



# Neurosociology: The Nexus Between Neuroscience and Social Psychology

*David Franks*

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## **Neurosociology: The Nexus Between Neuroscience and Social Psychology** David Franks

As a career sociologist I first became interested in neurosociology around 1987 when a graduate student lent me Michael Gazzaniga's *The Social Brain*. If the biological human brain was really social, I thought sociologists and their students should be the first, not the last, to know. As I read on I found little of the clumsy reductionism of the earlier biosociologists whom I had learned to see as the arch-enemy of our field. Clearly, reductionism does exist among many neuroscientists. But I also found some things that were very social and quite relevant for sociology. After reading *Descartes' Error* by Antonio Damasio, I learned how some types of emotion were necessary for rational thought – a very radical innovation for the long-honored “objective rationalist.” I started inserting some things about split-brain research into my classes, mispronouncing terms like amygdala and being corrected by my students. That instruction helped me realize how much we professors needed to catch up with our students. I also wrote a review of Leslie Brothers' *Fridays Footprint: How Society Shapes the Human Mind*. I thought if she could write so well about social processes maybe I could attempt to do something similar in connection with my field. For several years I found her an e-mail partner with a wonderful sense of humor. She even retrieved copies of her book for the use of my graduate students when I had assigned it for a seminar.

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