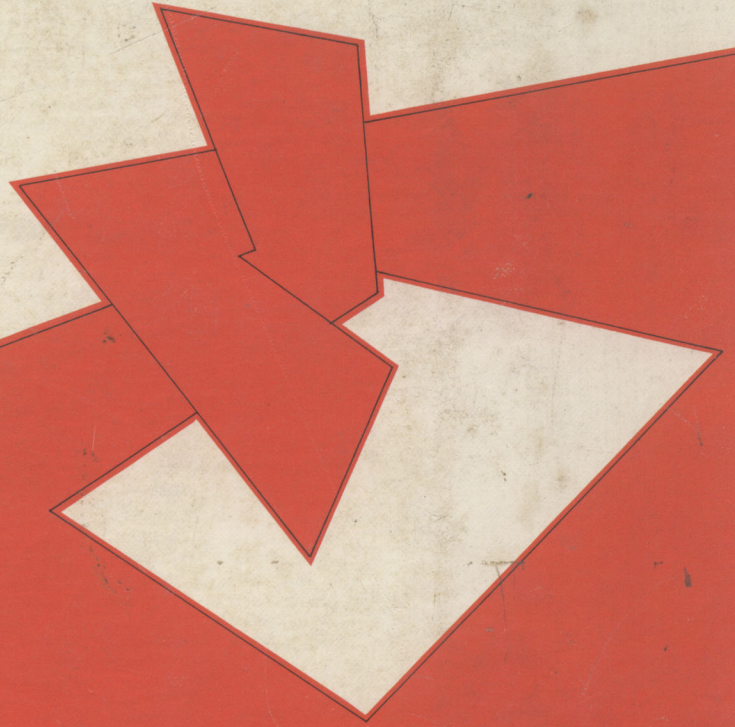


**ROBERT A. BARON ■ DONN BYRNE ■ WILLIAM GRIFFITT**



# **SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

**understanding human interaction**

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# **SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

**interaction**

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**To**

**Jessica**

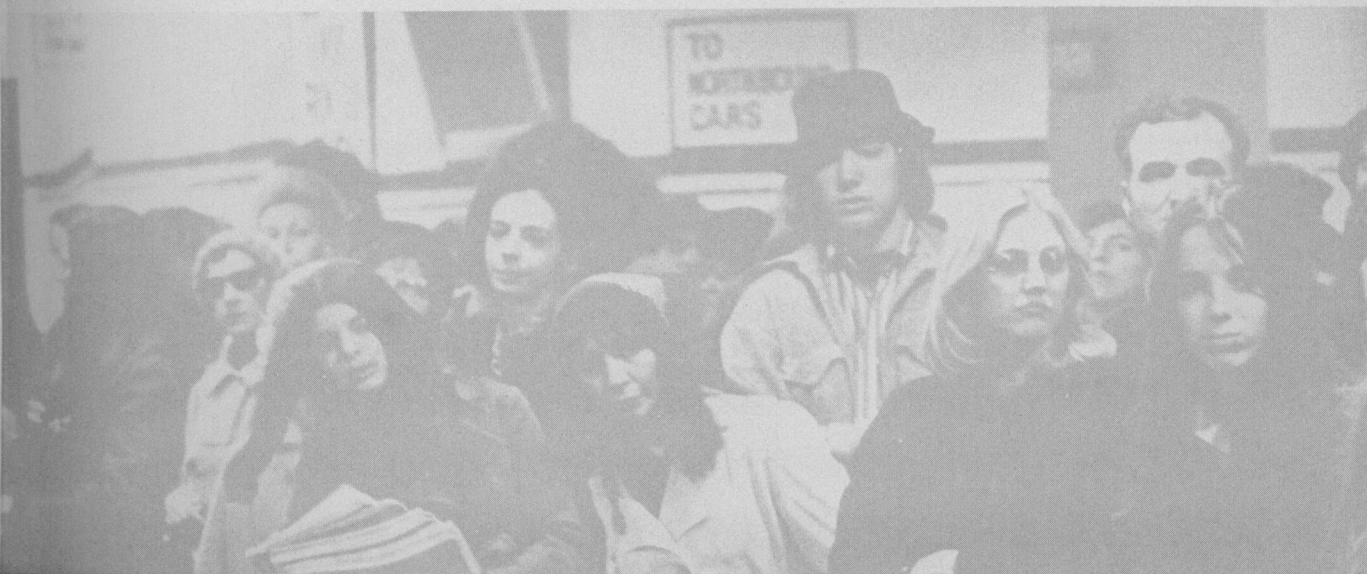
**Keven**

**Robin**

**Cary**

**and**

**Douglas**





# Preface

Social psychology is, by its very nature, an exciting and fascinating area. After all, how could a field which seeks to examine such topics as love, hate, altruism, compliance, leadership, prejudice, and persuasion by anything *but* intriguing? Despite this obvious fact, our collective experience in teaching the course suggests that, somehow, this intrinsic stimulation and appeal has been lacking from many of the texts we have adopted. Indeed, the most common complaint voiced by the students in our classes over the years has been that the volumes we chose for them to read were anything but interesting or lively; in fact, judging from their irate comments, quite the opposite was often true.

In writing the present text, therefore, we have made a conscious and concerted effort to break down the barriers of communication which seem to have prevented professional social psychologists from transmitting the fascination and value of their field to undergraduate students. More specifically, we have attempted to produce a volume which is truly reflective of the appeal we believe to be intrinsic to the discipline. In order to accomplish this formidable task, we have adopted four distinct strategies which, we hope, have carried us far in the direction we wished to go.

First, we have attempted to write the most comprehensive and inclusive book possible. As a result, the present volume contains full treatment of: (1) topics which have traditionally been of major interest to social psychologists and which continue to receive considerable attention at present (e.g., attitude formation and change, social influence, and group processes); (2) topics which have long been central to the field but which have recently experienced a marked increase in research interest (e.g., aggression, attraction, person perception, and social exchange); and (3) topics which have only recently become the focus of social psychological inquiry (e.g., prosocial behavior, modeling processes, sexual activity, and the influence of environmental factors). It is our firm belief that such broad, comprehensive coverage is required if students are to gain an accurate and undistorted view of the scope of social psychology in the 1970's.

Second, we have consciously chosen to emphasize recent work and findings rather than earlier, "classic" material. This is a reflection of our belief that an introductory course in social psychology should acquaint students with the current interests and emphases of the field, rather than simply with its past origins and development, and also our strong subjective impression that the growth of social psychology has been such that topics of recent interest and concern are much more likely to appeal to undergraduate readers than those examined in the more distant past.

Third, we have decided to select materials for inclusion in the volume on the basis of two distinct criteria: (1) scientific merit and importance; and (2) what our actual teaching experience suggested would be both appealing and intelligible to undergraduate readers. We felt that in this manner, we could produce a book that would be sound in terms of scholarship, accuracy, and breadth, but also interesting and comprehensible to students.

Finally, we have made a consistent effort, throughout the text, to relate the materials covered to social behavior and relationships occurring outside the laboratory and, wherever possible, to the solution of pressing societal problems.

We hope that by following these general guidelines, we have written a book that meets the needs of instructors for an accurate, substantive volume upon which to base a solid introductory course and also the needs of students for a text that they can read without persistent feelings of boredom, irritation, or despair. Of course, only the reactions of our colleagues and students will reveal whether we have actually succeeded in this undertaking. Nevertheless, given the vast wealth of fascinating material available for our use (i.e., the findings of modern social psychology), the extensive help and guidance we received from our students and colleagues, and our strong personal convictions concerning the intrinsic worth of social psychology, we are mildly optimistic that we have, at least, moved in the right direction.

In producing this volume, we have been aided immeasurably by a large number of friends and colleagues who gave generously of their time, effort, and knowledge. Although it would clearly be impossible to name them all here, special thanks must be offered to Rick Allgeier, Andrew Barclay, Dale Baskett, Steve Baumgartner, Rick Crandall, Carolyn Crandall, Kay Deaux, Bibb Latané, George Levinger, James May, David McMillen, Bernard Murstein, Joel Savell, Stu Taylor, Russell Veitch, and Paul Wright for their exceptionally helpful comments and suggestions. In addition, sincere appreciation must be expressed to Kathy Goodpaster, Wanda Newmeyer, Lorna Stewart, Marianne Stoecker, Carolyn Tessendorf, and Marilyn Whitaker for their assistance in preparing the manuscript and to our respective families for their forbearance and understanding during the many difficult months when the complex task of transforming our thoughts and ideas into a finished product occupied such a large share of our time and energies.

Robert A. Baron  
Donn Byrne  
William Griffitt



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# 1

## **Social Psychology: An Introduction**

What is the nature of love? Of hate? Why do some individuals become leaders and others followers? What are the causes of kindness and compassion? Of cruelty and violence? What are the bases of power? Obedience? Cooperation? Questions such as these have captured the imagination of thoughtful individuals down through the ages. As a result, we are the possessors today of a vast amount of opinion, speculation, and informal “knowledge” concerning the nature of human social interaction. In many cases, this information appears to be both accurate and insightful. For example, such statements as “Misery loves company,” “Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter,” and “Revenge is sweet” seem to capture important truths about human social relations, and we shall have reason to meet them again in later sections of this volume.

In many other cases, however, the information provided by “common knowledge” or “the wisdom of the ages” appears to be inaccurate, inconsistent, and even contradictory. For example, it is often contended that bonds of affection are strengthened by prolonged separation (“Absence makes the heart grow fonder”), while at the same time, it is suggested that they are actually *weakened* by such conditions (“Out of sight, out of mind”). Similarly, it has long been assumed that increasing the magnitude of punishment associated with illegal acts will serve to reduce the frequency of their occurrence, when in fact it appears that few criminals are ever deterred from such activities by the threat of even severe legal penalties. In short, it seems unwise to accept “common sense” and “common knowledge” as infallible guides to the understanding of complex social behavior.



How, then, are the bases of human interaction ever to be understood? And how, if “common sense” so often fails us, are we ever to fully decipher the complex nature of man’s social relations with his fellow human beings? One answer to these difficult and perplexing questions has been suggested, in recent years, by the rapidly expanding discipline of social psychology. According to the basic assumptions of this field, the best means of obtaining comprehensive, accurate, and definitive information regarding social behavior is that of adapting the methods of empirical science to the investigation of this fascinating topic. Within the context of such an approach, then, casual inspection of human interaction is replaced by careful and systematic observation, while elegant but often unfounded speculation is supplanted by orderly and precise experimentation. The desired result of such procedures is, of course, the substitution of reliable scientific evidence for unverified and often erroneous “common knowledge.”

From the perspective of the 1970’s, when the major problems confronting the human race are primarily social in nature (e.g., the threat of global warfare; overpopulation; pollution of the environment; political turmoil; racial, religious, and ethnic prejudice), the emergence of a scientific discipline of social psychology seems extremely timely. Indeed, it appears safe to assert that continued reliance upon unsubstantiated “common sense” as the only guide to our relations with others will lead to truly disastrous consequences in the years ahead.

But what have social psychologists learned about the nature of human interaction? And how may this knowledge be applied to the alleviation of significant social problems? It is with these important questions that the remainder of the present volume is concerned. Before turning to a consideration of these issues, however, it seems necessary to complete several preliminary tasks that will serve to introduce the reader to the methods, scope, and orientation of modern social psychology. In the present chapter, then, we will begin with a formal definition of the field, turn next to a brief description of its history and development, and finally conclude with an examination of its basic methods and procedures.

### **Social psychology: a definition**

Although social psychology has existed as an independent field of study for little more than fifty years, a surprisingly large number of definitions of its proper scope and contents have already been suggested. Indeed, at one point in the not-too-distant past, it seemed as if the number of contrasting definitions would soon come to equal or even surpass the number of researchers in the area! Fortunately, a recent “population explosion” in the number of social psychologists has rescued the field from this cruel fate. Yet the number of opposing definitions remains very large, and, for this reason, the present authors are somewhat reluctant to offer still another formulation of their own. Despite this collective hesitancy, however, they are strongly convinced that none of the existing definitions fully captures the major thrust and emphasis of the field

as it has developed in recent years. As a result, they feel compelled to risk the wrath and irritation of students and colleagues alike by providing one additional definition in the present volume. For purposes of this text, then, the field of social psychology will be defined as *that branch of modern psychology which seeks to investigate the manner in which the behavior, feelings, and thoughts (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, or opinions) of one individual are influenced and determined by the behavior and/or characteristics of others*. Perhaps some clarifying comments regarding the most important aspects and implications of this definition will now prove useful.

That our behavior, feelings, and thoughts are often strongly influenced by the actions of others is readily apparent. For example, imagine the reactions of a lovesick young man when the object of his passion looks deeply into his eyes and murmurs for the first time, "Darling, I love you." Or, in a markedly different context, imagine the reactions of a student who watches, with sinking heart, as a professor makes little red marks all over a make-up examination he or she has just completed. Finally, consider the responses of a driver who is cut off by another motorist. Clearly, in such cases, the behavior, emotions, and thoughts of the individuals involved are markedly influenced by the overt actions of others. It seems reasonable, then, to make the investigation of such effects one of the central tasks of social psychology.

It is also clear, however, that our behavior, feelings, and thoughts are strongly affected by certain characteristics of other individuals, quite apart from their overt actions. For example, imagine the reactions of a racial bigot (e.g., Archie Bunker) upon seeing his new next-door neighbor for the first time, and noting that he is black. Similarly, consider the fact that both men and women react differently to an attractive member of the opposite sex than to a member of their own gender. Clearly, then, we are often strongly affected by such characteristics of others as their skin color, sex, age, and physical beauty (see cartoon). Indeed, our reactions to others may be strongly affected even by such seemingly insignificant characteristics as their last names, especially when they are clearly identifiable as to ethnic origin. Thus, it is apparent that the investigation of such effects also belongs within the scope of an empirical science of social psychology.

Throughout the remainder of this volume, then, we shall be concerned with attempts by social psychologists to examine the social determinants of individual behavior. As we shall soon see, their efforts in this respect have led to the acquisition of a great deal of fascinating new information regarding virtually every imaginable aspect of human interaction. But how did social psychology emerge as a viable, independent field? And how has it grown and developed since its appearance? It is to these questions that we turn next.

### Social psychology: an abbreviated history

As has already been observed, speculation concerning human social behavior is as old as recorded history, and probably preceded even the development of





*"Miss Walters, I'd like you to know I did not select you as my secretary from the data-processing cards."*

An amusing illustration of the fact that we are often strongly influenced by the physical characteristics, as well as the behavior, of others. (Drawing by Whitney Darrow, Jr.; © 1971 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.)

written language. As a result, any attempt to present a complete or comprehensive treatment of the historical antecedents of modern social psychology would quickly exceed both the scope of the present volume and the interest of most of its readers. The following discussion, therefore, will touch only briefly on the intellectual roots of social psychology within philosophy and natural science, and concentrate instead upon its emergence and development during the years of the twentieth century.

### *The roots of social psychology*

Philosophers have long expressed a keen interest in the nature and origins of human social behavior. Indeed, even those two giants of ancient thought, Plato and Aristotle, directed a considerable amount of attention to many aspects of social interaction. However, it appears that philosophical speculation concerning the bases of social behavior reached a peak during the years of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, perhaps as a result of the rapid and profound social changes occurring during that period. Although such speculation took many forms, a considerable portion was channeled into the development of what have come to be called "simple and sovereign theories" of the social nature of man (Allport, 1968). Basically, each of these theories focused upon a single fundamental principle whose proponents believed it to lie at the root of all social

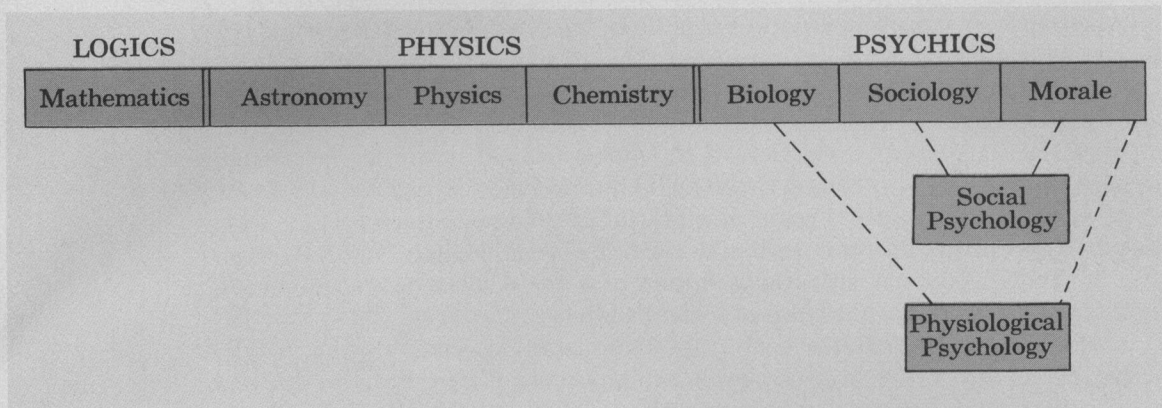
interaction. For example, several noted philosophers (e.g., Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer) suggested that all social behavior is based upon the desire of human beings to obtain pleasure and avoid pain, a position generally known as *hedonism*. Similarly, others (e.g., Nietzsche, Le Dantec) held that all social actions are directed toward the attainment of power, a view usually labeled *egoism*. That all these theories did not adopt such highly discouraging views is suggested by a third position which indicated that human social interaction is based primarily upon love and affection for others (i.e., *sympathy*).

Today (perhaps with the exception of a modified version of hedonism), such unitary theories of the bases of social behavior are rarely encountered, since it is widely recognized that human interaction is far too complex and intricate to permit us the luxury of such simple explanations. These theories did, however, help to "set the stage" for the emergence of an independent field of social psychology in two important ways. First, they focused the attention of many eminent scholars on the task of describing and explaining the nature of social interaction, and thus created a strong tradition of rational inquiry concerning this important topic. Second, they implied that social behavior, like other natural phenomena, is lawful and predictable rather than random or haphazard. As a result, although they were far too simple in scope and orientation to be very useful in explaining the complex and tangled web of human social affairs, such unitary theories did help to create conditions favoring the development of an independent field of social psychology.

At the same time that philosophers were directing increased attention to the bases of human social behavior, many of the natural sciences were undergoing a period of extremely rapid growth and progress (see Boring, 1950). Apparently, the swiftness of these advances suggested to a few intrepid individuals (e.g., Hermann Ebbinghaus, Wilhelm Wundt) the idea that similar rapid strides might also be made in the realm of human behavior by extending the empirical methods of science to the investigation of this fascinating topic. The implementation of this idea, of course, led to the emergence of the field of psychology during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The initial successes and accomplishments of this field, in turn, convinced still other investigators of the value of extending similar methods to the study of social activities, and an independent discipline of social psychology soon arose.

Obviously, the pattern of developments outlined above has been greatly simplified for purposes of the present brief discussion. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the development of a field in which the empirical methods of science are applied to the systematic investigation of social behavior was far from accidental. Rather, it followed in an orderly and logical manner from earlier trends and events. Indeed, so reasonable was this course of development that it was actually predicted in some detail several decades prior to its occurrence by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857).

Briefly, Comte reasoned, during the early years of the nineteenth century, that the fields of biology and sociology would soon be combined in a new science he termed "la morale." This field would focus upon the individual, studying those factors that influence his unique patterns of behavior and thought. Essentially, then, it would be very close in general orientation to the



**FIGURE 1-1.** Comte's views regarding the place of "morale" among the existing sciences, and its combination with sociology and biology to produce social and physiological psychology. (Adapted from Allport, 1968.)

field of psychology. He then went on to predict that on some occasions, "la morale" would lean more heavily upon its foundations in biology, seeking to examine the biological determinants of individual actions. In such cases, it would, of course, closely resemble the modern field of physiological psychology. On other occasions, however, it would tend to lean more heavily upon its foundations in sociology, seeking to examine the impact of various social factors upon the individual. Under these circumstances, it would come remarkably close to the conception of social psychology adopted in the present text. Figure 1-1 presents a graphic summary of Comte's views regarding the place of "la morale" among the existing sciences, and the manner in which, together with biology and sociology, it would lead to the modern fields of physiological and social psychology. Unfortunately, this ingenious and creative thinker died before he was able to complete the task of outlining the central characteristics of these new fields. It is interesting to speculate whether, had he lived to complete and publicize his work, the emergence of social psychology would have been hastened by several decades. Unfortunately, however, this is one of those intriguing possibilities we shall never be able to examine.

### ***Social psychology emerges: the early years***

Because no one arose to loudly proclaim the founding of social psychology, and because no ribbon-cutting ceremonies were held to mark the specific moment of its birth, it is extremely difficult to choose a single date for the formal launching of this field. Since, however, the existence of textbooks in a particular discipline is a sign that it has become accepted as a reasonable field of study, the publication of the first books bearing the title *Social Psychology* may be taken as a convenient marker for this event. The first two books meeting this



criterion were published in the year 1908 by William McDougall, a psychologist, and E. A. Ross, a sociologist. Clearly, then, the joint roots of social psychology in sociology and psychology, predicted many years earlier by Comte, were in evidence at its emergence.

Although Ross's book was concerned with topics that appear closer in scope to those of modern social psychology (e.g., crowd behavior, social influence processes), McDougall's volume exerted a much greater impact upon the field. In view of some of the unusual positions he adopted, this is somewhat surprising, but perhaps it was the controversial nature of his views that was responsible for the great attention they received.

Basically, McDougall adopted a "nativistic" approach to the study of social behavior. That is, he held that such behavior is primarily determined by a group of instinctive tendencies which he described as the "essential springs or motive powers of all thought and action." Some of the major instincts listed by McDougall, along with the associated emotional states he believed they induced, are presented in Table 1-1.

McDougall's suggestions regarding the central role of instincts in the determination of human social behavior received a mixed reception from his colleagues. Although John Dewey stated in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1917 that the science of social psychology must be founded upon a doctrine of instincts, others quickly denounced this suggestion (e.g., Dunlap, 1919). Indeed, criticism of McDougall's views became so intense that by 1932, he himself backtracked, substituting the term "propensity" for the word "instinct."

In the years following the publication of McDougall's book, social psychologists did more than simply argue the existence and role of instincts in social

INSTINCT	<i>Associated Emotional State</i>
Flight	Fear
Repulsion	Disgust
Curiosity	Wonder
Pugnacity	Anger
Self-abasement	Subjection
Self-assertion	Elation
Parental	Tenderness

**TABLE 1-1.** The major instincts and their associated emotional states. (Based on a list proposed by McDougall, 1908.)

behavior. In particular, they began to conduct empirical investigations of various social phenomena. Thus, by the year 1924, when Floyd H. Allport published another influential text entitled *Social Psychology*, he was able to include reports of actual research concerning such interesting topics as the ability of individuals to “read” and react to various facial expressions in others, social facilitation (the effects of the presence of others on individual behavior), and conformity. For example, under the first heading, Allport presented a description of work conducted by H. S. Langfeld in which subjects were asked to examine a series of photographs of a professional actor and identify the emotions he attempted to demonstrate (see also Chapter 9). Results indicated that laughter could be identified most readily, followed by amazement, pain, fear, disgust, doubt, and finally anger.

Allport's text is also of considerable historical interest because of its strong opposition to the suggestion that organized groups or social institutions possess a “collective mind” or “group consciousness” separate from the minds of their individual members. Allport argued persuasively against such a view by noting that in the end, there is no consciousness but that of the individual. In his own words (1924, p. 4):

There is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals. Social psychology must not be placed in contradistinction to the psychology of the individual; *it is a part of the psychology of the individual*, whose behavior it studies in relation to that sector of the environment comprised by his fellows. There is likewise no consciousness except that belonging to individuals. Psychology in all its branches is a science of the individual. To extend its principles to larger units is to destroy their meaning.

Writing in the early 1920's, then, Allport adopted an essentially modern orientation toward this problem. Moreover, it is clear that he defined the field of social psychology as that branch of psychology concerned with the study of social influences on individual behavior. In this respect, he was remarkably close in outlook to the general orientation of the field at the present time.

The 1920's and 1930's, which may be viewed as the decades when social psychology became fully established and organized, were also marked by the significant pioneering work of Muzafer Sherif and Kurt Lewin. Sherif (1935) began the investigation of social norms—generalized rules of conduct which tell us how we *should* or *ought* to behave—while Lewin (1939) and his associates initiated the study of complex group processes with their ingenious investigations of the impact of various leadership styles on the behavior of children. By the end of the 1930's, therefore, social psychology was clearly a “going concern.” New and interesting topics were continually being brought under observation, and empirical methods of investigating these phenomena were developing rapidly. It only remains in this brief historical survey, then, for us to summarize the course of developments within the field during the past three decades.