Facebook provides other options for targeting recipients based on their interests, geographic location, and the total budget to be spent.

A similar step-by-step process holds for preparing traditional advertisements for use on Facebook.

## **Feedback from Facebook**

Facebook provides feedback about the results of posts that are boosted (which they call Ads).

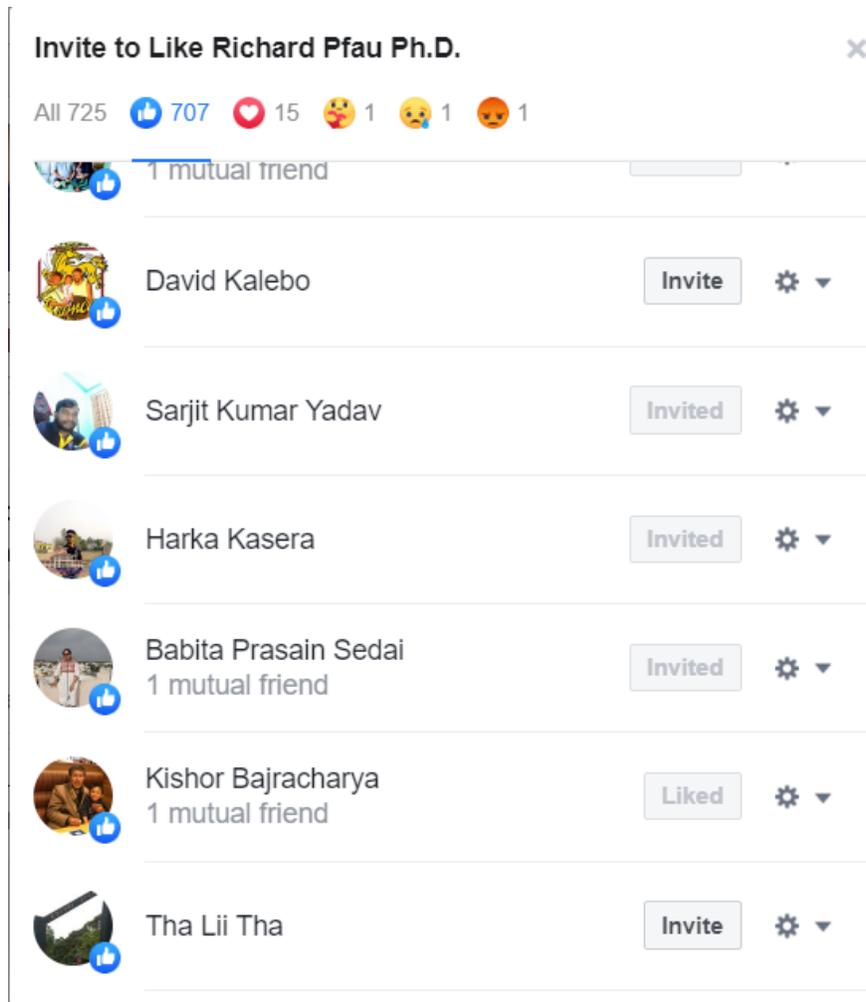
For example, one of the more successful posts boosted so far (i.e., the "crooked picture" drawing shown earlier on page 6 of this paper), had the following feedback:

- Reach: 85,024 people
- Post Engagement: 20,101 (this shows how many actions were taken by viewers)
- Cost per Post Engagement: \$0.002USD (out of a total of \$40.00USD spent)
- Link Clicks: 142 (these took viewers to my website richardpfau.com)
- Photo clicks: 9,791 (these took viewers to the business page)
- Comments: 7 (i.e., written responses by viewers of the post)
- Shares: 24 (when viewers shared the post with their online contacts).

## Followers

The business page has over 1,700 followers. Followers are people who routinely see business page postings but who are not directly linked to my personal Facebook page as friends.

Any viewer who sees a posting has the option to indicate whether they “Like” or “Love” what they see. As shown below, Facebook indicates the names of those who click on “Like”, “Love”, or another category, and provides an option to **invite** those who respond to become followers.



When the business page was set up during 2017, it had no followers. So, I paid money and boosted my postings to reach people and to obtain “Like” and “Love” responses from them. At first those targeted were people in the USA, Canada, and the U.K. who had an interest in psychology, human behavior, and changing their behavior. I invited those who clicked “Love” to be a follower. Many accepted and the number of followers grew over time. Now-a-days, I invite all those who click either “Like” or “Love” on a posting to become a follower if they are not one already, and I sometimes target a worldwide distribution.

## Responding to Viewer Comments

Some viewers provide written reactions to a post. I often respond by liking what they have written, by providing more information including relevant PCT-related ideas, and sometimes by mentioning the book *Your Behavior* as an additional source of information. Comments not relevant to the post or otherwise inappropriate are “hidden” by me and are not viewable by others. Hiding inappropriate comments is an optional feature of Facebook, rarely used.

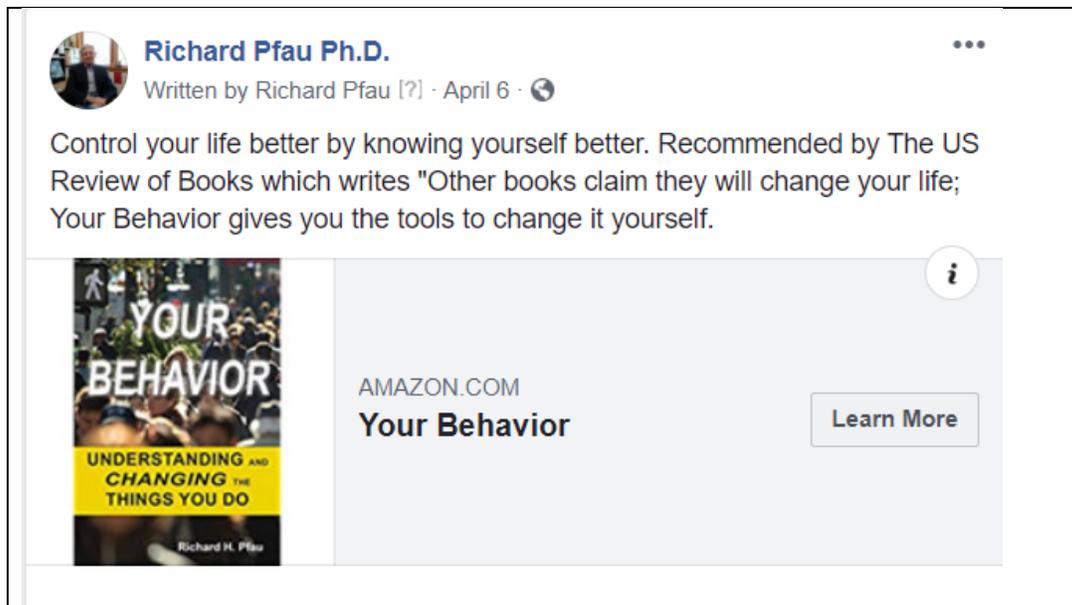
## Costs

Costs of setting up the business page were several hundred dollars, paid to the Digital Designer that I use. I also pay the Designer a fee each month to help me prepare and post quotations and Highlights.

Images from iStock, a good source of photos, usually cost \$12.00 USD plus tax. These are chosen by searching iStock’s images in their lowest cost “Essential” category.

When a posting is made, Facebook automatically provides it to a small percentage of followers. To ensure that nearly all followers see a post, I usually “boost” it for 4 days at \$3.00 USD a day. Posting are also sometime sent to other special target groups that may have an interest -- for example, to friends of followers, or to people identified by Facebook who have an interest in understanding behavior, changing behavior, psychology, religion, or management.

I also have one advertisement of the *Your Behavior* book running on Facebook for a cost of \$1.00 per day. You can see it below A click on the link labeled “Learn More” takes viewers to an Amazon.com site at which the book can be bought (i.e., at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1557789274>).



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post. At the top left is a circular profile picture of Richard Pfau. To its right is the name "Richard Pfau Ph.D." in blue. Below the name is the text "Written by Richard Pfau [?] · April 6 · 🌐". The main text of the post reads: "Control your life better by knowing yourself better. Recommended by The US Review of Books which writes 'Other books claim they will change your life; Your Behavior gives you the tools to change it yourself.'" Below the text is a large advertisement for the book "Your Behavior". The ad features a book cover on the left with the title "YOUR BEHAVIOR" in large white letters on a dark background, and a yellow banner at the bottom that says "UNDERSTANDING AND CHANGING THE THINGS YOU DO" with "Richard H. Pfau" at the very bottom. To the right of the book cover, the text "AMAZON.COM" is displayed above "Your Behavior" in a bold, dark font. A "Learn More" button is located to the right of the book title. A small information icon (i) is in the top right corner of the ad area.

Such boosting and advertisements result in modest sales of *Your Behavior*. Importantly, however, they continue to spread the word about PCT and its ideas to a broad audience within the USA and other countries around the world.

## Conclusion

One way to spread the word about PCT is by using Facebook. This paper illustrates a “soft” approach for doing so – “soft” in the sense that it is somewhat informal rather than presented in a typically academic, “hard science” manner.<sup>iv</sup>

If you are interested in setting up a Facebook business page or website to possibly promote PCT including publications or papers related to PCT, and feel that you don’t have the expertise or time to do so, you might use a specialist to help you, as I did. If you have trouble finding someone to help, feel free to contact me and I’ll provide contact information for the Digital Designer that I use.

Finally, to help promote PCT and its key concepts, you are free to use any of the posts contained in this paper or on my Facebook business page (i.e., at [Facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/](https://www.facebook.com/AuthorRichardPfau/)). Also, if you have any questions about this paper and my experience with Facebook, don’t hesitate to contact me at [richardhpfau@gmail.com/](mailto:richardhpfau@gmail.com/).

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Fred Nickols has a website at <https://nickols.us/> that deals extensively with the application of PCT to management, training, and human performance practices.

<sup>ii</sup> “Engagements” refer to actions taken by viewers such as indicating likes, making comments, sharing the post, clicks leading to my business page, and clicks on a Learn More button that led to the *Your Behavior* book on Amazon.com.

<sup>iii</sup> Looking now at this post, I realize that I could have been more explicit in asking for action by adding some words at the end such as “Feel free to share your thoughts below.”

<sup>iv</sup> Warren Mansell uses another approach on Twitter (at <https://twitter.com/iapct>) that you may want to look at if you are not already familiar with it. I’ve found a number of useful publications, papers, and ideas by going to this Twitter site.

RHP: Finalized 7 October 2020