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Social Psychology

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Handbook of
Social Psychology

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Preface

THE VISION

This *Handbook* is one tangible product of a lifelong *affaire*. When I was re-introduced to social psychology, as a first-semester senior psychology major, it was “love at first sight.” I majored in psychology because I wanted to understand human social behavior. I had taken an introductory sociology course as a freshman. The venerable Lindesmith and Strauss was our text, and I enjoyed both the text and the course. I thought at the time that it was the *psychology* of the material that attracted me. Two years later, after several psychology courses, I walked into social psychology, and realized it was the *social* that attracted me. I never looked back. Later in that semester I quizzed my faculty mentors, and learned that there were three places where I could get an education in *social psychology*: at Stanford with Leon Festinger, at Columbia, and at Michigan, in the joint, interdisciplinary program directed by Ted Newcomb. Fortunately, I arrived in Ann Arbor in the fall of 1963, and spent the next four years taking courses and seminars in social psychology, taught by faculty in both the sociology and psychology departments. I especially value the opportunity that I had to learn from and work with Dan Katz, Herb Kelman, and Ted Newcomb during those years.

These experiences shaped my intellectual commitments. I am convinced that social psychology is best approached with an interdisciplinary perspective. I bring such a perspective to my research, undergraduate training, and mentoring of graduate students. I do not believe that social psychology is the only relevant perspective, but I do believe that it is essential to a complete understanding of human social behavior.

As I completed my graduate work, I was fortunate to obtain a position in the University of Wisconsin Sociology Department. At that time, there were two other faculty members there who had earned degrees in the joint program at Michigan, Andy Michener and Shalom Schwartz. The three of us did much of the teaching in the social psychology area, graduate and undergraduate. We shared the view that social psychology is an interdisciplinary field, that combining relevant work by persons working in psychology and in sociology leads to a more comprehensive understanding. We viewed social psychology as an empirical field; theory, both comprehensive and mid-range, is essential to the development of the field but so is empirical research testing and refining those theoretical ideas. We believed that

research employing all types of methods, qualitative and quantitative, make an important contribution.

What, you ask, is the relevance of this personal history? The answer is that it is the source of the vision that guides my work. You will see this vision of the field reflected in various ways throughout this Handbook.

I was very pleased when the Social Psychology Section of the American Sociological Association decided to sponsor the volume, *Social psychology: Sociological perspectives*, edited by Rosenberg and Turner. I felt that there was a need for such a volume that could be used as a textbook in graduate courses. Following its publication in 1981, I used the book regularly in my graduate course. According to Cook, Fine, and House, it “became the textbook of choice for many sociologists teaching graduate courses in social psychology” (1995, p. ix). The need for an updating and expansion of that volume to reflect new trends in our field led the Section to commission a new work, published as *Sociological perspectives in social psychology* in 1995. I used this book in graduate courses for several years. By 2001 I felt that a new edition was needed. Conversations with members and officers of the Social Psychology Section indicated that the Section had no plans to commission such a book. At about this time Howard Kaplan, general Editor of this series of Handbooks, invited me to edit a volume on social psychology. And here it is. The editors of the two books commissioned by the Social Psychology Section graciously donated some of the royalties to the Section. I will donate to the Section one-half of any royalties from the sales of this Handbook.

THE GOALS

My goals as editor are similar to those of my distinguished predecessors, including Morris Rosenberg, Ralph Turner, Karen Cook, Gary Fine, and Jim House. I have also relied on the *Handbooks of social psychology*, which draw together work in our field from a more psychological perspective, in both my research and teaching. Now in the fourth edition, published in 1998, it convinced me of the value of a volume that can serve as a sourcebook for researchers and practitioners. One goal in preparing this *Handbook* is to provide such a sourcebook, or “standard professional reference for the field of social psychology” (Gilbert, Fiske, & Lindzey, 1998, p. xi). A second goal is to provide an opportunity for scholars in the field to take stock of and reflect on work in their areas of expertise. Authors were invited not only to draw together past work, but also to identify limitations in and to point to needed future directions. Third, I hope that this volume will serve as the “textbook of choice” for graduate courses for the next several years.

THE FIELD OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social psychology is a major subfield within sociology. The principal journal in the area, *Social Psychology Quarterly* (originally called *Sociometry*), was founded in 1937, and is one of only six journals published by the American Sociological Association. Sociologists share this field with psychologists. This has led to diverse views of the relationship between psychological and sociological social psychology. Twenty-five years ago, a widely held view was that these subfields were relatively distinct, that each was a distinctive “face” with its own core questions, theory, and methods (House, 1977). It is certainly true that there are differences in core questions; a comparison of the Table of Contents of the *Handbook of social psychology*

(1998) and *Sociological perspectives on social psychology* (1995) will make clear these differences. Psychologists often emphasize processes that occur inside the individual, including perception, cognition, motivation, and emotion, and the antecedents and consequences of these processes. In analyzing interaction, their focus is often on how aspects of self, attitudes, and interpersonal perception influence behavior. Sociologists have traditionally been more concerned with social collectivities, including families, organizations, communities, and social institutions.

Social psychology is the study of the interface between these two sets of phenomena, the nature and causes of human social behavior (Michener & DeLamater, 1999). Both intra-individual and the social context influence and are influenced by individual behavior. The *core concerns* of social psychology include:

- the impact of one individual on another
- the impact of a group on its individual members
- the impact of individuals on the groups in which they participate, and
- the impact of one group on another.

Given this set of concerns, I share Cook, Fine, and House's (1995) view that social psychology is interdisciplinary, that it involves and requires a synthesis of the relevant work in the two disciplines on which it draws. The apparent division into "two social psychologies" reflects in part the bureaucratic structure of the modern American university, including the division of knowledge by departments, and the practice of requiring a faculty member to have a single "tenure home." I do not believe that there are insurmountable differences in theory, method, or substance between the work of psychological and sociological social psychologists. The so-called "cognitive revolution" brought to the fore in psychology the same processes traditionally emphasized by symbolic interaction theory, identity theory, and the dramaturgical perspective in sociology.

One facet of social psychology within sociology is a set of theoretical perspectives. Rosenberg and Turner (1981) included chapter-length treatment of four theories: symbolic interaction, social exchange, reference group, and role theory. Cook, Fine, and House (1996) did not include a section devoted to theory, using instead an organization based on substantive areas. I have included a section on theory, with chapters on symbolic interaction, social exchange, expectation states, social structure and personality, and the evolutionary perspectives. The differences in the topics of theoretical chapters between Rosenberg and Turner and this Handbook reflect the changes in the field in the last two decades of the 20th century. Although it remains a useful metaphor, the role perspective *qua* theory has not flourished. Renewed interest in cognitive processes and their social context, and the development of social identity theory, has recast some of the concerns of the reference group perspective. Expectation states theory has become a major perspective, reflecting the continuing incremental and innovative theoretical development and research activities of a new generation of social psychologists. The rapid development of evolutionary perspectives and their application to such topics as interpersonal attraction, mate selection, family, and sexuality are the most visible changes to have occurred in the field.

Another facet is the methods we use to gather empirical data. Those who share(d) the "two social psychologies" view point(ed) to the dominance of the experiment in psychological social psychology, and of the survey in sociological social psychology. While there was a pronounced difference in this regard in the 1970s and 1980s, that difference has narrowed greatly in the past decade. Researchers, whether psychologists or sociologists, interested in areas such as prejudice and racism, mental health, and adult personality have always relied

heavily on surveys. Recent developments in the analysis of data and the increasing use of longitudinal designs have enhanced our ability to test causal models with survey data; the experimental method is no longer the only way to study causality. Furthermore, the use of the experiment by sociologically oriented social psychologists is increasing, particularly in research on expectation states and exchange theory. This development is welcomed by those of us who believe that problems are best studied using multiple methods. Finally, there has been a renaissance in the use of systematic observation by sociologically oriented researchers. Thus in 2002, social psychologists from both sides of the aisle are using surveys, experiments, and observational methods, and learning from each other how to improve these techniques.

At the same time, social psychology remains well integrated into the larger discipline of sociology. We share the use of the theories and methods described above with other sociologists. In our research and writing, we focus on topics that are of interest and in some cases central to the discipline: life-course analyses, social networks, socialization, status, stereotyping, and stigma, to name a few. Work by social psychologists is integral to most of the other major subfields in sociology: collective behavior and social movements, development, deviance, emotion, health, language, and social stratification. The relevance of social psychology to these topics is made clear in many of the chapters that follow.

THIS HANDBOOK

The topic outline for this *Handbook* is the result of a variety of input. I began by looking in detail at the outlines of four previous handbooks. I noted the frequency with which topics appeared, and developed an initial list of more than 25 topics. The sifting and winnowing of the list benefited greatly from input from the graduate student and faculty participants in the Social Psychology Brownbag/Seminar and other faculty members at the University of Wisconsin. Howard Kaplan also reviewed the outline. The Table of Contents contains all of the topics on my final list, save one. Despite repeated efforts, I was unable to find someone to author a chapter on the social psychology of race and gender.

Section I of the book contains five chapters, each of which presents a theoretical perspective basic to contemporary social psychology. They include symbolic interaction theory, expectation states theory, social exchange theory, the social structure and personality perspective, and evolutionary theory. Section II includes three chapters looking at developmental and socialization processes across the life of the person. Reflecting the divisions of the research literature, these chapters focus on childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, respectively. Section III contains chapters on major topics that are associated primarily with the person, including self, language, social cognition, values and attitudes, and emotions. Section IV includes chapters on interpersonal phenomena, including attraction and relationships, small groups, social networks, and the impact of structural location on psychological processes. The last section includes chapters discussing the contributions of social psychology to topics of general interest to sociologists, including deviant behavior, intergroup relations, collective behavior and social movements, and the study of cultural variation.

On the whole, the process of inviting persons to contribute to the *Handbook* went smoothly because most of the persons I approached agreed to contribute. In some cases, they added the writing of a chapter for the *Handbook* to an already long list of commitments, and I am very grateful for their willingness to do so. I believe that in many cases, accepting my invitation reflects the person's sense that this is an important undertaking. Of the 38 contributors to this Handbook, 28 are new in the sense that they did not contribute to Cook, Fine, and

House. I invited more senior persons to collaborate with a younger scholar in writing their chapters, and many of them did so. I am delighted at the inclusion of so many members of the cohort recently entering the field.

In common with other recent Handbooks, this one has some limitations. Because it is a single volume, unlike Gilbert, Fiske, and Lindzey, some tough choices were necessary with regard to topics. Not included in this volume are chapter-length treatments of some important areas, including aging, ethnography, sexuality, social constructionism, and social psychology of organizations, of work. This volume does not include chapters on research methods. I considered this choice carefully, and I concluded that I wanted to use the pages to cover substantive topics, that there are other good sources of information on the methods *qua* methods. A second limitation arises from the page limit imposed on authors; the target was 40 manuscript pages, including references. This, of course, forced authors to omit some topics and abbreviate coverage of others.

In their preface, Rosenberg and Turner characterized sociological social psychology as “having reached the late adolescent stage of development; as such, it is heir to the various identity crises that so often characterize that developmental stage. This volume, we hope, will assist it in discovering and establishing that identity” (1981, p. xxxiv). Fourteen years later, in their Introduction, Cook, Fine, and House stated “we have grown as a field and become more integrated into the discipline” (1995, p. xii), and suggested that the field had reached early middle age. In light of the fact that only eight years has passed since then, and of the continued growth, emergence of new areas of work, and increasing integration captured in these pages, we cannot have grown much older. I foresee a long and healthy midlife.

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