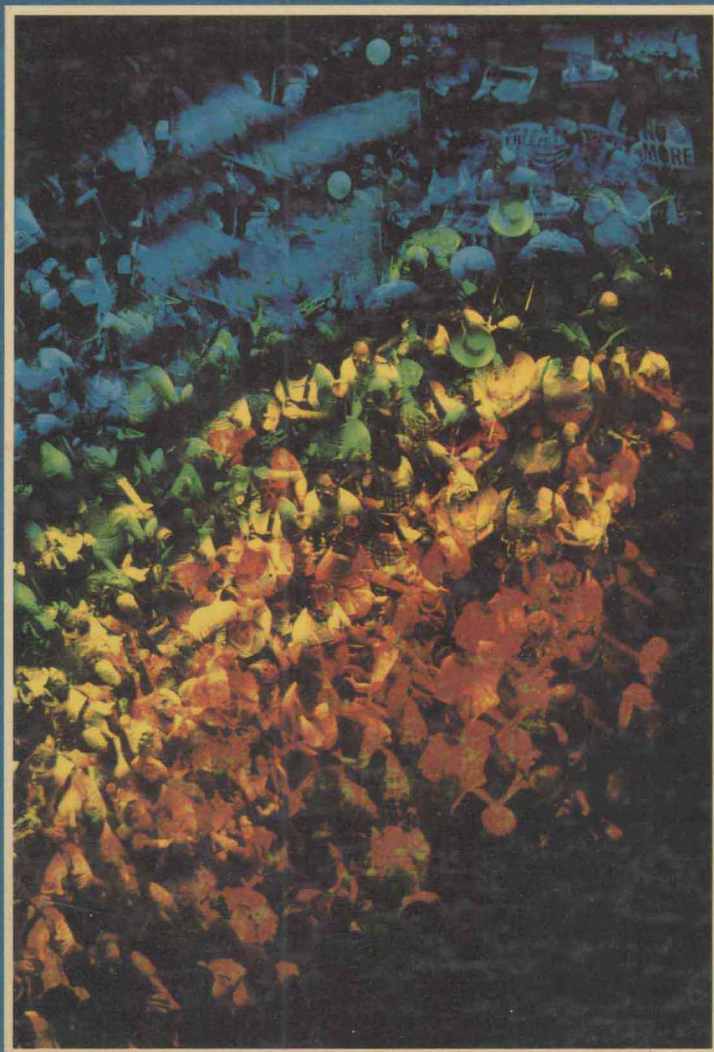


# A Survey of Social Psychology

Third Edition



Leonard Berkowitz

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# *A SURVEY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY*

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***THIRD EDITION***

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*A SURVEY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY*

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## *Preface*

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Generally speaking, textbook writers are usually faced with two choices: They can try to integrate much of the thinking and research in their discipline on the basis of a single perspective or they can reflect their field's diversity by indicating the range of topics receiving attention in the discipline and how these issues are being discussed by specialists. I have pursued this latter course and have attempted to provide the reader with a faithful survey of contemporary social psychology. This book will discuss those aspects of human social behavior being investigated by many social psychologists today, will summarize the major findings that have been obtained in their research endeavors, and will explain what the findings mean for our general understanding of human conduct. You will see that present-day social psychology is seeking the answers to a wide variety of questions: how we form impressions of other people, why we interpret someone's behavior in a particular manner, what influences shape our attitudes and beliefs, and how these attitudes and beliefs affect our actions, when are we most likely to conform to the views of others and when we are particularly apt to remain independent in our judgments, what conditions gov-

ern the level of aggression or helpfulness we display in a given situation—and many other issues.

This survey will not deal only with the abstract issues that only concern the professional. Most readers look to social psychology for an understanding of why people act as they do in their everyday lives. I have therefore attempted to extend many of the social psychological findings and ideas discussed in the text to problems that affect us greatly as members of a complex society, such as prejudice and group relationships, jury decision making in courtroom trials, illness, and the effects of the physical environment on behavior.

However, I did not want to write a book that would be only socially topical or “relevant.” The substantial changes that have occurred in the problems preoccupying our society over the past two decades testify to the way social interests alter and new concerns develop. Paralleling these broader changes, many of social psychology's “fashionable” topics and controversies have been modified. In society at large, as in social psychology in particular, what is topical at one time seems old-fashioned soon afterwards. The really important matters of social psychology are its

theoretical approaches. These will persist long after the passage of time shifts our attention to new problems in the social world. And as I note in the succeeding pages, our theoretical formulations are necessary for the student as well as the professional social psychologist. They help us make sense out of what otherwise would be a puzzling collection of isolated observations and help us predict what might happen on future occasions. This is not to say that our specific theoretical analyses remain constant. New ideas arise as research findings accumulate and new conceptual issues emerge. But what abides are the underlying theoretical approaches, the basic assumptions about human behavior that guide the social psychological investigators and analysts. In this book, therefore, I have attempted to summarize the major theoretical formulations in the field today and the more general conceptions of human nature that are at the basis of these formulations.

My emphasis on the significance of these theoretical analyses and perspectives is not meant to minimize the importance of the great numbers of "facts" that have been collected over the years. For example, I have little doubt that we know much more than before about the conditions promoting attitude change and social influence and, to take another topic, about the causes and consequences of aggressive behavior. In my view, you will encounter many valuable observations regarding human social conduct in these pages whatever theoretical interpretation you wish to give to these observations.

This book has benefited from the collaboration of many people. More than anything else, it rests on the shared endeavors of hundreds of social psychologists who have contributed their intelligence, intuition, and energy, seeking to further our understanding of human social behavior. I am deeply indebted to them for providing the observations and theoretical formulations without which this book would not have been

possible, and also for the intellectual stimulation they have provided that has so enriched my life as a teacher, researcher, and human being. Their work clearly demonstrates that social psychology is indeed an important field of study. I have enjoyed learning from them and have profited in many ways from participating in their activities. In writing this text I have sought to convey at least some of the pleasure and excitement I have felt through sharing their thoughts and discoveries.

I would also like to thank the following reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions:

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Words alone cannot express my appreciation for the love and encouragement given me by my wife, Norma, as I worked on this book over the past months. Warmly and without complaint, she has tolerated the time I have devoted to the writing and the social psychological problems with which I have struggled. She has been friend and partner in this endeavor to a very real extent.

*Leonard Berkowitz*

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***Part One***

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***What Is***

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***Social***

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***Psychology?***

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*Case 7. Criminal Violence and Handguns*

*Definition, Aim, and Causes of Aggression*

■ **WHAT SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IS**

*Definition and Focus*

*Emphasis on Theories*

*Theories and How to Evaluate Them*

*Theoretical Perspectives*

■ **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

*Some Philosophical and Sociological Precursors*

*Social Psychology Gets Under Way*

*Social Psychology from the Late 1920s to World War II*

*Social Psychology after World War II*

■ **SUMMARY**