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Social Psychology

Steven Penrod

University of Wisconsin

Psych

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Preface

If you were to write a social psychology textbook, where would you begin and end? When I first considered it I was confronted both by the sense that social psychology did not need yet another textbook *and* by the various complaints I have heard about them in recent years. It was easy to see the challenge in writing a new social psychology text. But, of course, avoiding the pitfalls that have trapped others is not an easy matter. Even though I started with a blemish-free vision of the final product, I learned that there are inevitably compromises to be made when writing a textbook. It cannot be as exhaustive, as thoughtful, as contemporary, or as forward-looking as one would like. But it can be engaging, informative, sometimes challenging and thought-provoking—as I hope this volume is.

My vision of what a social psychology text ought to be has been profoundly shaped by my own experiences as a student. I think my vision of social psychology is broader than that encountered in many social psychology texts. I came to social psychology late in my student career. My undergraduate major was in political science (in a department with a strong behavioral orientation) and before completing my PhD in social psychology I managed to squeeze in a law degree and some practical legal experience. Part of social psychology's attraction for me was that it offered theories and methods of inquiry that could help to answer many of the questions raised in political science and law. As a college student of the late 1960s I was immersed in calls for "relevance," and in social psychology I found much more relevance than I had encountered in any other discipline.

I found in my meanderings through other disciplines that much of social psychology had already been "given away"—one need only look at research on political behavior, communication, advertising, law, medicine, and many other topics to realize the profound influence social psychological theories and methods have had. When I think about the "applications" discussed in this book, I think not only about the applied research being done within the traditional boundaries of social psychology, but also about research being conducted in other disciplines by people who may not even consider themselves social psychologists.

Despite the attention to applied issues, I have tried not to sacrifice basic theory and research. The text covers most of the topics encountered in other social psychology texts, and the familiar—and important—classics are presented also. However, I have avoided the temptation to be encyclopedic. While a large number of interesting and theoretically significant studies of recent vintage are presented, they have been selected carefully to produce a sensible balance between new and old, basic and applied, theoretical and straightforwardly empirical.

Being a student for nearly a quarter of a century has sensitized me to the problems encountered by students. It is no fun reading turgid prose, and while the Socratic method may be fine in some settings, it has no place in introductory texts. The emphasis in this volume is on clear and engaging presentations of basic concepts and research findings.

About This Book

Social Psychology is intended for use as a text for a first course in social psychology. It provides an introduction to research methods, theories (and the research upon which they are based), and applications, and can be used in a one-term course.

Features The distinguishing features of this book include:

1. *Balanced coverage.* Classic studies are emphasized in order to place the major themes of social psychology in historical perspective. Throughout, research that has advanced theory and given birth to further research is noted. In an effort to show where today's interests lie, recent research is also stressed. Thus, emerging areas such as social cognition, the "self," and applications are given more attention, while relatively dormant areas such as cognitive dissonance and group dynamics receive somewhat less attention than in traditional texts. This text emphasizes key modern views (behaviorist and cognitivist) to illustrate the role of theory in research, without idealizing the scientific method.

2. *Scientific foundations and research methods.* Special emphasis is placed on the fact that social psychology is a science—albeit a young one that has not yet realized its full potential. I have tried to convey the importance of research and show how it is conducted, and also to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the varied methods used by social psychologists. Indeed, chapter 2 is more informative on these matters than most such chapters; I wrote it in the hope that instructors will use it to stimulate further discussion of the role of research. In addition, each chapter has a box highlighting research in which one or more studies are examined in some detail. My goal, especially in the first two chapters, was to provide a thorough introduction to the scientific world-view of contemporary social psychology and to underscore the advantages of systematic observation and study.

3. *Social implications.* This text, although not an "applied" volume, aspires to one extra step of relevance beyond that of traditional texts. Throughout, an effort has been made to illustrate the applications of traditional theories and research findings to the real world. In each chapter there is a box highlighting applied aspects of some theory or finding discussed in the main body of the text. In every chapter there are also boxes discussing controversial issues, within social

psychology as a discipline, or within the larger society in which we all live. In addition the final section of the book is largely devoted to applied topics.

4. *Readability and aids to learning.* The goal in writing has been clarity. Each chapter is preceded by a summary outline of its content, and a few "Questions about . . ." the subject under discussion, which was designed to get students to start considering relevant issues even before they begin reading an assignment. These questions are answered at the end of each chapter, where a chapter summary and a list of Suggested Additional Reading can also be found. Within each chapter descriptive heads guide the reader from topic to topic; generous use of tables and figures graphically supplements text discussion; and photographs and a cartoon provide additional illustrative comment on the relevance of the chapter content. The writing tends to be personal—the text was written for students and is meant to speak to them. I have tried to spice it with examples that they can relate to, and to steer a sensible course on the use of jargon, selecting and defining those terms that are central to the discipline and avoiding those that are merely pedantic. In every chapter, key terms are boldfaced and defined in context. These terms appear again in the extensive Glossary at the back of the book.

Organization This text is organized in a logical sequence that is adaptable to most instructors' course organizations. We start in part 1 by examining the historical framework and guiding principles of social psychology, and describing its scientific foundations and means of operation. Chapter 2 is devoted to a description of the research methods employed in social psychology.

The remainder of the text moves from the micro or personal level outward to the macro perspective of society as a whole. In part 2 the individual is the focus, as we look at the social cognition of the self and others and at interactions between individuals. Part 3 explores the effects of society on the individual, while in part 4 we examine the development of anti- and prosocial behaviors. Finally, in part 5, we look at people's roles and behaviors in the real world, examining such applied areas for social psychological insights as organizational behavior, environmental psychology, psychology and the law, and psychology and the quality of life in key areas. The sequence used is sufficiently flexible to allow the chapters to be assigned in any order, and to omit or assign as supplementary reading only those topics that lie beyond the purview of a particular course. The rich project suggestions as well as additional readings to be found in the *Instructor's Manual*, on the other hand, make possible the expansion of a given topic for fuller emphasis where this might be desirable. The *Instructor's Manual* also includes the *Test Item File*, which is made up of multiple choice questions and an answer key.

Acknowledgments

This book represents a collaboration of the best talent I could find. Initial drafts of manuscript chapters were provided by professional writers working under explicit instructions from my graduate students and myself. I want particularly to acknowledge the assistance of all those whose efforts made this book possible. First, I would like to thank four graduate students who labored long and hard to

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Lisa Thrush must receive credit for coordinating the activities of the throngs of people at the University of Wisconsin (including me) who worked on the book. Scott Broetzmann managed herculean efforts at the university library and Patricia Klitzke somehow produced typed manuscripts from scribbled drafts. James Coward, Hope Hunter, and Leslie Manke helped to tie up loose ends.

At Prentice-Hall, Marjorie P. K. Weiser must receive credit for somehow keeping all the bits and pieces of the text in sensible and working order, editing and rewriting, for exercising sound judgment on organization and where to cut and expand, for providing invaluable assistance on the basics of writing a book, for providing encouragement when I was discouraged, and for steering me back to the task when I had a tendency to wander.

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Social Psychology

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