

# *Social Psychology*

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY



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# PSYCHOLOGY

# SOCIAL

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A Viacom Company  
160 Gould Street  
Needham Heights, MA 02494  
www.abacon.com

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

Kenrick, Douglas T.  
Social psychology : unraveling the mystery / Douglas T. Kenrick,  
Steven L. Neuberg, Robert B. Cialdini.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 0-205-16521-4  
I. Social psychology. I. Neuberg, Steven L. II. Cialdini,  
Robert B. III. Title.  
HM251.K4545 1998  
302—dc21

98-51504  
CIP

Printed in the United States of America  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 VHP 00 99

*To David and Carol*

*To Erika, Rachel, and Zachary*

*To Bobette, Christopher, and Jason*

## FROM THE AUTHORS

To students assigned a typical social psychology textbook, the field must seem like an amazing three-ring circus, where every turn of the eye reveals a dizzying assortment of attention-demanding performances. A different show unfolds in each ring—awe-inspiring acts of altruism, shocking deeds of aggression, persuasive tricks from magician’s hats, human pyramids of cooperation, and mysterious feats of self-delusion. At the center of it all stands the course instructor, the ring-master, calling students’ attention alternately to one then another facet of the spectacle—*And now, ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to shift your gaze from the clownish antics of self-deception to the daring men and women attempting to traverse the tightrope of romantic love, and then back down to the wild lion pit of aggression. . . .*

## THE NEED FOR AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

For us, the problem with the three-ring circus presentation of social psychology is that it masks something crucial: Human social behaviors are woven together in related, interconnected patterns. To present an array of separate, disjointed chapter topics—aggression here, persuasion, prejudice, and personal relationships there, there, and there—offers a sorely inadequate view of the field. Common concepts, dimensions, and principles underlie all social behavior, and we are convinced that students will benefit greatly from knowing about them. After all, a primary rule of learning and memory is that people grasp and retain more material, more easily, when the various parts can be connected by organizing principles.

As entertaining and stimulating as a circus may be, it is not a good arena for learning. Much better, and equally engaging, is a well-constructed work of theater, cinema, or literature. The field of social psychology should not be presented to students—the way it too often has—as the circus of everyday social behavior, but



as the *story* of that behavior. It’s an intricate story to be sure, rich in versions and variations. But it is coherent nonetheless, with recurring characters, scenes, and themes linking its elements. Our major purpose in writing this text is to offer students and instructors a cohesive framework that retains social psychology’s renowned ability to captivate student interest, but that adds the more intellectually helpful (and satisfying) feature of integration.

## HOW DO WE ACCOMPLISH THE INTEGRATION?

For a full year before deciding to write this book, we met for an afternoon every week to try to develop a truly integrative framework for the course. We knew that we had one ironic advantage: In a basic way, we disagreed with one another. Each of us approached the task with a different one of the major, sometimes opposing, theoretical perspectives in social psychology today—social cognition, social learning, and evolutionary psychology. We realized that if we could find an overarching framework that would bridge our diverse approaches, it would provide an especially broad foundation for integrating the course material—one that allowed and incorporated a full range of theoretical starting points.



Those meetings were an exhilarating mix of conflicts, insights, false starts, blind alleys, and breakthroughs . . . but always accompanied by the shared sense that our understanding of social psychology was growing. The effort would have been worthwhile even if no book had come of it. At the end of that year of discussion and debate, not only did we have an invaluable mid-career learning experience under our belts but, as well, we had consensus on an integrative framework that we were all genuinely enthusiastic about.

The framework uses a pair of themes to tie together the text material within and across chapter topics:

### 1. The goal-directed nature of social behavior.

First, we stress that social responding is goal-directed. The goals themselves may not be verbalized or even conscious, but when people obey an authority figure, begin a new relationship, or raise a fist against another, they do so in the service of some goal—perhaps to gain another's approval, verify a self-image, acquire social status, and so on. In Chapter 1, we describe how goals flow from fundamental social motives, such as establishing social ties, attracting mates, and understanding ourselves and those around us. In Chapter 2, we examine how goals work: where they come from, how they are activated, how they ebb and flow across social situations, and how, ultimately, they influence our actions. In each succeeding chapter, we reestablish this emphasis on goals by asking the question, "Which goals are served by the behaviors considered in this chapter?"

**2. The interaction of the person and the situation.** Second, to understand fully the causes of a person's social behavior, we need to consider how aspects of that person interact with aspects of his or her situation. How do features inside the individual—attitudes, traits, expectations, attributions, moods, goals, stereotypes, and emotions—work together with features of the situation to influence social behavior? Beginning with Kurt Lewin, this interactionist theme has been prominent in our field. Unfortunately, the explanatory power of this perspective has rarely been engaged systematically in introductory social psychology texts. In contrast, our aim is to continuously invite readers to consider the instructive interplay of influences that come from inside and outside the person.

## THE STRUCTURE OF EACH CHAPTER

After introducing social psychology (Chapter 1) and taking a closer look at the person in the social situation (Chapter 2), we organize the remaining chapters around a common structure:

**1. The mystery.** Each chapter begins with an account of a baffling pattern of human behavior—an incident or set of incidents that seems beyond understanding. For example:

- *Why did a Japanese envoy in Europe decide to disobey his superiors' repeated orders and rescue thousands of Jews from the Holocaust?*
- *Why did a middle-class girl who had sung in the church choir and been a member of the Campfire Girls join two other women and a former high school track star in committing one of the most grisly mass murders of this century?*
- *What features of human emotion could inspire the king of one of the world's most powerful empires to abdicate his throne, lands, and castles for the affections of a woman his family and country judged wholly unsuitable?*

Later, as the chapter progresses, we introduce general principles of human behavior that, when put together properly, resolve the mystery. These mysteries represent more to us than devices for engaging readers' interest. They are designed to convey something basic about how we approach the text material: Our approach is heavily research-based, and research is akin to good detective work. Researchers, like detectives, begin their search with an interesting or perplexing question, then examine clues, gather evidence, test hypotheses, eliminate alternatives and—if things fall into place—uncover the right answer. To mine these instructive parallels, we return often in the text to the concept of researcher-as-detective.

**2. The goals.** Next we introduce readers to the set of goals underlying the behavior covered in the chapter, by asking "What purposes does this behavior (e.g., aggression or helping or conformity) serve for an individual?" and "Which factors lead an individual to use this behavior to achieve those goals?" Taking each goal of the set in turn, we consider factors in the person, in the situation, and in their interaction:

*The person.* Here we present research showing which internal factors trigger each particular goal. So, which traits motivate people to seek social approval through conformity? Which moods influence people to think deeply in order to understand themselves and others more accurately? Which beliefs lead people to discriminate against other groups in order to feel good about themselves?

*The situation.* Here we consider evidence of situational factors relevant to a given goal. How do personal threats engage self-protective prejudices? How do cultural norms influence the desire to seek sexual gratification through casual

relationships? How does time pressure affect the inclination to think deeply before deciding what a stranger's personality is like?

*The person–situation interaction.* In this section, we present data demonstrating how personal and situational factors interact. Social psychologists are used to thinking about how people with different attitudes, expectations, and traits act differently in the same situation. But interactions are much richer than this: People choose their life situations, change situations they do not like, and are themselves rejected from some situations and changed by others. For example, lonely people may act in needy ways that alienate others. In turn, others may avoid them and stop inviting them to social events, further enhancing their inner feelings of social isolation. By systematically showing students the importance of person–situation interactions, we hope to illustrate the limitations of the usual single-factor explanations—such as putting all the blame for aggression or blind obedience on the person, or the converse error of viewing people as interchangeable pawns on a giant interpersonal chess board.

**3. Special features.** Several of social psychology's messages and themes are highlighted in each chapter's special features:

*Focus on Gender.* Here, we examine how men and women approach social encounters in ways that are sometimes very different, and sometimes surprisingly similar. In the chapter on relationships, for instance, we note that, although gender differences in sexual behavior often jump out and grab people's attention, the two sexes approach long-term loving relationships in remarkably similar ways.

*Focus on Culture.* In this feature we emphasize how particular cultures and subcultures influence social behavior. In the chapter on persuasion and attitude change, for instance, we consider how advertisers in Korea and the United States texture their ads to engage the somewhat different “selves” found in these cultures. Looking across cultures teaches us to see beyond our own narrow experiences and to appreciate not only the dazzling differences but also some of the commonalities that link all human beings together.

*Focus on Application.* Here, we discuss how a specific experimental finding or body of findings relates to real-world issues—how research insights can be used to create less-prejudiced classrooms, help married couples stay together, reduce violence, or encourage honesty in employees.

*Focus on Method.* In Chapter 1, we present the research methods in terms of a detective metaphor—searching for clues by sifting through shreds of evidence. In each chapter that follows, we introduce a new tool for the researcher's detective work. For example, in describing the research findings on media violence and viewer aggression, we include a feature on how meta-analysis works. In discussing research on love, we introduce the tool of factor analysis. By introducing these tools throughout the text, we hope to show the student why methods are essential to solving fascinating riddles.

*Focus on Social Dysfunction.* Psychology students are fascinated by disordered behavior. In this feature, we hope to tap that fascination to demonstrate broader principles. We examine how normally healthy social behaviors can, if taken too far, produce unhealthy consequences—for example, how the usually adaptive tendency to develop strong bonds between lovers can underlie obsessive relationships.

**4. Revisiting the Mystery.** The final section returns to the opening mystery to help students pull together the various research findings discussed in the chapter. For example, we return to the puzzle of the prosocial Japanese envoy, the mass-murdering middle-class young woman, or the abdicating king in light of research findings on altruism, aggression, and relationships (and we pull together the new clues we revealed in the chapter). In this way, we hope not only to capitalize on curiosity, but also to tap another general principle of learning and memory—the principle that students recall more facts when they are connected to vivid cases.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEFT OUT

A glance at the table of contents shows that we have included no separate applications chapters on such topics as health, business, or the law. This is not because of any lack of regard for their importance within social psychology. Quite the reverse. Rather than giving these topics a tagged-on, stand-alone status in the book, we want to emphasize their frequent connections to the



mainstream topics of the field. Consequently, we point out these links as they occur naturally within the text discussion and (when special elaboration is appropriate) in the *Focus on Application* features found in each chapter. In this way, we hope to convey to students the inherent relationship between the principles of social psychology and the behaviors of people in workplaces, school-rooms, and other applied settings.

For similar reasons, there is no isolated chapter or appendix on methodology. Although we do expose the reader to the major methodological issues of social psychological research in Chapter 1, we think the more valuable instruction comes in the *Focus on Method* features that appear in each subsequent chapter. There, blended with a discussion of puzzling research questions, the student learns the details of the methods that can answer them. Additionally, the student learns to appreciate that one cannot be fully confident in the results of a study without understanding how those results were obtained.

Lastly, and once again reflecting our emphasis on integration, the chapters are not grouped and divided into separate sections, such as social knowing, social influence, and social relationships. Instead, the chapter topics flow in a continuum from phenomena occurring primarily inside the individual to those occurring primarily outside. However, there is no imperative to this ordering and, with the exception of the first and last chapters, instructors may sequence the chapters to fit their own preferences without harm to student understanding.

One reason for this adaptability is that the integration we have proposed does not depend on any lock-step, building-block progress through the course material.

**Social psychology as an integrated whole.** Rather than presenting the fascinating findings of the field of social psychology as a mind-dazzling three-ring circus, we have attempted to arrange them into a patterned whole. Just as the many separate brush strokes of an Impressionist painting can be combined to produce a single visual image, and the separate acts of a ballet performance can be seen as parts of the same story, so we believe the separate parts of social psychology can be made into a cohesive whole. To this end, we use the recurrent themes of goal-orientation and person-situation interactions to organize each chapter of this text. Presenting the field in an organized structure should not only make it more intellectually appealing to advanced students, but should, by capitalizing on a basic principle of learning and memory, make the diverse facts and figures easier to grasp and remember for students at all levels. (Painting is “The Rehearsal of the Ballet on Stage,” by Edgar Degas).

Rather, that integration comes from a pair of concepts, *goals* and *the person-situation interaction*, that apply generally to the topics of the course. Although the goals may not be the same, the ways that goals function—the mechanisms by which they develop and operate—are similar in the case of aggression or attraction or self-presentation or any of the social behaviors we consider. And, although the particular factors may differ depending on the behavior under study, understanding how factors in the person interact with factors in the situation provides the most informed insights into the causes of everyday social behaviors—whatever the behaviors, in whichever order they are considered. These two concepts, then, allow an organization that we think is both integrative and flexible.

In the pages that follow, readers will find everyday social behaviors depicted as something more tightly woven and interconnected than a three-ring circus. Beyond being “the greatest *show* on earth,” social psychology may well be the greatest *story*—breathtaking, coherent, and, most of all, instructive. We hope you will agree.

## SUPPLEMENTS

Our goal is to provide supplements, for students and instructors, that are a cut above the materials that usually accompany social psychology textbooks. With the help of the expert teachers and scholars who have written the supplements to accompany our book, we are confident that you will find them both useful and accurate.





## INSTRUCTOR'S SUPPLEMENTS

### INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL (IRM)

Prepared by Renée Bator of the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, the IRM contains a wealth of materials to help enrich classroom presentations. For each chapter, the IRM provides a brief and a detailed chapter outline, lecture and discussion suggestions, critical thinking activities, classroom learning activities, reproducible handouts, and a list of multimedia resources (including readings, video titles, and web links).

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### WEBSITE

Visit <http://www.abacon.com/knc>, an easy-to-use website that features interactive practice tests, hotlinks to related websites, activities, and additional resources.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many of the best and brightest social psychologists devoted their valuable time to provide thoughtful comments on early drafts of this book. Without doubt, the book is better because of them. We send our deepest thanks to:

*Scott T. Allison, University of Richmond*  
*Michael L. Atkinson, University of Western Ontario*  
*Anita P. Barbee, University of Louisville*  
*Roy Baumeister, Case Western Reserve University*  
*Victor L. Bissonnette, Southeastern Louisiana University*  
*Galen Bodenhausen, Northwestern University*  
*Nyla Branscombe, University of Kansas*  
*Brad J. Bushman, Iowa State University*  
*Delia Cioffi, Dartmouth College*  
*Lisa N. Coates-Shrider, McMurry University*  
*Diana Cordova, Yale University*  
*Christian Crandall, University of Kansas*  
*Cynthia Crown, Xavier University*  
*Mark H. Davis, Eckerd College*  
*Carl Denti, Dutchess Community College*  
*Patricia Devine, University of Wisconsin, Madison*  
*Joan DiGiovanni, Western New England College*  
*Kenneth L. Dion, University of Toronto*  
*Steve Duck, University of Iowa*  
*Victoria Esses, University of Western Ontario*  
*Phillip Finney, Southeast Missouri State University*  
*Robert W. Fuhrman, University of Texas—San Antonio*  
*Grace Galliano, Kennesaw State College*  
*Stella Garcia, University of Texas—San Antonio*  
*Bryan Gibson, Central Michigan University*  
*Marti Hope Gonzales, University of Minnesota*  
*John Harvey, University of Iowa*

*Cindy Hazan, Cornell University*  
*Edward Hirt, Indiana University*  
*David Houston, University of Memphis*  
*Robert Hymes, University of Michigan—Dearborn*  
*Blair Johnson, Syracuse University*  
*Rich Keefe, Scottsdale Community College*  
*Mark Leary, Wake Forest University*  
*Craig A. Johnson, Hofstra University*  
*Larry Messe, Michigan State University*  
*Jeffrey Scott Mio, California State Polytechnic*  
*University, Pomona*  
*Paul A. Mongeau, Miami University*  
*Paul Nail, Southwestern Oklahoma State University*  
*Miles L. Patterson, University of Missouri—St. Louis*  
*Lou Penner, University of South Florida*  
*Pamela Regan, California State University,*  
*Los Angeles*  
*Harry Reis, University of Rochester*  
*Robert Ridge, Brigham Young University*  
*Alexander Rothman, University of Minnesota*  
*Dan Sachau, Mankato State University, Mankato*  
*Mark Schaller, University of British Columbia*  
*Connie Schick, Bloomsburg University, Pennsylvania*  
*P. Wesley Schultz, California State University,*  
*San Marcos*  
*Chris Segrin, University of Kansas*  
*James Shepperd, University of Florida*  
*Laura S. Sidorowicz, Nassau Community College*  
*Dianne Tice, Case Western Reserve University*  
*Timothy P. Tomczak, Genesee Community College*  
*Ann Weber, University of North Carolina—Asheville*  
*Margaret Zimmerman, Virginia Wesleyan College*

Our home in the psychology department at Arizona State University is intellectually stimulating and interpersonally collegial, for which we have always been grateful. We wish to thank, in particular, our colleagues and students who commented on early drafts of this book: Terrilee Asher, Dan Barrett, Linda Demaine, Nancy Eisenberg, Rosanna Guadagno, Carol Luce, Greg Neidert, John Reich, Kelton Rhoads, Ed Sadalla, Brad Sagarin, Delia Saenz, Melanie Trost, and Wilhemina Wosinska.

We would especially like to thank David Lundberg Kenrick and the students in Steve Neuberg's social psychology classes for providing invaluable insights from the perspective of the readers that most matter—undergraduate students.

In writing this book, we have searched for interesting real-world events and stories to help illustrate the concepts of social psychology. Several people were able to help us go beyond what was already available in published books and articles, and we greatly appreciate their efforts: Dr. Avrum Bluming, Lenell Geter, Steven Hassan, Cindy Jackson, Eric Saul, and Rabbi Marvin Tokayer.

Turning a set of ideas into a textbook is a long, complex task, and Jim Anker was there at the beginning to offer great advice. Much thanks. At Allyn and Bacon, we thank first Bill Barke, who shared our vision for a different kind of social psychology text and who provided the necessary levels of enthusiasm and commitment to make it a reality. The dynamic Susan Badger helped convince us that A & B was the place for our book; she was right. Sean Wakely took over from Susan and, with grace, insight, and more than his fair share of patience, made the right decisions and kept us moving forward. Our developmental editors, Beth Brooks and Kathy Field, contributed to this book in immeasurable ways. To Kathy, in particular, we are grateful, for she recognized, better than anyone, when our academic writing got in the way of communicating. The production team, starting with Joe Sweeney, somehow managed to turn our manuscript into an actual book in a stunningly short amount of time. Peggy J. Flanagan, our project manager, kept things moving smoothly, teaching us along the way about the process and providing good advice. Leslie Brunetta did a nice job catching our mistakes and cleaning up our prose, and Jessyca Broekman skillfully made the art program work. Sue C. Howard toiled under great time pressure with know-how and a sense of humor, acquiring for us difficult-to-find photographs. Linda Knowles did a great job designing the cover; like other good art, it reveals its messages and themes in layers, as we had hoped. And we continue to be impressed by the marketing and sales forces—spearheaded by the savvy, indefatigable Joyce Nilsen, and guided and supported by creative and energetic folks like Sandi Kirshner, Amy Braddock, Kate Conway, and Marcie Mealia—who enable us to get our view of social psychology to the student and the adopter.

Finally, we wish to thank the supplement authors for their outstanding work: Renée Bator on the *Instructor's Manual*; Angela Bryan on the *Student Study Guide*; and Lisa Farwell and Kelton Rhoads on the *Test Bank*.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

For over ten years, Douglas Kenrick, Steven Neuberg, and Robert Cialdini met weekly over enchiladas, shwarma, or pasta to design experiments and debate the big issues in social psychology. Over time, they came to realize that they agreed on several important things, and that these ideas could form the foundation of an integrative and exciting social psychology textbook. The authors possess over sixty years of combined experience in teaching social psychology to undergraduate and graduate students, in environments ranging from small private colleges to large public universities. They have published research in the field's most prestigious journals on a wide range of topics, including social cognition, self-presentation, persuasion and social influence, friendship and romance, helping, aggression, and prejudice and stereotyping. Each is independently recognized for integrative research that, when combined, inspire the two major themes of the book. This textbook brings together their many teaching and research interests.



Douglas T. Kenrick is a professor at Arizona State University. He received his B.A. from Dowling College and his Ph.D. from Arizona State University. He taught at Montana State University for four years before returning to ASU. His research has been published in a number of places, including *Psychological Review*, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *American Psychologist*, *Handbook of Social Psychology*, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. With John Seamon, he coauthored *Psychology* (1994). He has taught a graduate course on teaching psychology, and he thoroughly enjoys teaching undergraduate sections of social psychology.



Steven L. Neuberg received his undergraduate degree from Cornell University and his graduate degrees from Carnegie-Mellon University. He spent a postdoctoral year at the University of Waterloo in Canada, and has since taught at Arizona State University. Neuberg's research has been published in journals such as *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and has been supported by the National Institute of Mental Health. He recently received his college's Outstanding Teaching Award. He serves on a federal grant review panel and as director of the ASU social psychology program.



Robert B. Cialdini is a regents professor at Arizona State University, where he has also been named Graduate Distinguished Professor. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin and his graduate degrees from the University of North Carolina. He is a past president of the Society of Personality and Social Psychology. His research has appeared in numerous publications, including *Handbook of Social Psychology*, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. His book *Influence: Science and Practice* (1993) has been translated into seven languages.



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