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Social Psychology

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Nyla R. Branscombe • Robert A. Baron



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Social Psychology

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Dedication

*To Phil Schlaman, my best friend and essential social support;
You make it all worthwhile.*

—Nyla R. Branscombe

*To the people I care about most and who care most about me—
Rebecca, Ted, Melissa, Samantha, Randy, Paul and Leah;
And to the colleagues who helped make my life's journey such a happy one—
Donn Byrne, Roger Black, Jim Naylor, John Capaldi, and Mike Morris*

—Robert A. Baron

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Preface

Social Psychology in a Changing World

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

—Quote by Nelson Mandela

“As we go forward, I hope we’re going to continue to use technology to make really big differences in how people live and work.”

—Quote by Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google

“Psychology cannot tell people how they ought to live their lives. It can, however, provide them with the means for effecting personal and social change.”

—Quote by Albert Bandura

The aims identified in these quotations are truly impressive ones, and we most assuredly share their faith in the transformative power of education. We agree that equipping people with new ways of understanding themselves and interacting with the world has far-reaching consequences. And—more importantly—we believe that social psychology does provide powerful means of comprehending why people think, feel, and act as they do, and these ideas, in turn, illuminate how the social world shapes who we are and the processes by which we can achieve change, in ourselves and the social world. As you know, the goal of changing the world through technology, at least in terms of its implications for how we interact with other people and access our accumulated knowledge, has in fact been met—to “google” something has become a verb in everyday language, and Facebook and other social media have changed much about how we interact with each other. Just try to imagine life without the many forms of social media we use practically every hour of every day. Probably you cannot because digital technology has become woven into the very fabric of our lives so that we take them for granted and use them as though they are extensions of ourselves. While the founders of Google and Facebook sought to change how people interact with the world, social psychologists seek to illuminate the many “hidden processes” that shape how people influence each other. By providing you with a comprehensive overview of social psychological theory and research, we believe the information in this book offers you

a valuable means of learning about yourself and the social world in which we live.

The social world, which is the primary focus of this book, has changed tremendously in recent years, perhaps more quickly and dramatically than at any time in the past. That includes how we interact with each other, and a key point we will emphasize throughout the book is this: These changes have important implications for how we think about ourselves and other people. *Social psychology* is the branch of psychology that studies all aspects of our behavior with and toward others, our feelings and thoughts about them, and the relationships we develop with them. The central message for social psychology as a field, and for any book that seeks to represent it, is simple: Keep up with these technological changes in terms of their implications for social life, and this is precisely what we do with this 14th edition.

We are happy to report that social psychology provides many important insights crucial to understanding the social changes we have described thus far and can provide you with the means of understanding how to create further—and beneficial—social change. The field continues to be the vibrant and adaptable one it has always been and, we predict, always will be. The scope of social psychological research (and knowledge acquired) has expanded rapidly in the past few years—in fact, much has been learned since the publication of the previous edition of this book—and this new edition fully reflects the many changes now occurring all over the world.

Our central goal for this new edition was to illustrate just how well our field has—and does—adjust to and reflect the changing social world. Technology is not simply changing the way we carry out certain tasks: It is also changing the way we live and—most important—how we interact with each other. Although many basic principles of social life remain, in essence, unchanged—for instance, the nature of love, hate, and emotions in-between—the ways in which these principles are *expressed* and *experienced* have changed drastically.

So, how, precisely, did we set out to reflect these major trends while fully and accurately describing the core of our field—the knowledge and insights that social psychologists have gathered through decades of systematic research? As the 2015 *White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team Report* indicates, social psychological research consists of an impressive body of knowledge about how people actually think, feel, and behave toward other people, and the

accumulated knowledge identifies how changing social conditions can influence those responses, often with an eye to improving life for us all. Indeed, social psychological research has taught us much about the “human animal” that can and is being fruitfully applied in numerous domains. That is precisely what we aimed to do with this edition—illustrate how understanding social psychological processes can help to improve many aspects of life. The following is a summary of the major steps we took to accomplish these important goals.

Changes in Content

An Entirely Revamped Chapter Based on “the Science of Happiness”

Dealing with Adversity and Achieving a Happy Life (Chapter 12)

This capstone chapter is ambitious and entirely consistent with the theme of the 14th edition: *Education for achieving change*. We believe that social psychology can help *you* deal with the stresses of life and serve to guide you on the way toward achieving greater happiness. That’s a tall order, but our field can indeed now provide the central ingredients for thinking about ourselves in ways that can help us be resilient when we enter new social environments and provide insight with specific strategies that, when put into practice, will improve people’s well-being. Here’s what you can learn from this greatly revised chapter (Chapter 12):

Can people be too happy? What roles do culture and age play in defining the meaning of happiness? What do we know about how the happiness of people in different nations can be improved? And, what can we do to make ourselves happier individuals and satisfied with what we have and the choices we have made? In short, this chapter describes social psychological knowledge that can help you in your quest to build the happy and fulfilling life we all seek.

In other words, in this chapter we provide an overview of some of the important ways in which social psychology—with its scientific approach to personal and social change—can help us attain our key goals. Perhaps most important of all—we examine strategies people can use to handle the setbacks they may experience and reveal the ingredients for increasing happiness. Some of the questions we will consider are: What roles do culture and age play in defining the meaning of happiness? What do we know about how the happiness of people in different nations can

be improved? And, how do we turn adversity into strength and achievement? This chapter describes what social psychologists, with their comprehensive approach to understanding social life, have discovered, and this knowledge can help *you* in your quest to build the happy and fulfilling life we all seek. We think that some of the findings we will present are indeed surprising—for instance, the fact that increasing wealth does not necessarily make people happier, but investing in social relationships does indeed make people happier. We believe that this is a unique and important aspect of this text and one that is fully consistent with the practical credo that social psychology, as a field, has always embraced.

Changes in Content Within Each of the Chapters

Continuing a long tradition in which each edition of this textbook has included literally dozens of new topics, this 14th edition is indeed “new.” In every chapter, we present new lines of research, new findings, and new theoretical perspectives. Here is a partial list of the new topics included:

Chapter 1

- An increased emphasis on the importance of social relationships for psychological well-being.
- An entirely new section on the importance of meta-analysis in assessing an existing body of knowledge on a topic.
- A new emphasis on how cultural factors shape our conceptions of the self and how that in turn affects individuals’ comfort and ability to navigate different social settings.

Chapter 2

- A new section on heuristic use under conditions of economic threat.
- A new section on the “portion size effect” and how eating can reflect inadequate adjustment from a high anchor.
- New research on belief in free will and its implications for counterfactual thinking.

Chapter 3

- A new section on why we find it difficult to recognize deception in others.
- A new discussion of attributions and terrorism—how perpetrators explain their actions.
- New research on how first impressions are revised over time.

Chapter 4

- An entirely new section addresses how trying to conceal our identity can inhibit social interaction and harm well-being.
- New research addresses why introspection fails, and particularly why people apparently don't know that spending their money on others can make them happier than spending it on themselves.
- An entirely new section on how migration affects self-esteem—both international and domestic moves by students.

Chapter 5

- New research concerning the role of reactance in students' responses to instructor behaviors in the classroom.
- New research addressing how attitudes can be conditioned nonconsciously.
- New research examining when people's behavior reflects their abstract values and when it is based on their economic self-interests.

Chapter 6

- New coverage of how racial group membership affects responses to issues concerning police treatment of citizens.
- New research concerning how groups maintain a favorable view of themselves, despite treating other groups in a prejudicial fashion.
- New research illustrating how stereotypes create gender-based disparities in the workplace.

Chapter 7

- A new section on social skills—our ability to get along with others—and their importance in many aspects of social life.
- A new discussion of how even trivial similarities to others (e.g., sharing the same first names) can increase liking for them.
- New information concerning the attributes that we look for in romantic partners change over the course of our relationships with them.

Chapter 8

- A new discussion of the potential benefits of refusing to “go along”, or not yielding to social pressure.
- An expanded discussion of the effectiveness of various techniques (including several new ones) for gaining compliance from others—for getting other people to say “yes” to our requests.
- An entirely new section focused on unintentional social influence: How others influence us even when they are not trying to do so.

Chapter 9

- A new discussion of “crowd-funding”—a form of online helping in which individuals donate money to entrepreneurs without ever meeting them and without expecting anything in return.
- A new discussion of the role of social class in pro-social behavior.
- New findings concerning how feelings of anonymity (produced by darkness) can reduce willingness to help others.

Chapter 10

- New research concerning the role of genes in combination with exposure to stress affects aggression in children.
- A new section on the effects of narcissism on aggression has been included.
- A new section on situational factors that encourage aggressive behavior including gun availability.

Chapter 11

- New research concerning how groups create greater cohesion among their members when their distinctiveness is threatened.
- New research on how being part of a group helps people achieve a greater sense of control in their lives has been added.
- New research on distributive justice rules and how they vary across cultures was added.

Chapter 12

- This completely revamped capstone chapter offers a “social cure” perspective for managing the stresses in our lives and illustrates the critical role of social relationships for health, well-being, and achieving a meaningful life in a changing world.
- The importance of “believing we can change” for helping us weather adversity is described.
- Why practicing self-forgiveness following mistakes can help people change.

New Special Features with Research Insights on Cutting-Edge Topics

To fully reflect current trends in social psychological research and the field's responsiveness to social change, we now include two new special sections in each chapter—ones that were *not* present in the previous edition. These new sections, which are labeled “**What Research Tells Us**

About...” integrate important new research that will capture students’ attention and excite their interest in new emerging topics in social psychology. Some examples are:

- A new research insights section on “People’s Preference for the Status Quo.”
- A new research insights section on “Why Not Controlling Ourselves Can Make Us Feel Good.”
- A new research insights section on “The Role of Non-verbal Cues in Job Interviews.”
- A new research insights section on “Why Some People Conclude They Are Superior to Others.”
- A new research insights section on “The Importance of Belonging and Group Ties.”
- A new research insights section on “Perceived Discrimination and Self-Esteem.”
- A new research insights section on “Social Modeling and Eating.”
- A new research insights section on “Culture and Attitude Processes.”
- A new research insights section on “Biases in Our Beliefs About Inequality.”
- A new research insights section on “The Role of Existential Threat in Prejudice.”
- A new research insights section on “Dramatic Differences in Appearance Between Partners: Is Love Really Blind?”
- A new research insights section on “Two Factors That Can Destroy Love: Jealousy and Infidelity.”
- A new research insights section on “How Much We Really Conform.”
- A new research insights section on “Using Scarcity to Gain Compliance.”
- A new research insights section on “Paying it Forward: Helping Others Because We Have Been Helped.”
- A new research insights section on “How People React to Being Helped.”
- A new research insights section on “The Role of Emotions in Aggression.”
- A new research insights section on “Aggression in the Workplace.”
- A new research insights section on “Dissent and Criticism of Our Groups—“Because We Care.”
- A new research insights section on “The Importance of Being Treated With Respect.”
- A new research insights section on “Reducing Post-traumatic Stress Among Veterans.”
- A new research insights section on “The Relationship Between Emotions and Life Satisfaction Within Different Cultures.”

Student Aids

Any textbook is valuable only to the extent that it is both useful and interesting to the students using it. To make this edition even better for students, we have included several student aids—features designed to enhance the book’s appeal and usefulness. Included among these features are the following:

Chapter Objectives: The aims of each major chapter section are presented. With these, students should know what they will learn before they begin each chapter.

Chapter Openings Linked to Important Trends and Events in Society: All chapters begin with examples reflecting current trends in society or real-life events that illustrate important principles of social life. Here are some examples:

1. How people must make judgments—from what college to attend to what health insurance option to select—with incomplete information (Chapter 2)
2. How many famous people have deceived the public and why their deception was so difficult to detect (Chapter 3)
3. Facebook as a medium for presenting ourselves to others (Chapter 4)
4. How our beliefs about climate change are formed (Chapter 5)
5. How protest movements such as “Black Lives Matter” emerge and why there is a racial divide concerning police treatment of citizens (Chapter 6)
6. The powerful, practical advantages of being highly likable (Chapter 7)
7. How swindlers such as Bernie Madoff, who cheated investors out of billions, use social influence for selfish purposes (Chapter 8)
8. How more than 1.5 billion people have been helped to lead better lives by being provided with more efficient—and safer—cooking stoves (Chapter 9)
9. The goals of recent mass shooting perpetrators in the United States are compared with those committing aggression as part of a group to achieve political ends (Chapter 10)
10. The critical role of sharing an identity with an audience for effective communication in groups (Chapter 11)
11. How U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor overcame adversity to achieve a happy life (Chapter 12)

End-of-Chapter Summaries: Each chapter ends with a summary that recaps the key issues covered.

Special Labels on All Graphs and Charts: To make these easy to understand, we continue to use the “special labels” that are a unique feature of this book.

Supplementary Materials

All excellent texts are supported by a complete package of supplementary material, for both the students and the instructor. This text offers a full array of such aids including:

- **Instructor Manual:** includes chapter outlines, lecture launchers, key terms, in-class, and out-of-class activities.
- **PowerPoint Presentation:** provides a core template of the content covered throughout the text. Can easily be expanded for customization with your course.
- **Test Bank:** includes questions in multiple choice, fill-in-the blanks, short answer and essay response—formats.

Some Concluding Words

Looking back over the changes we have made for this 14th edition, we absolutely believe we have done everything possible to make this edition the best one yet! We sought to create a textbook that fully captures the extent to which modern social psychology reflects, and embraces, the major changes now occurring in the world and illustrate how those affect the social side of life. But only you—our colleagues and the students who use this textbook—can tell us to what extent we have succeeded. So please do send us your comments, reactions, and suggestions. As in the past, we will listen to them very carefully and do our best to use them constructively in planning the next edition.

Our warm regards and thanks!

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Nyla R. Branscombe & Robert A. Baron

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Her current research addresses a variety of issues concerning intergroup relations from a social identity perspective. How people think about groups that have a history of victimization, when and why privileged groups may feel collective guilt for their past harm doing, and the consequences of experiencing discrimination for psychological well-being have been key topics investigated. She gratefully acknowledges ongoing research support from the *Canadian Institute for Advanced Research: Social Interactions, Identity, and Well-Being Program*.



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Robert A. Baron is Regents Professor and the Spears Professor of Entrepreneurship at Oklahoma State University. He received his Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Iowa (1968). He has held faculty appointments at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Purdue University; the Universities of Minnesota, Texas, South Carolina, and Washington; Princeton University; and Oxford University. From 1979 to 1981, he was the Program Director for Social and Developmental Psychology at NSF. In 2001, he was appointed as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow by the French Ministry of Research (Universite de Toulouse).

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His current research interests focus on applying the findings and principles of social psychology to the field of entrepreneurship, where he has studied such topics as the role of perception in opportunity recognition, how entrepreneurs' social skills influence their success, and the role of positive affect in entrepreneurship.

Chapter 1

Social Psychology

The Science of the Social Side of Life



Chapter Overview

Social Psychology: What It Is and Is Not

- Social Psychology Is Scientific in Nature
- Social Psychology Focuses on the Behavior of Individuals
- Social Psychology Seeks to Understand the Causes of Social Behavior
- The Search for Basic Principles in a Changing Social World

Social Psychology: Advances at the Boundaries

- Cognition and Behavior: Two Sides of the Same Social Coin
- The Role of Emotion in the Social Side of Life
- Social Relationships: How Important They Are for Well-Being
- Social Neuroscience: The Intersection of Social Psychology and Brain Research
- The Role of Implicit (Nonconscious) Processes
- Taking Full Account of Social Diversity

How Social Psychologists Answer the Questions They Ask: Research as the Route to Increased Knowledge

- Systematic Observation: Describing the World Around Us
- Correlation: The Search for Relationships
- The Experimental Method: Knowledge Through Systematic Intervention
- Further Thoughts on Causality: The Role of Mediating Variables
- Meta-Analysis: Assessing a Body of Knowledge

The Role of Theory in Social Psychology

- The Quest for Knowledge and the Rights of Individuals: Seeking an Appropriate Balance
- Getting the Most Out of This Book: A User's Guide



Learning Objectives

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1.1 Evaluate the diverse topics that social psychology seeks to understand</p> <p>1.2 Examine the major avenues that social psychology is currently exploring</p> <p>1.3 Understand the methods social psychologists use to gain insight into the questions posed</p> | <p>1.4 Explain how theories play a key role in social psychological research</p> <p>1.5 Identify how the dilemma of deception is addressed in social psychology</p> <p>1.6 Outline the steps taken to make reading this book a pleasant and informative experience</p> |
|---|---|

Consider, for a moment, what aspect of your life impacts your health and happiness most? Did your relationships with other people come to mind? What would your life be like without your family, friends, roommates, romantic partners, professors, coworkers, sports teammates—all the people you care about and with whom you interact? The truth is human beings are a truly social species. Each of us is connected to and influenced by other people, even if we're not always consciously aware of all the ways we are affected by them. Indeed, a fundamental message of social psychology is that both the good and the bad in our lives involve other people. As evidenced in the following quotations, people from all cultures and walks of life agree that our connections to others bring happiness and meaning to our lives. At the same time, we also know that other people—when they disagree with us, exclude us, or harm us—can be the source of our worst pain.

- The Dalai Lama: “Our prime purpose in this life is to help others.”
- John Lennon, former musician with the Beatles: “Count your age by friends, not years.”
- Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”
- Bob Marley, famous reggae musician: “Truth is, everybody is going to hurt you: You just gotta find the ones worth suffering for.”
- David Byrne, musician formerly of the Talking Heads: “Sometimes it’s a form of love just to talk to somebody that you have nothing in common with and still be fascinated by their presence.”
- Robert Alan Silverstein, author and social change activist: “In our hectic, fast-paced, consumer-driven society, it’s common to feel overwhelmed, isolated and alone. . . . The sense of belonging we feel when we make the time to take an active role in our communities can give us a deeper sense of meaning and purpose.”

Connecting with others—both as individuals and as part of social groups—is a major predictor not only of happiness and well-being but also of physical health. Robert Putnam summed up the importance of social connections based on extensive research reported in his book, *Bowling Alone*: “If you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half.” If you had any lingering doubts about the importance of the social side of life, perhaps you don’t anymore!

We also know that solitary confinement is so bad for mental health that it is often considered “cruel and unusual punishment.” Try, for a moment, to imagine life in total isolation from others, as shown in the movie *Cast Away*, the story of a person who finds himself stranded on an uninhabited island after his plane crashes in the Pacific Ocean. After a while, he craves human company so much that he paints a face on a