

FOURTH EDITION

JAMES W. VANDER ZANDEN

# SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY



# *To my parents*

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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Fourth Edition

78910 HDHD 998765432

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## **Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Vander Zanden, James Wilfrid.

Social psychology.

Bibliography

Includes index.

1. Social psychology. I. Title.

HM251.V293 1987 302 86-3276

ISBN 0-07-553945-4

Manufactured in the United States of America

Text design: Glen Edelstein

Cover design: Celine Brandis

Line art: Vantage Art, Inc.

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# Preface

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Preparing this new edition of *Social Psychology* has been a happy experience. I deem myself fortunate to be able to spend my working days studying, teaching, and writing about matters that I would otherwise pursue as a hobby. Indeed, what can be more intrinsically fascinating than a discipline that so immediately touches the human condition as does social psychology? It allows us to examine and understand human behavior—to learn what makes us tick. But even more, the insights we gain from social psychology are applicable as we go about our daily activities. With this knowledge, we can lead fuller, richer, and more fruitful lives. And more broadly, we have the opportunity to improve the human condition.

As I noted in the preface to the previous edition, I owe a personal debt to social psychology. My wife died some fifteen years ago, and in the intervening years my sons have grown into young manhood integrated into my work and the whole undertaking we know as social psychology. Although both sons are now in graduate-degree programs in computer science, they remark how valuable they continually find the insights they have gained from the discipline. They believe that it has broadened their horizons, increased their options in life, allowed them to develop greater self-assurance, and promoted their self-actualization. Social psychology has likewise been of immeasurable benefit to me in my life. And I hope that instructors and students will also find the study of social psychology a meaningful and enriching experience.

Each new edition of *Social Psychology* has allowed me to survey the literature in the discipline and to discern the waxing and waning of research interests. Some topics, such as attribution processes and altruism, have continued as dominant research themes. Others, such as self processes and interpersonal relationships, have gained in research activity in recent years. Still others, such as groups, leadership, conformity, and race relations, have witnessed a slackening in research interest. Overall, the most notable trend, among social psychologists from both psychological and sociological backgrounds, has been the shift from studying social behavior to studying the social mind. American social psychologists tend to be dominated by an individualistic orientation and to slight what goes on within and among people as they interact with one another. However, it is these latter matters that drew me to social psychology and that seem especially to intrigue students. Consequently, I have attempted to find a balance between social mind and social behavior concerns in this text.

#### iv PREFACE

However compelling its subject matter, a textbook, to be successful, must meet two criteria: First, it must provide the appropriate information; second, it must communicate the subject matter effectively. I attempt to achieve these ends in a number of ways:

*The book aims to capture student interest:* Most instructors of social psychology find it a stimulating field, and there is no reason why students should not experience the same enthusiasm and challenge. Therefore, in this text top priority is assigned to making social psychology come alive. One device for achieving this is the inclusion throughout of excerpts from student journals. In their journals, students record observations or events and interpret them according to social psychological concepts or principles. These journal entries, in which student teaches student, afford vivid and readable accounts of the human experience.

*The text aims to provide a scientifically sound presentation:* The reader is exposed to a wide sampling of social psychological theory and empirical research. The solid research foundations of the book are reflected in the lengthy bibliography at the back of the text. This new edition contains some 600 new references.

*The text aims to be contemporary:* Social psychology is shown in its relation to the world in which the instructor and the students live. Various contemporary social matters and problems are examined, including advertising, the use of power, company cultures, attracting a mate, successful marriages, the quality of intimate relationships, legislating good Samaritanism, social dilemmas, victimization, rape, sexism, and terrorism. Each chapter contains at least one new boxed insert.

*The text aims for an interdisciplinary synthesis:* Some chapters necessarily emphasize psychological interests and research; others sociological interests and research. Care has been taken, however, to weave this material into a meaningful and coherent whole.

*The text aims to provide maximum flexibility in teaching:* Clearly, there is not one "right" way to teach social psychology, and the material that is presented can be adapted to suit instructors' own teaching objectives and their students' needs. The chapters are sufficiently independent that they can be assigned in any order without posing problems for the students. In short, users of this text should feel free to make it serve their particular purposes. *Social Psychology* is meant to be a tool, your tool.

Columbus, Ohio

James W. Vander Zanden

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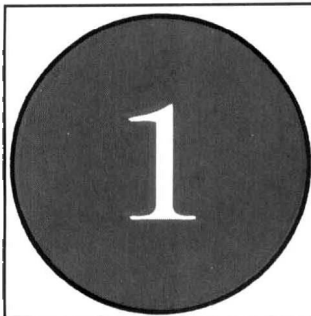
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# INTRODUCTION

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### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I was driving home over a back road when I came upon a guy driving a new Porsche. He was going 20 miles an hour under the speed limit. The road was winding and I could not pass him. So I said to myself, "What would it take to get me to speed up if I were driving that Porsche?" My answer was, "Tailgate him." I then moved my car close behind the Porsche, but it did not seem to have any effect. I evaluated my own act, and it seemed to me that I was gesturing in a way that would get my point across. So I thought, "This isn't working. I had better try something else. I'll drop back a little, and the first chance I get, I'll pass him." When I reached an open stretch of road that had no oncoming traffic, I accelerated and attempted to pass him. But the driver also speeded up so that I couldn't get by. Again I appraised the situation and concluded, "I had better push the accelerator to the floor." I did so, but the driver speeded up to prevent my overtaking him. Frustrated, I said to myself, "That guy is going to get both of us killed. I'll just drop back of him and not try to pass." I did so. At this point



## 2 INTRODUCTION

the guy gave me the “finger” and raced off in the Porsche. From this example, one can see the operation of the selfhood process. As we engage in social behavior, we mentally evaluate its product. We become an audience to our own actions. We adopt a state of preparedness for certain kinds of responses from other people. We test our behavior on an ongoing basis and revise it. Consciousness allows us to reflect on our behavior and to modify it in accordance with our definition of the situation.

\* \* \*

Yesterday a female companion and I were joyriding in my sports car. I had taken a piece of candy from my glove compartment and placed it in my mouth. My girlfriend asked me what color the candy was and to let her see what it looked like. I concealed the candy under my tongue, opened my mouth, and moved close to her with my mouth open. I then closed my mouth and moved back. I asked her whether or not she saw the candy. She said, “No.” Then I asked her if she saw my tongue. She said, “Yes.” I next asked her, “What color is my tongue?” She said, “I don’t know. I was looking for the candy.” This is an example of selective perception. She was trying to perceive the color of the candy by looking at the candy and the candy only. But if she had not been so selective in her viewing and had taken notice of the color that the candy had stained my tongue, she would have known the color of the candy itself.

\* \* \*

I never really thought I had pretty legs. I felt they were too big at the knees, too fat at the thighs, and too small at the calves. Last Thursday I wore gym trunks while throwing a football with some fraternity guys. Later my boyfriend told me a lot of the guys thought I had really pretty shaped legs. Well, then, I looked at my legs, and thought, “Boy, my legs do look pretty good.” So I tried wearing my gym trunks again today. A couple of my girlfriends told me I had pretty legs. Strange as it may seem, my legs have been looking better and better to me. Now I feel quite confident about them and want to show them off. This just goes to show how the responses others make toward us affect how we come to see ourselves. Our self-image arises out of the feedback others give us in the course of social interaction.\*

\* \* \*

In their journals, all these students were concerned with social interaction—interpersonal behavior—the subject matter of **social psychology**.† The late Gordon W. Allport (1968: 3),‡ a psychologist, regarded social psychology as a scientific “attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of

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\* These edited quotations from student journals, and others that appear throughout this book, are reproduced by permission of the students.

† Concepts in **boldface type** are defined in a Glossary at the end of each chapter and in the Glossary at the back of the book.

‡ A single year in parentheses refers to the work cited in the References section at the end of the book. The number that follows the date is the page number.

others." In sum, social psychology is the study of people—loving, hating, working, helping, trusting, fighting, communicating. It focuses on the entire drama of our daily lives, all of our activities in relation to one another. As such, it studies the trivial and the vital, the transient and the abiding, the joyful and the painful, the superficial and the visceral.

## EARLY ROOTS: PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

Although social psychology is an ancient discipline (some point to Plato or Aristotle as its founder), it was officially launched as a separate field in 1908. In that year the first two English-language textbooks appeared—William McDougall's *Introduction to Social Psychology* and E. A. Ross's *Social Psychology: An Outline and Source Book*. McDougall was a psychologist; Ross, a sociologist. In the intervening years social psychology has retained its interdisciplinary links to both psychology and sociology (Boutilier, Roed, and Svendsen, 1980; Pepitone, 1981).

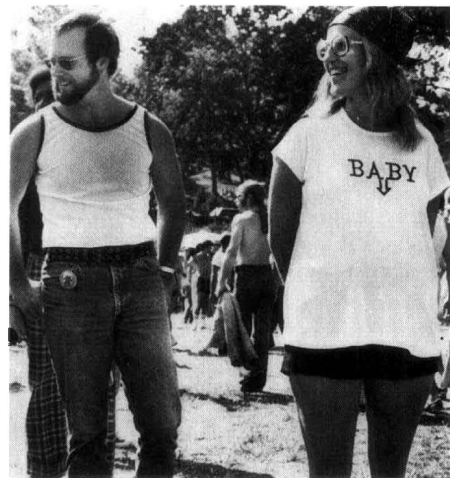
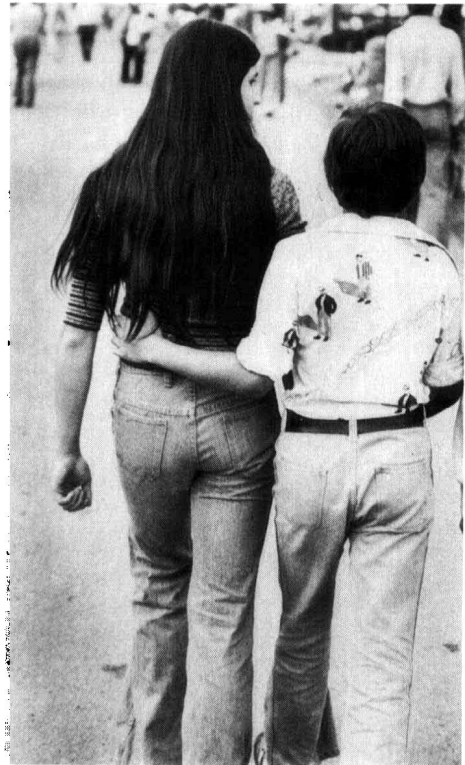
Because social psychology draws from the storehouses of both sociological and psychological knowledge, many universities and colleges offer social psychology courses both in their sociology departments and in their psychology departments. Indeed, until relatively recently, psychologists and sociologists tended to go their independent ways. Psychologists traditionally focused on individuals and the social stimuli that impinge on them. In contrast, sociologists concerned themselves with the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society, stressing the part that social interaction plays within human life (Stryker, 1977, 1980; Stryker and Statham, 1985).

Within psychology—the science of behavior and mental processes—social psychology is distinguished from other subfields such as learning, perception, and motivation (Jones, 1985). While all psychologists study behavior—sometimes even the identical responses—they differ in their primary interest. Social psychologist Robert Zajonc provides us with the following analogy:

The rat's response of "turning left in a T-maze" may be analyzed in terms of the number of reinforced trials that have been given to the animal (the psychology of learning); or in terms of the level of the animal's hunger (the psychology of motivation); or in terms of the physical properties of the right arm of the maze as opposed to those of the left arm (the psychology of perception). If all of the above variations—reinforcement, deprivation, and physical stimulation—are held constant, and if we observe the rat's responses of "turning left in the T-maze" when there happens to be one other rat in the right arm of the maze, we become social psychologists. (1967: 1)

Although at one time a minor field within psychology, social psychology has gained considerable stature during the past three decades.

Within sociology—generally viewed as the science of social organization (society) and group life—social psychology has long enjoyed a prominent place. Indeed, many sociologists find it difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the fields. Among sociologists with a symbolic-interactionist orientation, the



### **The Subject Matter of Social Psychology**

Social psychologists study how the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people are influenced by other individuals. (Patrick Reddy)

overlap tends to be complete. Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929), an influential early American sociologist and symbolic interactionist, placed the individual and society in a single frame of reference:

*A separate individual is an abstraction unknown to experience, and so likewise is society when regarded as something apart from individuals. The real thing is Human Life, which may be considered either in an individual aspect or in a social, that is to say a general, aspect; but is always, as a matter of fact, both individual and general. In other words, "society" and "individuals" do not denote separable phenomena, but are simply collective and distributive aspects of the same thing, the relation between them being like that between other expressions one of which denotes a group as a whole and the other the members of the group. (1902: 1–2)*

In Europe, where social psychology never emerged as a separate specialty, leading sociologists such as Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), Max Weber (1864–1920), and Georg Simmel (1858–1918) dealt with social psychological matters as an integral part of their sociological studies.

Within the United States, social psychologists differ in their perception of the field. Some social psychologists, such as Edwin P. Hollander and R. G. Hunt (1971), view social psychology as a distinctive discipline—one that is not merely a mixture of bits and pieces from sociology and psychology, but a genuine fusion. Others, such as Zick Rubin (1973), view it not as a discipline like economics, history, sociology, and psychology, but as an "interdiscipline."

Whether social psychology is viewed as a qualitatively distinct discipline or as an interdiscipline, the overlap between sociology and psychology has contributed to a freshness in approach and has functioned as a stimulus to the further advancement of the frontiers of knowledge. Of course there are scholars who jealously seek to exclude rivals in neighboring sciences from what they view as "their" territory. Nevertheless, the prevailing attitude has increasingly become one of welcoming aid and collaboration from any qualified person, regardless of discipline. Each scientist can and should learn from the others.

## SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

*Nothing is so practical as a good theory.*

—Kurt Lewin

**Theory** is the net we weave to catch the world of observation so that we can explain, predict, and influence it (Deutsch and Krauss, 1965). Formulating a theory is a way of making sense out of a confused set of data through a symbolic construction by the human mind (Kaplan, 1964; Scarr, 1985). It allows us to bring together a multitude of facts in a meaningful manner so that we may comprehend them all at once. Consequently, theory is in part a summary of known facts and in part conjecture about the implications of such facts and the probable relationships that exist among them. Thus theory is a *tool*. More specifically, a theory performs a number of functions (Shaw and Costanzo, 1982).

## 6 INTRODUCTION

First, it permits us to organize our observations and to deal meaningfully with information that would otherwise be chaotic and useless. Second, theory allows us to see relationships among facts and uncover implications that would not otherwise be evident in isolated bits and pieces of data. And third, it stimulates inquiry as we search for knowledge about many different and often puzzling aspects of our behavior.

Within social psychology, a number of differing theoretical traditions have emerged. This is hardly surprising, since the same behavior may be viewed from differing perspectives. Take, for example, the matter of eating. We could consider eating in terms of the experience of hunger that is alleviated by food; the stimulus that the sight or smell of food provides; the social meanings attributed to eating with friends or enemies; or the ways in which people fit their actions together to provide food or a particular meal. In this chapter we will examine several major approaches within contemporary social psychology. Since the various orientations will appear again in various parts of the book, we will limit ourselves to a brief description of each orientation.

### Behavioral Theory

How an organism learns—acquires responses—has been the chief concern of a major and productive group of American psychologists whose approach is termed **behaviorism**. The behaviorist approach, which occupied the center stage in psychological work between 1920 and 1960, was initially set forth by John B. Watson (1914, 1919) and further developed and elaborated by such psychologists as Edward L. Thorndike (1907, 1931), Edward C. Tolman (1932), Edwin R. Guthrie (1935), Clark Hull (1943, 1952), and B. F. Skinner (1953, 1957, 1974). When Watson began his work early in this century, American psychology was preoccupied with topics like “mind,” “image,” and “consciousness.” Watson rejected these concepts, labeling them “mystical,” “mentalistic,” and “subjective.” Instead, he called for a totally objective psychology, one that would deal only with the observable activities of organisms—their “doings and sayings.” Hence, Watson insisted that psychology should study how people in fact behave and that this could best be achieved by employing the experimental procedures of animal psychology.

Behaviorists have argued that introspection (observation of one’s own perceptions and feelings) is unreliable and that psychologists should not concern themselves with internal or mental events. Instead behaviorists segment *behavior* into units called **responses** and they divide the *environment* into units called **stimuli**. Accordingly, behaviorism is also referred to as stimulus-response (or simply S-R) psychology.

Behaviorists assert that a particular stimulus and a particular response are “associated” with one another, producing a functional relationship or linkage between them. For example, a stimulus like one’s friend coming into one’s visual field elicits a response like a smile. This notion regarding the connection between stimuli and responses is a logical outcome of the behaviorists’ downgrading of



### Removing Barriers

By stripping away mystery and cant, social science can have a liberating effect. With knowledge, people can break down the barriers that lock individuals within unjust social arrangements. It offers us the opportunity to improve the human condition by helping us to achieve freedom, self-identity, and self-fulfillment. (Patrick Reddy)

inner mental considerations. It is not surprising, therefore, that extreme behaviorism is often termed a “black box” approach. Stimuli enter the “box” (the organism) only to come out as responses. The internal structures or mental processes that intervene between the stimulus and the response, since they are not directly observable, are minimized by traditional behaviorists.

Behaviorists stress the part that *reinforcement* plays in establishing and strengthening stimulus-response connections. Reinforcement refers to any event that strengthens the probability of a particular response. A good illustration of reinforcement procedures is provided by Benjamin Franklin. Two centuries ago a minister on a ship complained to Franklin that the sailors rarely attended prayer meetings. Franklin suggested that the minister take charge of passing out the daily ration of rum and that he dispense it immediately after the prayers. The minister did what Franklin recommended and “never were prayers more generally and more punctually attended” (Franklin, 1969). Chapter 4 will consider behaviorist theory at greater length.

## Cognitive Theory

*Man is a reasoning animal.*

—Seneca,  
*Epistulae moralies ad Lucilium*,  
 63 A.D.

Behaviorists view organisms as essentially *passive* receivers of stimuli. Indeed, early behaviorists viewed the brain as a kind of switchboard that merely routes the proper responses to incoming stimuli. In contrast, cognitive psychologists see the organism as an *active* agent in receiving, using, manipulating, and transforming information. They depict people as thinking, planning, problem solving, and decision making—as mentally manipulating images, symbols, and ideas. **Cognition** is a term referring to all the mental processes that transform sensory input in some meaningful fashion—that code, elaborate, store, retrieve, and appropriately use it.

In clear contradiction to behaviorist approaches, cognitive theorists believe that thoughts are causal factors in behavior. They criticize behaviorists for portraying individuals as robots who are mechanically programmed by environmental reinforcements. Instead, cognitive psychologists say that people are capable of intervening in the course of their affairs with conscious deliberation. They view people as able to make decisions that are rational in that the decisions are based on available information and an ability to process the information intelligently. Thus cognitive psychologists are interested in how we use information from our environment and our memories to make decisions about what to do. In recent years, the cognitive approach has displaced behaviorism as the leading focus of psychological work (Jones, 1985; Markus and Zajonc, 1985).

Among psychologically oriented social psychologists, interest in cognitive processes often blurs the boundary between social and nonsocial psychology (Jones, 1985). Given a researchable problem, they typically frame it in cognitive terms and ask how the situation, the stimuli, and the variables controlling the responses are represented in the minds of people. Hazel Markus and R. B. Zajonc (1985: 137) observe: “The result is that one can no longer view today’s social psychology as the study of social behavior. It is more accurate to define it as the study of the social mind.” A good illustration is *attribution theory*, which deals with the processes by which we impute causes to behavior (see Chapter 2).

Most of the critical questions of social cognition have to do with how we mentally represent social knowledge. The organism processes information in such a way that an image, symbol, or idea comes to stand for something else—for instance, an act, an object, an emotion, a sound, or an internal state. Information is processed by some type of internal or mental structure that receives and organizes it—what is termed a *cognitive* or *knowledge structure* (see Chapter 2). Such structures are organized stores of information (mental representations) that we have achieved as a result of prior information processing. They operate as frameworks for interpreting our current social experiences. These structures simplify perceptual inputs that would otherwise overwhelm us by their



complexity. And they fill in where there is too little information, allowing us to make sense of an otherwise ambivalent situation. Thus cognitive structures help us to achieve some coherence in our environment, and they assist us in the construction of social reality. The memory system is assumed to contain countless knowledge structures (Markus and Zajonc, 1985).

## Gestalt and Field Theories

The recent surge of interest in cognitive processes was influenced by the work of earlier Gestalt psychologists. Max Wertheimer (1880–1943) and two of his German co-workers, Wolfgang Köhler (1887–1967) and Kurt Koffka (1886–1941), are considered founders of the Gestalt movement (**Gestalt** is a German word meaning configuration or organization). The major emphasis of the Berlin Gestalt group was on the part-whole relationship, especially as it found expression within perceptual phenomena. The Gestalt psychologists emphasized that parts or elements do not exist in isolation; rather, they are organized into wholes. For instance, when we look at a building, we do not see lumber, shingles, bricks, glass, and other components—instead we see a house. Hence, the brain is said to process, organize, and interpret stimuli received from receptor organs; it relates an experience to other experiences in terms of some larger, more inclusive context.

The initial impetus to Gestalt psychology came in 1910, when Wertheimer discovered the *phi phenomenon*. The phi phenomenon involves the illusion of motion. If two lights blink on and off at a certain rate, they give the impression that the light is moving back and forth. The principle finds expression in motion pictures when stills are shown in rapid succession and in the apparent movement of neon-lighted arrows that seem to fly when lighted in succession. The experience of motion emerges from our organizing elements into wholes.

Gestalt theory provided an impetus to the work of Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) and his students. Although at one time a member of the Berlin Gestalt group, Lewin moved in sufficiently new directions for social psychologists to distinguish his field theory from Gestalt theory. Lewin's approach was based on the concept of **field** or **life space**. He felt that all psychological events, be they acting, thinking, dreaming, hoping, or whatever, are a function of life space—the person and the environment viewed as one constellation of interdependent forces (Deutsch, 1968). The life space consists of all past, present, and future events, since all three aspects of life can influence behavior in any single situation.

This emphasis on the relatedness of the individual and the environment constituted a major contribution to the field of psychology. Traditionally, psychologists had focused on the characteristics of individuals (“instincts,” “heredity,” “intelligence,” “needs,” and “habits”) relatively independently of the situations in which the individuals operated. But according to Lewin, statements that do not take the situation into account are unacceptable. Lewin would rule out such observations as the following: “He is psychotic because of his heredity.” “He became leader of the group because of his personality.” “Her emotional outburst was due to hysteria.” “Friends work together better than strangers” (Deutsch, 1968).

Lewin stressed that the understanding of behavior requires knowledge not only of a person's past experiences, present attitudes, and future expectations, but also of the immediate context or situation. John R. P. French (1944) inadvertently demonstrated this principle when he undertook an experiment designed to compare the behavior of organized and unorganized groups in a fear-provoking situation. While students were completing questionnaires in a locked room, the experimenter switched on a smoke machine that sent smoke curling under the door of the experiment room. Shortly thereafter, a fire siren was sounded. Unhappily for French, some students reacted in a disappointingly calm manner. In one group, a student said, "I smell smoke. Is there a fire?" while another serenely observed, "They probably want to test our psychological reactions." In another group, the first student to observe the smoke jumped up, shoved open the locked door, and knocked over the smoke machine. The response of subjects, then, depended on how they defined the *situation*—whether they saw the smoke as part of an experimental hoax or as caused by a real fire. The unexpected results of French's experiment demonstrate that social psychologists cannot interpret a subject's responses unless they have knowledge of the totality of psychological facts that exist in the person's life space at the time of the experiment.

Lewin's interest in life space led him to the study of group dynamics. One of his studies concerned behavior in various social climates (Lewin, Lippitt, and White, 1939). The research dealt with democratic and authoritarian leadership and the effects of such leadership on the productiveness and behavior of a group of boys. Authoritarian leadership was found to be accompanied by high levels of frustration and some degree of aggression toward the leader. When the leader was present, productivity was high; when he was absent, it was low. In contrast, democratic leadership was associated with greater individual happiness, more group-minded activity, greater productivity (especially in the leader's absence), and less aggressive displays. Studies such as this opened up important new ideas for social research and contributed to the growth of social psychology. Shortly before his death, Lewin was instrumental in developing what is now termed sensitivity training. The T-groups (training groups) that he set up were the first part of a movement later characterized by encounter groups.

## Social Exchange Theory

**Social exchange theory** has roots within both psychology, identified with such psychologists as John W. Thibaut and Harold H. Kelley (1959), and sociology, identified with such sociologists as George C. Homans (1950, 1974) and Peter M. Blau (1964). However, the theory has gained popularity only over the past fifteen years, during which time publications in the area have grown exponentially (Beniger and Savory, 1981). The tradition represents an attempt to integrate the behaviorist theory that learning is brought about through reward and punishment with the principles of classical economics. According to this theory, people enter into exchange relationships because they derive rewards from doing so. Social exchange theorists broaden the economist's concept of exchange of