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Introducing Social Psychology

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

We introduce social psychology with a few examples of classic studies to give an impression of the research questions social psychologists address and of the methods they use to tackle these questions. We then present a formal definition of social psychology and discuss the differences between social psychology and related areas. The main part of the chapter is devoted to the history of social psychology, which we trace from the starting years around 1900 until today. Most of this history took place in the USA, but this development was strongly influenced by European researchers, even before the establishment of a European social psychology following World War II.

Introduction:
Some Classic Studies

How do social psychologists go about addressing research questions?

In 1954, Muzafer Sherif (see Pioneer box, Chapter 14, p. 295), who was then professor of social psychology at the University of Oklahoma (USA), conducted one of a series of classic studies with 11-year-old boys, who had been sent to a remote summer camp at Robbers Cave State Park, Oklahoma. None of the boys knew each other before the study. They were divided into two groups, who stayed in cabins far apart from each other and did not know of each other's existence. For one week, each of the groups enjoyed the typical summer camp life, engaging in fun activities like camping out, transporting canoes over rough terrain to the water and playing various games. They had a great time. It is therefore not surprising that at the end of the week, group members had grown very fond of one another and that the groups developed strong group identities. Each chose a name for itself (the 'Rattlers' and the 'Eagles'), which they proudly displayed on shirts and flags.

At the end of the week, each of the groups was told that there was another group in the vicinity. As though acceding to the boys' requests, the staff arranged tournaments of games (e.g., touch football, baseball, tug of war) between the groups. The winning team would receive a cup and members of the winning team would each be given a new penknife. The tournament started in the spirit of good sportsmanship, but as it progressed, hostilities between the groups began to develop. 'Soon members of each group began to call their rivals "stinkers", "sneaks" and "cheats" . . . Near the end of this stage, the members of each group found the other group and its members so distasteful that they expressed strong preferences to have no further contact with them at all' (Sherif, 1967, p. 82).

What was the point of all of this? What can tales about boys in a summer camp tell us about real life? The answer is: a great deal. These studies actually mark a turning point in the study of prejudice

(i.e., dislike for members of an outgroup), because they challenged the then dominant view of prejudice as either an outflow of a prejudiced personality disposition (authoritarian personality) or as the result of displaced frustration (scapegoat theory). There was no indication that these boys had prejudiced personalities or needed scapegoats to displace their aggression. And yet, they developed strong dislikes for the members of the other group (the 'stinkers' and 'sneaks'), because they were competing with them for some valued good which only one of the two groups could attain. Sherif interpreted these findings as support for his realistic conflict theory, which assumed that intergroup hostility and intergroup prejudice are usually the result of a conflict of interest between groups over valued commodities or opportunities. Goals were the central concept in Sherif's theory: he argued that when two groups were competing for the same goal, which only one could achieve, then there would be intergroup hostility.

Not surprising, you might say. After all, this is the reason why football supporters beat each other up every so often before and after games between their clubs. And yet, this is not the full story. Nearly two decades later, Henri Tajfel (see Pioneer box, Chapter 14, p. 297), then professor of social psychology at Bristol University (UK), and colleagues conducted a series of studies, which called into question the assumption that competitive goals are a *necessary* condition for the development of intergroup hostility (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971). Participants in these studies were 14- to 15-year-old schoolboys, who all knew each other well and came to the psychology laboratory in groups of eight, to participate in an experiment on visual perception. Their task was to estimate the number of dots that were flashed on a screen. After completion of this task, they were told that they would also participate in a second experiment and, for the ease of coding, would be divided on the basis of the dot estimates they had just made. Half the boys were then (randomly) assigned to the 'underestimators' group, the other half to the 'over-estimators' group. (In later studies, boys were often divided on the basis of their alleged preference for paintings by Klee or Kandinsky, an equally irrelevant criterion for boys of that age.) The boys then had to assign rewards to other individuals in real money. They did not know the identity of the other individuals, but only their code numbers and their group membership. Tajfel and colleagues were especially interested in how the boys would divide money up between a member of their own group and a member of the other group. The results were quite surprising: in making their intergroup choices, most boys gave consistently more money to members of their own group than to members of the other group. These studies were again quite innovative, because they showed that intergroup conflict was *not* an essential cause of intergroup discrimination (or at least ingroup favouritism). Apparently, the mere fact of division into groups was sufficient to trigger discriminatory behaviour.

You may now believe that you have some idea of what social psychology is all about and how social psychologists conduct their research. You might also think that the approach of Sherif was more in line with what you had expected but that the studies by Tajfel, despite their artificiality, led to some interesting results. However, you will be somewhat premature in your confidence, as you may realize when we describe two more studies that have become classics in social psychology.

In 1994, Neil Macrae (then at Cardiff University) and colleagues studied people's ability to suppress their prejudicial thoughts (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne & Jetten, 1994). After all, there is a great deal of evidence that people acquire their prejudices quite early and may not be able to get rid of them later in life, even if these prejudicial thoughts have become inconsistent with their egalitarian values (Wilson, Lindzey & Schooler, 2000). Thus, if people cannot forget their prejudicial thoughts, it would be good if, at least, they could inhibit them and prevent them from affecting their actions. As the studies by Macrae, Bodenhausen et al. (1994) show, this may be more difficult than one would think.

Participants in these studies were students. When they arrived at the laboratory, they were told that they were to participate in an investigation of people's ability to construct life event details from visual information. They were then presented with a colour photograph of a skinhead and were asked to write a short essay about a typical day in the life of a skinhead. Skinheads were chosen here not only because there is widespread prejudice against them, but also because, unlike prejudice towards other minority groups, expressing prejudice towards skinheads is not (yet) politically incorrect. Half of the participants were asked to suppress their prejudice against skinheads in writing this essay. They were told to try to write this essay without being influenced by their stereotypes about skinheads, that is, the beliefs they might have about the characteristics of skinheads in general. The other half (i.e., the control group) were not given this instruction.

After participants had finished the first essay, they were given a photo of another skinhead and asked to write another essay. This time, however, they were not given any instructions about suppressing stereotypes. Both essays were then rated by independent raters, who did not know whether a given essay had been written by a participant from either the experimental or the control group, and who evaluated the extent to which writers expressed stereotypes about skinheads. With regard to the first essay, results were not very surprising. As one would expect of 'good' (i.e., obedient) participants, individuals who had been instructed to suppress their stereotypes in their first essay did so quite successfully. Their

Plate 1.1 *How easy is it for people to suppress their prejudice towards skinheads?*

essays were much less stereotypic than the essays of the control group. However, the analysis of their second essays provided a striking finding: *there was a rebound effect*. The second essay of these 'suppressors' was more stereotypic than that of the control group. Thus, when people no longer tried to suppress their stereotypes, they showed a higher level of stereotypical thinking than if they had never tried to suppress their thoughts in the first place.

Although these are fascinating results, Macrae (see Chapter 4, this volume) and colleagues were not satisfied with merely showing a rebound effect of stereotype suppression on *thinking*. They also wanted to know whether attempts to suppress one's stereotype would affect people's *action*. They therefore conducted a second study. The first part of this study was identical to that of their first experiment. However, after having written an essay under either stereotype suppression or no-suppression instructions, participants were told that they would now go next door to meet the person depicted on the photograph (i.e., the skinhead). When they entered the room next door, there was a row of chairs standing next to each other, but no skinhead. However, on the first chair there was a denim jacket and bag. The experimenter told the participant that the other person must just have gone to the toilet and would return shortly and that the participant should sit down on one of the chairs in the meantime. The measure of interest in this case was the seating position, that is, how far the participant would choose to sit away from the skinhead he or she was supposed to meet. We would all acknowledge that the distance we keep from someone is an indication of our liking for that person (Macrae, Bodenhausen et al., 1994). And in line with the findings of the previous study, participants who had (successfully) suppressed their stereotype on writing the essay now chose a chair that was significantly further away from the skinhead than did individuals in the control group. Thus, the rebound effect of stereotype suppression affected not only thoughts but also behaviour (but for some constraints on the general effect, see Monteith, Sherman & Devine, 1998).

As surprising as these findings were, the impact of stereotypes on behaviour was still restricted to the way the individual behaved towards a member of the group towards whom the stereotype was held. As we will see in the next experiment, the impact of

stereotypes can be even more pervasive. This study was conducted by John Bargh (see Pioneer box, Chapter 4, p. 75) and his colleagues (Bargh, Chen & Burrows, 1996) at New York University (USA). In the first part of this experiment, participants had to complete a scrambled sentence test in which they had to form sentences from scrambled sets of words. For participants in the experimental group, these sentences contained words that were part of the (American) stereotype of the elderly such as 'Florida', 'Bingo' and 'grey'. This procedure is known as 'priming', because these words will bring the elderly stereotype to participants' minds (i.e., make it more accessible), including characteristics of elderly people that were not even mentioned in the priming procedure.

One such characteristic that is typically attributed to the elderly, but was not mentioned in the priming procedure, is that elderly people move rather slowly. The researchers assumed that participants who were primed with the stereotype of the elderly would also think of 'moving slowly' as another salient characteristic of the elderly. It was further assumed that this thought would affect *the participants' own behaviour*. The researchers predicted that participants primed with the elderly stereotype would move more slowly than participants in the control condition who had been exposed to neutral primes. The experimenters then measured the time it took participants to walk from the experimental room to the nearest lift. In line with the hypothesis, participants who were primed with the elderly stereotype took significantly longer to reach the lift than did participants who had been primed with neutral words. It appears that thinking of the concept 'slow' influenced behaviour, and that consciousness did not play any part in this process, because participants were aware neither that they had been primed nor that they had been led to walk more slowly (see Research close-up 4.1, p. 74).

We hope that reading about these studies has stimulated your interest in social psychology. If it has, you can read more about the first two studies in Chapter 14 (Prejudice and intergroup relations). The last two studies are discussed in Chapter 4 (Social cognition). Given that the research we have discussed so far is quite varied in its research questions, scope and methods, we now turn to a more general discussion of the nature of social psychology.

WHAT IS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY?

How do social psychologists define their discipline?

When social psychologists are called upon to define their discipline, they usually refer to the definition given by Gordon Allport (1954a) (see Pioneer box, Chapter 14, p. 309) in his classic chapter on the history of social psychology, published in the second edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology*: 'Social psychology is the attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings,

and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings' (p. 5). This is quite a good definition, which can accommodate the studies that we have described earlier.

One characteristic of social psychology, which Allport implied but did not mention specifically, is the use of *scientific methods*. The scientific method of choice used in the studies we just described was the experiment. We will discuss this method only briefly, because you will learn more about the experimental method in the chapter on methods (Chapter 2). Experiments are a method in which the researcher deliberately introduces some change into a setting to examine the consequences of that change. The typical procedure used in experiments is that conditions in which a change has been introduced (i.e., an independent variable manipulated)

are compared to conditions in which this has not been the case, the so-called control group. By randomly assigning participants to either experimental or control group, the researcher can be reasonably certain that any difference between the two groups was due to the manipulation of the independent variable. Thus, Macrae and colleagues asked half their participants to suppress their stereotype of skinheads, and compared their thoughts and behaviour to those of a control group of individuals who had not been asked to suppress their stereotype. Bargh and colleagues compared the walking speed of participants who had been primed with the elderly stereotype with that of (control) participants, who had not been primed. The study by Sherif is somewhat deficient in this respect, because he did not really have a proper control group. He compared the impact of the introduction of intergroup competition on group members' behaviour over time. The control conditions in the Tajfel experiment are difficult to explain without a more detailed description of the study. You may remember that Tajfel and colleagues assessed how the boys would divide money between a member of their own group and a member of the other group. As a control for ingroup bias, they simply reversed the alleged group membership of the two individuals between whom the money had to be divided.

Another methodological difference between the study by Sherif and those of the other researchers is that Sherif's study was a field rather than a laboratory experiment: he used a natural setting (summer camp) to test his hypotheses. The other studies were all laboratory experiments which used settings that were specially created by the experimenter. For example, Macrae and colleagues led their participants to believe that they were in a study of people's ability to construct life event details from visual information. This is also an example of a darker aspect of social psychology, namely, that we often have to use deception to test our predictions. But if the participants in the study by Macrae and colleagues (1994) had known the real purpose of the study, this would have influenced their thoughts and behaviour and the results of such a study would have been meaningless. (We therefore often disregard the data of participants who guess the purpose of our experiments.) Field and laboratory experiments are not the only scientific methods used by social psychologists to test their hypotheses. You can read about other methods in Chapter 2 (Research methods in social psychology).

Obviously, the use of scientific methods is not a characteristic that allows one to distinguish social psychology from other social sciences. By definition, all sciences use scientific methods and for many of them, experiments are the method of choice. A more distinctive characteristic introduced by Allport is the fact that social psychology is concerned with social influence and that it studies the impact of others on individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviours. All of the studies we described earlier tried to understand and explain how thoughts, feelings and behaviours of their participants were influenced by the presence of other human beings. In the case of the study by Sherif, these human beings were mainly the members of the other group with whom the boys competed, although the members of their own groups also influenced the behaviour of these boys. In contrast to the Sherif study, where the others were actually present, the presence of others was imagined rather than real in the Tajfel study (recall that Allport's careful

definition allowed for the impact of the *imagined* presence of others). Finally, in the studies by Macrae and by Bargh and colleagues, it was not really the presence of others that influenced participants' thoughts or behaviour but the suppression or activation of their beliefs about other groups.

The studies by Macrae and Bargh are also good examples of an aspect of social psychological research that is less clearly emphasized in Allport's definition, namely, the fact that we are interested not only in the impact others have on our thoughts, feelings and behaviour but also in the *cognitive processes* by which our thoughts, emotions and goals guide our understanding of the world around us and our actions. You can read more about this in Chapter 4 (Social cognition).

A final characteristic of social psychology emphasized in Allport's definition is that social psychologists study the impact that the implied or actual presence of others has on the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of *individuals*. Thus, even when we study social groups, we examine the impact groups have on the individual group members. For example, in the classic study of conformity with group majorities, Asch (1956) examined the impact of the majority opinion on the judgements of individual participants (see Chapter 11, this volume). Similarly, Tajfel and colleagues (1971) studied the impact of the mere categorization of others into ingroup and outgroup on the way individuals distributed money between them. This emphasis on the individual is actually a very important point which had already been made by the elder brother of Gordon Allport, Floyd Allport, in his classic textbook of social psychology: 'There is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals. Social psychology must not be placed in contradistinction to the psychology of the individual; it is a part of the psychology of the individual, whose behaviour it studies in relation to that sector of his environment comprised by his fellows' (F. Allport, 1924, p. 4). The emphasis on the individual does not deny the importance of the social context as a determinant of individual behaviour, but it rejects the existence of a group consciousness or a collective mind as separate from the minds of the individuals who comprise the group.

HOW DOES SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY DIFFER FROM OTHER DISCIPLINES?

What differentiates social psychology from related disciplines such as personality psychology and sociology?

In addition to using examples of studies as well as a definition to illuminate the nature of social psychology, it might be helpful to contrast social psychological research to that of research in related disciplines. As in the previous section, we will use the example of
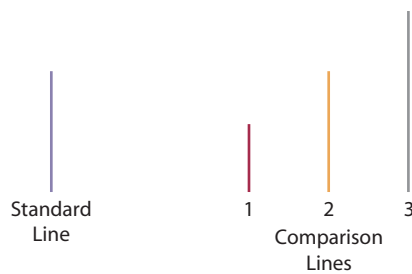
Figure 1.1 *Example of the stimulus pattern used in the conformity studies of Asch (1955).*

an experimental study to clarify these differences. This study was conducted at a small elite college in the United States and was announced as an experiment on perception. The experimental sessions were held in a small classroom and eight participants attended each of the sessions. The participants, who were seated in two rows of four, were presented with sets of four lines of different length, a standard line and three comparison lines. Their task consisted of the comparison of the standard line with the three other lines, one of which was equal to the standard line. The comparison lines were numbered from 1 to 3, and the participants stated their judgements by calling out one of the numbers (see Figure 1.1).

Obviously, this was a simple experiment in visual discrimination in which the experimenter probably wanted to find out how accurately participants could differentiate between lines of different lengths and where the threshold lay at which people would begin to make mistakes. However, there is one feature of the experiment which does not fit with standard procedures in perception experiments, namely, that participants judged these lines in groups. This would not have been a problem had the experimenter ensured that judgements were written down, to exclude the possibility that participants would be aware of each other's judgements. But in the present experiment, participants were asked to *call out* their judgements to the experimenter. This appears to be a serious methodological fault. Any determination of a difference threshold based on such data would be flawed, because participants might have been influenced by the earlier judgements that they overheard. Let us assume that the first participant calling out his judgements committed an error. The second participant, who might normally have given a correct response, might now have become uncertain and given the same erroneous response as the first participant. In this way, an experiment on perception might, in fact, have become a study of social influence.

Since we are concerned here with social psychology, it will not come as a surprise that the experimenter, a professor of social psychology at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, was not really interested in measuring perceptual thresholds but in the extent to which individuals would be influenced by a discrepant majority judgement. In fact, only one of the eight participants in each session was a 'naïve' participant; all the others were confederates of the experimenter and were instructed to give unanimous but wrong judgements on 12 out of the 18 trials. These judgements were so easy that participants who judged the stimuli in individual sessions made practically no incorrect judgements. And yet, when participants were exposed to the incorrect judgements of a unanimous majority, 36.8 per cent of their judgements were incorrect (Asch, 1955).

With this experimental setting, Asch created a situation which is familiar to most of us from everyday life. We have probably all had the experience of members of our group disagreeing with us on some issue, and then having to decide whether we should go with the group or stick to our own position at the risk of becoming disliked or of looking foolish. Naturally, we do not usually disagree about the length of lines but about some issue of greater importance, and often the disagreeing majority is not unanimous. However, the setting that was developed by Asch would allow us to manipulate all these variables, and most of them have indeed been investigated in subsequent research (for a review, see Allen, 1965). Our decision to stick to our guns or go with the group will depend very much on how confident we are of the correctness of our own opinion, on how important a correct decision is for us and for the group, and on how well we know the other group members. We are probably also more willing to conform to a majority if we are confronted with a majority that is unanimous rather than divided. If we return to Gordon Allport's definition of social psychology, it is easy to see that the Asch experiment fits all of the characteristics: Asch used a laboratory experiment to study the social influence which a (false) majority judgement would have on the thoughts and behaviours (i.e., judgements) of individuals.

The Asch experiment also allows us to demonstrate the difference between social psychology and 'asocial' *general psychology*. If Asch had been interested in studying perceptual thresholds, he would have systematically varied the difference in the lengths of his standard and comparison stimuli to assess the extent to which such variations affected perceptual judgements. The (perceptual) judgements would have remained the same, but they would now be investigated in relation to variations in the physical aspects of the stimuli, while keeping the social context constant. In contrast, Asch kept the physical stimulus constellation relatively constant and was interested in the effect that varying the social context (i.e., majority size and unanimity) had on perceptual judgements.

The Asch situation is also useful for demonstrating the difference between social and personality psychology. As a social psychologist, Asch was interested in the impact that characteristics of the social situation had on the thoughts and behaviours of his participants. Does the rate of conformity increase if we increase the number of majority members who give erroneous judgements? Does the conformity rate decrease if participants are allowed to give their judgements anonymously? Asch's approach is typical of social psychological research, which usually *manipulates* important aspects of the social context in order to assess the impact these changes have on the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of the target person.

Personality psychologists, on the other hand, might be less interested in the impact of the social context on behaviour and, instead, ask themselves why some participants are influenced by the erroneous judgements of the majority while others remain unaffected. Thus, the personality psychologist would be interested in the personality traits that are responsible for the fact that

different individuals act differently in what is essentially the same social situation. The personality psychologist might test whether intelligent individuals are less likely than unintelligent ones to conform to majorities, or whether conformity is more prevalent among authoritarian rather than non-authoritarian personalities (see the discussion of the authoritarian personality in Chapter 14, this volume; Adorno et al., 1950).

Personality psychologists would not, however, only address the question of individual differences as determinants of conformity; they would also want to know how these individual differences came about. Is it possible to relate differences in authoritarianism to differences in the way parents brought up their children, and what aspects of a person's upbringing determine his or her self-esteem? Thus, one could try to separate the disciplines of social and personality psychology as follows: individual behaviour is determined by three factors: (1) the biological constitution of individuals, (2) their acquired traits and (3) the social and physical context. Whereas personality psychologists are mainly interested in studying how particular traits are acquired and how these traits influence the individual's behaviour, social psychologists study the impact of the social situation on individual behaviour.

Unfortunately, such a distinction would oversimplify the differences between social and personality psychology (for more details, see Krahé, 1992) because one of the central concepts of social psychology, namely social attitudes, is defined by many social psychologists (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) as a tendency (i.e., individual disposition) to evaluate an attitude object positively or negatively (see Chapter 6, this volume). Even though social psychologists are mainly interested in studying how attitudes change in response to social influence attempts (see Chapters 7 and 11, this volume), they also use attitudes to predict individual behaviour (see Chapter 6, this volume). Furthermore, within social psychology, researchers have often been interested in studying individual difference variables, such as the degree to which individuals are prone to prejudice and susceptible to fascist ideologies ('authoritarianism'; Adorno et al., 1950; see Chapter 14, this volume), or the degree to which individuals are oriented to situational cues or reactions of others ('self-monitoring'; Snyder, 1974).

Since there is a great deal of agreement that individual behaviour is influenced by personality traits (see Chapter 8, this volume, on aggression) as well as the social context, the two fields of personality psychology and social psychology are, in fact, difficult to separate. It is therefore not surprising that the leading social psychological journal is the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and that most American social psychologists are members of the Society of Personality and Social Psychology. However, there are subtle differences in focus. Social psychologists are typically interested in personality variables as *moderators*. They look for the extent to which the impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable is qualified by, or depends on, the level of an individual's score on a personality measure. For example, there is a higher correlation between attitudes and behaviour for 'low' than for 'high' self-monitors (Snyder & Kendzierski, 1982). Many of the chapters in this volume refer to such personality influences on social behaviour. Social psychologists also tend to emphasize that the impact of personality variables on social behaviour is weaker in 'strong' compared to 'weak' social situations

(Mischel, 1977). Thus social psychologists emphasize the power of strong social situations to relegate personality influences to the background. This occurs, for example, in experiments investigating helping in emergencies (Latané & Darley, 1976; see Chapter 9, this volume) and obeying an authority figure's orders to behave in immoral ways (Milgram, 1974; see Chapter 11, this volume).

After the difficulties we experienced in distinguishing social psychology from personality psychology, distinguishing it from neighbouring social sciences such as sociology might seem easy. It would appear that sociology differs from social psychology both in the issues it studies and in the level of analysis at which it addresses these issues. Unfortunately, things are again not that simple. First, there is quite a bit of overlap between the issues studied by social psychologists and those that interest sociologists. Thus, social groups and group norms are topics that are of equal interest to sociologists and social psychologists. The sociologist George Homans wrote one of the classic monographs on social groups (Homans, 1950) and the sociologists Hechter and Opp (2001) recently edited a volume that summarizes the important work of sociologists in the area of social norms.

Although there are sociological approaches which, influenced by the work of Talcott Parsons and Emile Durkheim, emphasize that sociological facts should not be explained through psychological processes (Vanberg, 1975), most sociologists would no longer accept this position. In fact, sociologists have made major contributions to the development of individualistic social psychological theories. Thus, the sociologists Homans (1964) and Blau (1964) have written monographs on exchange theory, a theory that has become central in social psychology through the classic *Social Psychology of Groups* written by the social psychologists Thibaut and Kelley (1959). The central tenet of exchange theory is that individuals interact with those others who provide the greatest rewards for the least costs (the social exchange view is covered in Chapters 10, 12 and 13, this volume). Thus, most sociologists agree with social psychologists in espousing what has been called 'methodological individualism', namely the idea that even collective behaviour is essentially behaviour of the individuals who form the collective and therefore has to be explained in terms of rewards and costs of this behaviour to the individual (e.g., Klandermans, 1997).

Even though there is a great deal of overlap between sociology and social psychology, there are also major differences in the way these areas approach social behaviour. Sociologists are more likely to trace social behaviour upwards to structural variables such as norms, roles or social class, whereas social psychologists will trace it downwards to the individual's goals, motives and cognitions. For example, both sociologists and social psychologists are interested in aggression and violence. Social psychologists have studied the cognitive and affective processes through which anger can, given the right contextual cues, explode in aggressive behaviour, that is, behaviour performed with the express intention of hurting another person (Chapter 8, this volume). Sociologists, on the other hand, have been more interested in why levels of aggression are higher in some societies or groups than in others. Why is the murder rate in the USA so much higher than in Canada, even though guns are widely available in both countries? Since a possible difference could be the type of guns that are available in the

Plate 1.2 *How is the way social psychologists study aggression and violence different from the approach of sociologists?*

two countries, with hunting rifles being more prevalent in Canada and hand guns or assault weapons more frequently held in the United States, the potential answer might lie in the aggressive images that will be activated by different types of weapons, leading us back to individual psychological processes. Thus, even though sociologists are more likely to link individual behaviour to social structural variables, while social psychologists are more likely to study individual processes, a combination of the two approaches might often provide a fuller explanation than either discipline can offer on its own.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The beginning

Who conducted the first experiment?
Who wrote the first textbook?

Authors who write about the history of a scientific discipline usually like to report dates marking the official beginning of that discipline. Often these are the years in which the first textbooks or handbooks bearing the name of the discipline were published. In social psychology, 1908 is usually noted as the year when the first two textbooks of social psychology were published, one by a

sociologist (Ross, 1908), the other by a psychologist (McDougall, 1908). However, since both texts cover very little material that we would consider social psychological these days, 1908 may not be the best choice for the birth year of social psychology.

One could also argue that using the date of the first textbook to mark the beginning of a discipline is questionable anyway, because it would be difficult to write a textbook about a discipline that does not already exist. There must first be relevant theorizing and research available with which to fill the pages of a textbook. It is probably for this reason that another date has become quite prominent in chapters on the history of social psychology, namely the date of (presumably) the first social psychological experiment, a study published in 1898 by Norman Triplett. Triplett appeared to have been a fan of bicycle races. He was interested in the phenomenon that racing cyclists go faster when racing with others or when being paced than when riding alone, racing against the clock. Since there are records of the average speed of the different kinds of races, he could have used these records rather than doing his own study. However, the problem with using records is that different racers participate in different kinds of races, so that the differences in speed could have been due to self-selection. Triplett therefore had young boys and girls pull in a fishing reel as fast as possible and they had to perform this task either in pairs or alone. Rather than randomly assigning his participants to the two conditions, he had each participant do three trials alone and three in pairs, alternating these conditions (i.e., a within-subject design). A few children were slower in competition, some were unaffected, but the majority were faster and the experiment is usually cited as demonstrating the effects of what later became known as social facilitation, the phenomenon that the performance of simple tasks is facilitated by the presence of an audience or of others working on the same task (see Chapter 11, this volume).

Although the study by Triplett (1898) had all the artificiality that became the hallmark of experimentation in social psychology, its historical significance has been challenged by scholars who doubted whether it really was the *first* social psychological experiment. For example, Haines and Vaughan (1979) have argued that there were other experiments before 1898 deserving to be called social psychological, such as studies on suggestibility (e.g., Binet & Henri, 1894). But social psychological experiments may have been performed even earlier by the French agricultural engineer Max Ringelmann, who between 1882 and 1887 conducted investigations into the maximum performance of workers pulling a load under different conditions (Kravitz & Martin, 1986). Although the comparison of individual and group performance was of only secondary interest to Ringelmann, he found the first evidence of productivity loss in groups, a phenomenon that was later named 'social loafing' (see Chapter 13, this volume). Ringelmann found that eight men who pull at a rope together achieve only about 50 per cent of the pulling power that could be expected on the basis of their pulling measured individually. However, since Ringelmann only published this research in 1913, Triplett predates him, certainly as far as publication is concerned.

It is interesting to note that these early experiments were studies of an applied nature in areas which later became known as sports psychology and psychology of work performance. There were other studies of this nature available in other applied areas

Plate 1.3 *Do the men pull to their potential? If not, why not?*

PIONEER

Floyd Henry Allport (1890–1978), the elder brother of Gordon Allport, received both his undergraduate degree (1914) and his PhD (1919) from Harvard University. His dissertation was based on his studies on social facilitation, a research area that had been suggested to him by Hugo Münsterberg, then professor of psychology at Harvard. In 1922 Allport found a position as Associate Professor of Social Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It was here that he began writing his *Social Psychology*, which was widely praised and adopted as a text. This book and his studies on the impact of the group on individual cognitive performance are his major contribution to social psychology. He retired from Syracuse University in 1956.

(e.g., Mayer, 1903; Moede, 1920) and it needed somebody to recognize that the study of the impact of the social context on performance was really a discipline by itself, namely, social psychology. It may then be justifiable to choose the date of the first textbook or handbook about a discipline as its 'origin' insofar as a discipline is characterized not only by its content but also by its disciplinary identity. Thus, it is not sufficient that research that is vaguely social psychological has been conducted in the area of sports psychology or even agriculture. There needs to be somebody who pulls all of this research together and declares the emergence of a new area (in which, incidentally, this applied research then becomes fundamental).

In our view, this was first achieved by Floyd Allport (1924), who in his textbook made several major contributions towards defining the field of social psychology. He declared the study of social behaviour as the subject of social psychology. He defined social behaviour as 'behavior in which the responses either serve as social stimuli or are evoked by social stimuli' (p. 148). As mentioned above, he postulated that social psychology 'is part of the psychology of the individual, whose behavior it studies in relation to that sector of the environment comprised by his fellows' (p. 4). 'For . . . only within the individual can we find the behavioural mechanisms and the consciousness which are fundamental in the interactions between individuals' (p. vi). A third contribution, which may be less embraced today, was his emphasis on the experimental method. Although the experimental method is still one of the major research tools of social psychologists, other research methods have become equally accepted these days. However, in Allport's time, the emphasis on experiments was probably essential for establishing the scientific respectability of social psychology. It would also have helped to distinguish it further from sociology, a discipline that still prefers surveys and field studies to conducting experiments. It is interesting, though, that with the exception of his chapter on the 'Response to social stimulation in

groups', Allport (1924) reviewed very little experimental evidence of a social psychological nature.

The early years

What were the key contributions to social psychology during the first half of the twentieth century?

It would be an exaggeration to claim that the publication of Floyd Allport's textbook immediately stimulated an exponential growth in social psychological research. In fact, not that many milestones are to be reported for the period before World War II. A rather doubtful one is the publication of the first *Handbook of Social Psychology* by Carl Murchison (1935). We call it doubtful because this handbook is an odd collection of chapters on topics that nobody would consider social psychological these days, from the 'Population behavior of bacteria' to the 'Social history of the yellow man'. There are really only two chapters included in this volume that are truly social psychological: the chapter by Gordon Allport on attitudes and that by Dashiell on 'Experimental studies of the influence of social situation on the behaviour of individual human adults'. While the attitude chapter achieved lasting fame through its widely cited first sentence ('The concept of attitude is probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology', p. 798), the chapter by Dashiell reports an extensive series of experimental studies on social facilitation and inhibition.

Three other significant events during this early period were the publication by Thurstone (1928) of a paper with the provocative title 'Attitudes can be measured', *The Psychology of Social Norms* by Sherif in 1936, and Newcomb's (1943) *Personality and Social Change*, a study of attitude formation in the student community of Bennington College. Thurstone's article was remarkable because

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Theodore Newcomb (1903–1984) received his undergraduate degree from Oberlin College in 1924 and entered Union Theological Seminary in New York intending to become a Christian Missionary (Converse, 1994). However, more attracted by the psychology courses taught at Columbia University across the road, he switched to psychology and received his PhD from Columbia in 1929. He joined Bennington College in 1934, a newly founded women's college that drew its students from the politically conservative 'upper crust' of Vermont's society but had a famously liberal atmosphere. His Bennington study of the change in attitudes that these young women underwent during their studies became a classic. Not only was the longitudinal design innovative at that time, but the study captured the interplay between individual and group processes and thus supported one of the central assumptions of social psychology. After a stint of wartime research, he became director of a joint doctoral program of the departments of sociology and social psychology at the University of Michigan, where he stayed for the remainder of his career. Intrigued by the work of Fritz Heider, Newcomb developed his own interpersonal version of balance theory.
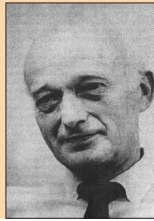
he described the first psychometrically sound method for the measurement of attitudes. Sherif's study became a classic, because he devised an experimental paradigm which allowed him to study the development of group norms in a laboratory situation (see Chapter 11, this volume). Participants in his study were repeatedly exposed to a stationary light source in a darkened room. Sherif made use of the fact that participants perceive this light source as moving (autokinetic effect) and that, if asked to judge the movement over repeated trials, they establish relatively stable individual norms. By putting individuals who had developed widely differing individual estimates into a group situation, Sherif could demonstrate that individuals in groups develop a joint and stable group norm, which they then maintain even when they continue to make their estimates again in individual situations.

Finally, Newcomb's Bennington study became a classic, because it is an ingenious longitudinal field study of social influence on a college campus. It maps out the way in which the political attitudes of students, all women who came from conservative homes, changed over time towards the liberal attitudes that were predominant on this college campus. Thus, it illustrates how individual beliefs and attitudes can be shaped by the group context and thus supports one of the basic assumptions of social psychology. The study is particularly interesting because these students were followed up for 50 years, allowing researchers to demonstrate the stability of their attitude change over a lifetime (Alwin, Cohen & Newcomb, 1991).

The years of expansion

How did Adolf Hitler further the development of social psychology in the USA?
Who were the key figures in social psychology in the post-war period?

Somewhat tongue in cheek, Cartwright once wrote that the one person who most furthered the development of social psychology in North America was Adolf Hitler (Cartwright, 1979). This observation is correct, though indirectly, insofar as Hitler's actions had an important impact on the development of social psychology in the USA. World War II greatly stimulated interest in social psychological research. The Information and Education Branch of the US Army initiated surveys and experiments to assess the impact of army propaganda films on the morale of their soldiers. One social psychologist who became heavily involved in this work was Carl Hovland. Originally a learning theorist, Hovland became fascinated by the experimental study of the determinants of attitude change. The work he directed during his army years on experiments in mass communication was eventually published as one of

Plate 1.4 *How did Hitler's actions affect the development of social psychology?*

PIONEER

Carl Iver Hovland (1912–1961) received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Northwestern University in 1932 and 1933. He then moved to Yale to work for his PhD under the prominent learning theorist Clark Hull. In his dissertation, Hovland provided the first evidence for a law of generalization, according to which the learned tendency to make a response to a particular stimulus falls off exponentially with the distance separating that stimulus from the original training stimulus along some sensory continuum. After finishing his dissertation in 1936, Hovland was invited to join the Yale faculty, of which he remained a member for the rest of his life. Hovland never abandoned his interest in learning theory. Even when he became fascinated by persuasion and attitude change during his wartime leave from Yale in the period from 1942 to 1945, he used learning theory principles as a theoretical perspective. His wartime research was published (with Lumsdaine and Sheffield) in 1949 in *Experiments in Mass Communication*. After returning to Yale, Hovland established the Yale Communication and Attitude Change program, which he directed until his premature death in 1961. The research conducted there by Hovland and 30 students and co-workers over a 15-year period established the field of attitude change research as we know it today (Shepard, undated).

the volumes of the *American Soldier* series under the editorship of the sociologist Stouffer (Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield, 1949).

After the war, Hovland returned to his academic career and founded the Yale Communication and Attitude Change program. This program attracted young researchers from a variety of universities and generated a stream of collaborative studies that defined attitude change research for decades to come (see Chapter 7, this volume). The program resulted in the publication of four highly influential volumes on studies of the determinants of persuasion and attitude change. In the first of these volumes, Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) explored the impact of communicator variables (e.g., prestige, credibility and expertise), communication variables (e.g., fear appeals) and context variables (e.g., salience of reference groups). Although the theoretical perspective of the program was eclectic, Hovland himself was most comfortable with the view that attitude change was a special form of human learning (Jones, 1998).

Following this classic volume, members of the program published a number of more specialized but also highly influential monographs dealing with order effects (Hovland, 1957), personality (Hovland & Janis, 1959), cognitive consistency factors (Rosenberg, Hovland, McGuire, Abelson & Brehm, 1960) and the role of social judgement, in particular assimilation and contrast, in attitude change (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). William McGuire, one of the members of the Yale Communication and Attitude Change program, returned to Yale and, with his information-processing paradigm (see Chapter 7, this volume), essentially continued the Yale research program well into the 1980s (e.g., McGuire, 1969, 1985).

A second action of the Hitler regime that advanced the development of social psychology in the USA was the forced emigration of Jewish academics from Germany (e.g., Köhler, Koffka, Lewin, Wertheimer). The most important of these émigrés from Germany for social psychology was undoubtedly Kurt Lewin, considered by many to be the most charismatic psychologist of his generation (Marrow, 1969). Lewin left the Berlin Psychological Institute in 1933 for the Department of Home Economics at Cornell University, to move in 1935 to the Iowa Child Research Station. In 1945 he established the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which after his premature death in 1947 (aged 57 years) was moved to the University of Michigan.

PIONEER

Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) studied psychology and philosophy in Berlin. After fulfilling the formal requirements for a PhD in 1914 (a degree he received only in 1916), he volunteered for the army and spent the next four years fighting World War I (Marrow, 1969). He then returned to the University of Berlin to join the Gestalt psychologists Köhler and Wertheimer at the Institute of Psychology, where he stayed until his (permanent) move to the United States in 1933. The time at Berlin University was probably Lewin's most productive period. He attracted an international group of students, developed his field theory, which argued that behaviour is a function of both the person and the environment, and supervised a series of classic studies, mainly conducted by his students as part of their dissertation. These studies addressed fundamental issues of the psychology of motivation. Lewin's interest in social psychology developed only after his move to the United States (Marrow, 1969). In the USA he first worked at Cornell University, and then moved to the University of Iowa. During his ten years at the University of Iowa (1935–1945) Lewin conducted some classic experimental studies in social psychology, such as the experiment on the impact of authoritarian and democratic leadership styles on group atmosphere and performance (Lewin et al., 1939), which later stimulated research on participative leadership to overcome resistance to change (Coch & French, 1948). Lewin became more and more interested in social processes, and in 1944 he moved to Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he founded the Research Center for Group Dynamics.
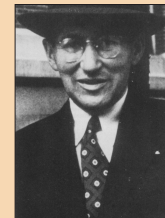
It is difficult to understand today how and why Lewin became such a key figure in social psychology. As is the case today, the impact of a researcher in those days was mainly determined by three factors: (1) the development of a theory, which stimulated a great deal of research; (2) publication of numerous studies that supported that theory, preferably involving intriguing new research paradigms; and (3) training of a stream of outstanding graduate students, who would later continue the work. Lewin did not score all that well on the first two criteria. The field theory he developed, though monumental and impressive, was more of a heuristic framework and did not lend itself easily to the derivation of testable hypotheses. Even his own empirical work was only very loosely related to that theory. He only published a few studies in social psychology, the most well known being the study of autocratic and democratic leadership (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939), which initiated interest in the impact of leadership styles on group atmosphere and performance. However, Lewin's approach to social psychology has two characteristics which were novel at the time. For him, a problem was only worth studying if addressing it would make a difference with regard to actual problems in the world (Festinger, 1980). Second, and more importantly, he insisted on studying such problems experimentally and on creating in the laboratory powerful situations that made a big difference (Festinger, 1980). Lewin instilled these ideas in his graduate students, and his impact on social psychology was mainly due to these graduate students, who nearly all became leaders of the field during the second half of the twentieth century. Among his graduate students during his US years were Kurt Back, Dorwin Cartwright, Morton Deutsch, Leon Festinger, Harold Kelley, Stanley Schachter, and John Thibaut.

All these individuals shaped the field of experimental social psychology in the post-war period, but the most illustrious among them was undoubtedly Leon Festinger, whose theory of cognitive dissonance dictated the research agenda in social psychology during the 1960s and 1970s (Festinger, 1957; see Chapter 7, this volume). The theory of social comparison processes, which he had developed earlier (Festinger, 1954), had less of an immediate impact but is still influential today (see, e.g., Chapters 5, 10, 11 and 12, this volume).

Another important émigré was the Austrian Fritz Heider (see Pioneer box, Chapter 3, p. 47), although in this case Hitler cannot be blamed for his emigration. Heider came to the USA in 1930 to work with Kurt Koffka, who was then at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. He had initially planned to stay for only one year, but decided to remain when he fell in love with Grace Moore, whom he later married. He moved to the University of Kansas in 1947 where he remained until his retirement. His impact on the field is intriguing, because he was not a prolific writer, attracted few graduate students, and published no experimental research in social psychology. And yet, he stimulated two of the theoretical traditions which dominated social psychology during the second half of the last century, namely consistency theory and attribution theory.

With his paper on balance theory in 1946, Heider developed the notion central to consistency theories that inconsistency between our attitudes and beliefs creates tension in our cognitive system and a tendency to establish consistency. Although only a

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Leon Festinger (1919–1990) completed his undergraduate studies at City College in New York, and his graduate research at the University of Iowa, with the German psychologist Kurt Lewin. After receiving his PhD in 1942, and a stint of wartime research, he rejoined Lewin and the newly formed Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1945. In 1948, he moved with the Center to the University of Michigan, from there to the University of Minnesota in 1951, on to Stanford in 1955, and finally, in 1968, to the New School for Social Research in New York, where he stayed until his retirement (Schachter, 1994). During his period at MIT, Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950) conducted their classic study of friendship patterns and residential proximity (see Chapter 10, this volume). This study showed that students were most likely to form friendships with those who lived close to them, that students who appeared close together in social networks had similar attitudes, and that those who had deviant attitudes were social isolates (see Chapter 11, this volume). Festinger (1950) published his first theoretical paper in social psychology on informal social communication and the process, via social comparison, of establishing the correctness of one's beliefs. These ideas were later elaborated in his paper on social comparison processes (Festinger, 1954). Soon afterwards, Festinger (1957) published the work for which he is best known, his theory of cognitive dissonance (see Chapter 7, this volume). The key hypothesis of this theory – that when we hold two or more incompatible ideas, there will be pressure to reduce this inconsistency – bears close relationship to his earlier work as well as to balance theory. It is more the research he conducted to test these ideas, rather than the theory itself, which turned it into arguably the most impressive body of research in social psychology to date. But it also marked the end of his interest in social psychology, which shifted, first, to the visual system and perception, and then to archaeology and the history of religion.
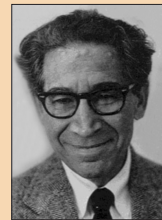
limited amount of research has been conducted to test Heider's balance theory, the theory stimulated the development of other consistency theories, most importantly the theory of cognitive dissonance.

With his paper on phenomenal causality, published in 1944, and his monograph *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, published in 1958, Heider initiated another important theoretical perspective, namely attribution theory (see Chapter 3, this volume). Attribution theory is a social psychological theory about how individuals manage to infer the 'causes' underlying the behaviour of others or even their own behaviour. In trying to interpret

behaviour, we will typically attempt to disentangle the contribution of internal causes (e.g., personality traits, motivation) from external causes (e.g., situational factors). For example, if a mother learns that her son has received a poor grade in his first maths test, she will wonder whether this poor result is due to lack of ability, lack of motivation or to an overly zealous maths teacher who gave too tough a test. Deciding between these alternatives will be important for her because it will suggest different strategies to prevent this situation from happening again.

The impact of attribution theory in stimulating a great deal of research in the 1960s and 1970s is intriguing, because neither Heider's (1958) monograph nor his 1944 article was written in a way that would make it accessible or appealing to the average researcher in North America. There was also very little research to back up Heider's ideas. It is generally accepted that attribution theory became influential because three major figures in the field of social psychology – Edward Jones, Harold Kelley and Bernard Weiner – adopted it and translated it into a language that was more accessible to social psychologists and yielded clear, testable hypotheses (Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1986). Probably most influential was Kelley's (1967) covariation model of attribution. This model was appealing because Kelley argued that, in inferring causes of behaviour, our inference process would be analogous to conducting an analysis of variance, a statistical procedure highly familiar to social psychologists. Other influential adaptations of attribution theory were Jones and Davis's (1965) correspondent inference theory and Weiner's (1986) application of attribution theory to achievement motivation and emotion.

A final way in which Hitler influenced the development of social psychology is by stimulating interest in particular topics. For example, the questions of how the German people could accept such an authoritarian regime and how people could execute commands they must have perceived as criminal, even at the time, stimulated some of the most influential research in social psychology. Thus, researchers studied the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950), the determinants of conformity (Asch, 1955) and obedience (Milgram, 1963). Lewin's interest in the effects of authoritarian and democratic leadership styles can be seen as an attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the democratic style, an attempt that was only partly effective because autocratically led groups outperformed the democratic groups with regard to quantity of production, although democratic leadership produced more creative groups whose performance did not deteriorate so dramatically when the leader was removed (White & Lippitt, 1976).

The crisis years

How and why did the crisis in social psychology develop?

So far the history of social psychology appears to have been one of unmitigated success. Stimulated by World War II, social psychological research expanded enormously and there was soon no single psychology department at a top university that did not also have a strong social psychology unit. But just when social psychology was on the up and up, it ran into a crisis of confidence that led to years of infighting about the right course it should follow. This crisis was probably initiated by two critical papers published in 1967 and 1973.

The first of this duo was a paper by Kenneth Ring entitled 'Experimental social psychology: Some sober questions about some frivolous values', published in the highly respected *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. In this paper, Ring contrasted the vision of Kurt Lewin of a social psychology that would contribute to the solution of important social problems with what he called the 'fun and games' attitude of the social psychology of his days. He argued that: 'Experimental social psychology today seems dominated by values that suggest the following slogan: "Social psychology ought to be and is a lot of fun" . . . Clever experimentation on exotic topics with zany manipulations seems to be the guaranteed formula for success . . . One sometimes gets the impression that an ever-growing coterie of social psychologists is playing (largely for another's benefit) a game of "can you top this?" ' (pp. 116–17). Although Ring did not refer to any specific examples of this fun and games approach, his criticism was probably directed at some of the work conducted in tests of dissonance theory. Since Ring, although a respected researcher, was not a very central figure in the social psychology of his days, the paper stimulated some discussion but did not really have a serious impact on the field. However, in 1973, one of the golden boys of experimental social psychology, Kenneth Gergen, published a paper entitled 'Social psychology as history' in the top journal of our discipline, the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. As the title already suggests, Gergen's paper was not an attack on the values directing social psychological research. Much more seriously, he questioned its scientific value. His two most important arguments were (1) that knowledge of social psychological principles could change our behaviour in ways which would negate these principles, and (2) that since the basic motives assumed by many of our theories are unlikely to be genetically determined, they might be affected by cultural change.

As an example of the first principle, Gergen argued that once groups were aware of their tendency to make extreme decisions (i.e., group polarization; see Chapter 11, this volume), they might consciously counteract this tendency in their decision-making. As an example of the second principle, Gergen used social comparison and dissonance theory. Social comparison theory assumes that people have a desire to evaluate themselves accurately and do this by comparing themselves to others. Gergen argued that one could easily imagine societies where such a desire would not exist. Similarly, dissonance theory assumes a need for consistency, which not everybody might share. Gergen saw these problems as the main reason why, as he claimed, social psychological research often failed to be replicable, and hence did not result in a body of cumulative knowledge.

Most researchers these days would accept these arguments without questioning the scientific status of social psychology. With regard to Gergen's first point, we would argue that it would be difficult, even for a trained social psychologist, to keep in mind all situations where our behaviour might be affected by others, to recognize all the relevant cues signalling such situations, and then

to counteract the situational pressures. Furthermore, people might not be very motivated to engage in such effortful processing, because these context effects are often minimal and sometimes contribute positively to the functioning of the group. Second, since the evaluation of one's own abilities through social comparison is highly functional, and essential for effective action, it is hard to imagine societies where people do not engage in social comparison. However, we do know that there are individual differences in the need for social comparison (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999), as there are in individual need for consistency (Cialdini, Trost & Newsom, 1995). Thus, if we want to correct for such differences, we simply add a measure of these needs to our experimental procedure.

Gergen's (1973) critique would probably have been less effective had it not come at a time when the collective self-esteem of social psychologists had been undermined by other developments. For one, there was an attack on the usefulness of a concept that Allport (1935) had hailed as the most central concept of social psychology. In a review of studies that empirically assessed the value of social attitudes in predicting behaviour, the sociologist Alan Wicker (1969) drew the following conclusion: 'Taken as a whole, these studies suggest that it is considerably more likely that attitudes will be unrelated or only slightly related to overt behavior than that attitudes will be closely related to actions' (p. 65). This conclusion was highly damaging, since social psychologists were interested in attitudes mainly because they expected them to predict behaviour. Since attitude change in most studies is assessed through an individual's self-rated position on some attitude dimension, the news that such ratings might be unrelated to behaviour was devastating.

A second development with a negative impact on the collective self-esteem of the scientific community of social psychologists was the publication of a series of papers that were highly critical of the experimental method. Thus, Martin Orne (1962) had suggested that most experimental situations contained 'demand characteristics', which would help research participants to guess the hypothesis to be tested in a given study. Since participants typically tried to be 'good subjects', Orne argued, they would then do their best to support these hypotheses.[1] Even more damaging was the suggestion of Robert Rosenthal (Rosenthal & Fode, 1963) that the expectations of the experimenter might influence the behaviour of research participants, even without their knowledge. The impact of these expectations on the behaviour of research participants could, for example, be mediated by experimenters' reacting positively to responses that supported their hypotheses and negatively to responses that were inconsistent with expectations.

The reaction to these critical voices was the organization of numerous conferences in which the crisis was discussed, sometimes in rather heated language. Although these conferences resulted in a number of crisis books (e.g., Strickland, Aboud & Gergen, 1976), they failed to bridge the theoretical and methodological chasm that separated the critics from mainstream social psychology. The critics finally founded their own social psychological schools, such as social constructionism in the United States (e.g., Gergen, 1999) and discourse analysis in the United Kingdom (e.g., Potter & Wetherell, 1987), which developed their own methodologies in an attempt to address these problems.

Overcoming the crisis

How was the crisis overcome?

In mainstream social psychology a number of developments were initiated, which over the years helped to alleviate some of the problems highlighted by these critics:

- Social psychologists began to demonstrate their ability to contribute to the solution of real-life problems by developing several applied areas, which contributed to resolving important societal problems. To mention only one such area, health psychology is an application of social psychology. One of the major research areas in health psychology is aimed at changing health-impairing behaviour patterns in our society (e.g., smoking, eating too much, drinking too much alcohol, practising unsafe sex). Social psychologists have helped to understand the reasons why people engage in these behaviours as well as to develop interventions aimed at changing them (Stroebe, 2001; see Chapter 15, this volume).

- The impression that social psychological research did not result in cumulative knowledge may have been the result of improper strategies of reviewing, a problem that was mostly resolved with the development of meta-analytic procedures (see Chapter 2, this volume). When reviewing research areas, researchers often erroneously concluded that support for a theory was missing or inconsistent, because few studies supported the theory by yielding significant results, whereas the majority of studies failed to find significant results. In the meantime, we have realized as a discipline that the failure to find significant results may simply have been due to conducting a study with an insufficiently large number of participants. If the effects we were looking for were small, this might have resulted in insignificant findings, even though the differences between conditions might all have been in the predicted direction. Since then, meta-analytic procedures have been developed which allow us to integrate statistically the results of independent studies of a given phenomenon, with a view to establishing whether the findings exhibit a pattern of relationships that is reliable across studies (Cooper & Hedges, 1994).

- We now know that attitudes are predictive of behaviour but that this relationship is often obscured in studies which employ inappropriate procedures in measuring the two components (see Chapter 6, this volume). As Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) demonstrated in their classic review, attitudes are related to behaviour if both components are assessed with measures that are both reliable and compatible. To be reliable, measures have to consist of multiple items rather than a single item. To be compatible, attitude and behaviour have to be assessed at the same level of specificity. Thus, if we want to predict whether people are likely to engage in physical exercise to

improve their health, we should not measure their attitude towards their health but their attitude towards engaging in physical exercise. The latter attitude is likely to be highly correlated with an aggregate measure of a variety of exercise behaviours (such as jogging, walking, going to the gym). If one wanted to predict specific exercise behaviour, such as whether an individual is likely to jog, one should measure his or her attitude towards jogging rather than towards physical exercise in general.

● Finally, social psychologists have tried to design their experimental manipulations in ways that would minimize the threat of demand characteristics and experimenter expectancy effects. Furthermore, the fact that many research participants do not even meet experimenters any more, because experiments are often run on the computer by computer programs, should certainly rule out experimenter expectancy effects. The depressing fact that most experiments do not work out the way they were expected to by the experimenter who designed them also appears to suggest that these effects cannot be all that powerful. Festinger (1980) most aptly expressed these feelings when he wrote: 'I've always wondered why, if these spurious experimenter effects were so strong, so many of my own experiments did not show the expected results' (p. 252).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN EUROPE

How did social psychology develop in Europe?
Why and in what way was the foundation of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology important for the development of European social psychology?

Until the end of World War II, the development of social psychology as a discipline was restricted to the USA. However, even before the influx of academic refugees in the 1930s, there had been a great deal of European influence on this development. For example, F. Allport's (1924) work on social facilitation had been stimulated by one of his academic teachers at Harvard, the German Hugo Münsterberg, whom Allport explicitly thanks in the preface to his book (Allport, 1924, p. vii). Münsterberg, in turn, was familiar with similar work that had been done in Germany by Moede (1920). The experimental work of Bartlett (1932) in Britain on remembering can be viewed as a major precursor of contemporary research on social cognition. And finally, the theorizing underlying Sherif's (1936) studies of norm development is heavily influenced by Gestalt psychology.

However, even though there were individuals in Europe who conducted research that could be considered social psychological, there was no unitary social psychology. This situation continued into the 1960s, even though social psychology groups had been established at a number of European universities. But while there *was* social psychology in Europe, there was no *European social psychology*: there was no European collaboration and most European researchers had not met each other, nor were they even aware of each other's work.

Obviously, a European network was not necessary for the development of a strong social psychology in some of the European countries where effective social psychology research groups already existed (e.g., Belgium, Britain, the Netherlands and Germany). However, in some other countries it would probably have taken many decades for social psychology to develop. Furthermore, since most of the European researchers met each other, if at all, only at conferences held in the USA, without the foundation of a European association European social psychology would probably have remained a minor appendix of North American social psychology rather than developing its own theoretical perspective. Thus the foundation of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology was critical.

Given the dominance of North American social psychology at that time, even in Europe, it is no coincidence that it was again an American, John Lanzetta, who set things in motion in 1963. During a sabbatical year in London, Lanzetta, then Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Delaware, visited various social psychology groups in Europe. He was struck by the fact that many of these colleagues, though well informed about US social psychology, were not really aware of what was going on in the social psychology departments of neighbouring European countries. He decided to change this and raised funds for a first European Conference on Experimental Social Psychology, held in Sorrento, Italy, in 1963 (Nuttin, 1990). One of the main initiatives which emerged from this and two follow-up conferences was the foundation of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology (EAESP) in 1966. The European Association engaged in a number of regular activities, which had great impact on the development of social psychology in Europe. These included:

● Summer schools for advanced students, taught by outstanding researchers.

● Publication of the *European Journal of Social Psychology* in 1970, which included most of the early research thought of (then at least) as typically 'European' (e.g., studies of intergroup relations or minority influence). Other key European publications were the *European Monographs* series and the *European Review of Social Psychology*. The first edition of the textbook you are reading now was published in 1988, in part to counteract the tendency of American textbooks to under-report the work of European social psychologists.

● The regular organization of conferences, including plenary meetings of the whole membership, and special East–West meetings (the latter were particularly effective forums at a time when travel and currency restrictions made it extremely difficult for social psychologists from Eastern and Western Europe to meet).

Membership in the EAESP has grown at a phenomenal rate, from less than 30 in 1970 to more than 1,000 members in 2005. During

this period, scientific development in social psychology also changed from being a one-sided enterprise, with American ideas being adopted in Europe, to a mutual development, with European ideas being taken up enthusiastically in the United States and ever-increasing collaboration leading to scientific growth. It is now accepted practice for prominent North American journals (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* and *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*) to have at least one European editor, and likewise for the *European Journal of Social Psychology* to have non-European editors.

Probably the two most important examples of European ideas influencing social psychology in the United States are research on intergroup behaviour and on minority influence. Although Tajfel was not the first to conduct experimental research on intergroup behaviour (that honour goes to Sherif), he developed the paradigm (the 'minimal group paradigm') that turned intergroup behaviour into a major research area (see Chapter 14, this volume). The minimal group paradigm offered an easy and very economical procedure for the study of intergroup behaviour, but Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986) developed from it a theoretical framework that could account for these findings, social identity theory.

The second theoretical innovation that was started in Europe and then accepted in the United States is research on minority influence. Social influence research in North America focused exclusively on conformity, that is, on explaining how majorities influence minorities. It was Moscovici who first pointed out that this type of theorizing could hardly explain social or religious innovations, where powerless minorities influenced powerful majorities (e.g., women's rights, Christianity). After Moscovici and his colleagues in Paris (e.g., Moscovici, Lage & Naffrechoux, 1969) had published a number of studies demonstrating minority influence, and again with the development of a theory that could account for these effects, research on minority influence became a major research area both in the USA and in Europe (Moscovici, 1976; see Chapter 11, this volume).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

What new theoretical perspectives have emerged during the last few decades?

In the 1980s most of the researchers who had contributed to modern social psychology, and who, as often as not, had come from the research centres directed by either Lewin or Hovland, were still alive and active (Cartwright, 1979). In the meantime, not only have many of these pioneers retired or died, but so also have most of the students whom they, in turn, had trained. The field has grown at an exponential rate. There are now chairs in social psychology at practically all major universities in the United States, in Northern Europe, and in some countries of Southern Europe, and social psychologists number in the thousands rather than a few

hundreds. Social psychology has also become an essential part of the psychology curriculum in these countries.

Not surprisingly, social psychology has also changed over these decades. Major scientific perspectives, such as consistency theory or attribution theory, have faded and new perspectives, such as *social cognition*, *evolutionary social psychology* and *social neuroscience*, have emerged. Jones (1998) colourfully described these changing trends in research as 'band wagons and sinking ships' (p. 54).

Social cognition research is an application of principles of cognitive psychology to the area of social psychology (see Devine, Hamilton & Ostrom, 1994). Unlike other psychological disciplines, social psychology has always placed a strong emphasis on how individuals internally represent their environment. Many of our theories have been labelled 'cognitive' (e.g., cognitive dissonance), and central concepts of social psychology (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, intentions) are cognitive constructs. It would thus appear a small step for social psychologists to borrow methods from cognitive psychology to study how social information is encoded and how the information is stored and retrieved from memory. This perspective has had a widespread influence across the field of social psychology, but is seen perhaps most clearly in changes to the way we theorize and do research in person perception (see Chapters 3 and 4, this volume), attitude change (Chapter 7) and prejudice and intergroup relations (Chapter 14).

Evolutionary social psychology (e.g., Burnstein & Branigan, 2001; Buss & Kenrick, 1998) is an application of evolutionary theory to social psychology. Evolutionary theory explains human behaviours, including differences in partner preference according to gender, from their reproductive value, that is, their value in producing offspring in our evolutionary past. Evolutionary psychology makes the basic assumption that if a given behaviour is (1) at least partly genetically determined and (2) increases the probability that an individual will produce offspring, the gene that determines this behaviour will become more prevalent in the gene pool of future generations. Evolutionary social psychologists have made important contributions to the study of interpersonal attraction (Chapter 10, this volume), helping and cooperation (Chapter 9) and aggression (Chapter 8). The development of evolutionary social psychology as an accepted research area in social psychology is surprising, as talking about genetic determinants of social behaviour was considered heresy in the decades following World War II and the defeat of the race ideology of the Hitler regime. However, modern applications of evolutionary social psychology are less deterministic, less ideological and, most importantly, more solidly based on evolutionary theory than such earlier approaches.

Social neuroscience is the study of the neural correlates of social psychological phenomena (Cacioppo & Berntson, 2005; Ochsner & Lieberman, 2001). Building on huge recent advances in the use of non-invasive techniques for examining the functioning of the human brain, social neuroscience studies participants' brains while they are engaged in processing social information. Already studies have used such techniques to further our understanding of prejudice (see Chapter 14, this volume). Some studies, for example, have examined changes in blood flow within the brain (using functional magnetic resonance imaging, fMRI) while people are shown race-relevant stimuli under different conditions. Such research has shown that there is a link between social categorization and the
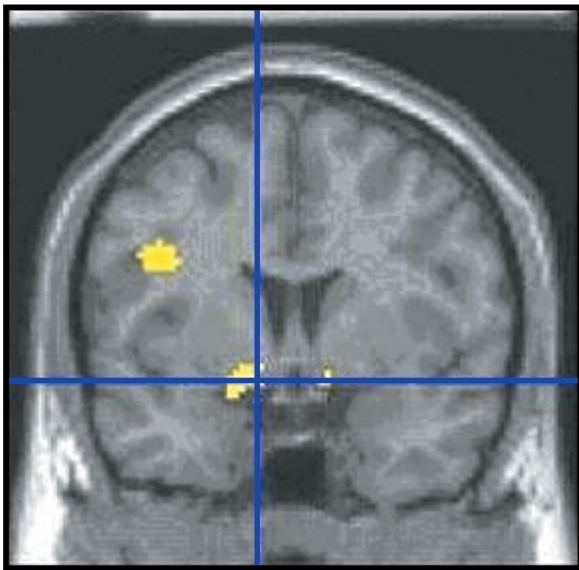
Plate 1.5 *An fMRI scan shows activation of the amygdala processing social, fear-related information.*

amygdala, a structure in the limbic system which has a role in response to stimuli that signal danger or threat. Phelps et al. (2000) showed, for example, that white participants' greater amygdala activation in response to black versus white faces was significantly correlated with their implicit racial prejudice only when the faces were of unknown black people, but not when they were of famous and well-liked black and white individuals. These findings suggest that amygdala activation and behavioural responses of race evaluation are heavily shaped by social learning, and that personal experience with members of these groups can modulate bias. Thus, involvement of biological processes does not imply something fundamental and unchangeable. In fact, social neuroscience emphasizes that *social* variables can *influence* biological processes (Eberhardt, 2005; Phelps & Thomas, 2003). In our view, this new direction is less a theoretical than an empirical approach, but none the less exciting. We anticipate that, during the lifetime of this book, there will be many new developments in social neuroscience.

Social psychology today is an exhilarating and thriving enterprise. Living up to Lewin's motto that nothing is as practical as a good theory, social psychologists are applying the understanding they have gained from their study of fundamental cognitive, emotional and motivational processes to the solution of real-life problems. They have contributed importantly to the development of applied areas such as health and organizational psychology (see Chapter 15, this volume), and social psychological theories and research on intergroup conflict and prejudice can provide important guidelines for avoiding or resolving conflicts in European societies which are becoming increasingly multicultural (see Chapter 14, this volume). In the absence of systematic and controlled social psychological research in most areas, Allport (1924) had to rely heavily on speculation in his ambitious road map for social psychology as an empirical science. We hope that the readers of this

textbook will appreciate the progress social psychologists have made in less than a century in replacing speculation with theory-guided empirical research.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- Social psychology is often defined as the scientific attempt to understand and explain how thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings.

- There are several candidates that could claim to have been the first experiment in social psychology, but all were conducted just before 1900.

- The first textbook that covered topics which would still be considered social psychology today was written by Floyd Allport (1924).

- Allport (1924) defined social psychology as part of the psychology of the individual and as based on experimental methods.

- Although there was some important research conducted before World War II, most theorizing and research considered part of modern social psychology has been published since 1945.

- World War II stimulated interest in social influence and attitude change. Carl Hovland, who during his army years directed a section concerned with experimental work on mass communication, later founded and directed the highly influential Yale Communication and Attitude Change program. This laid the foundation for modern research on attitude change.

- The development of social psychology in the USA was strongly influenced by two academic émigrés from Europe, Kurt Lewin from Germany and Fritz Heider from Austria.

- Kurt Lewin's influence was mainly through his students, an illustrious group who shaped social psychology in the decades following World War II.

- Fritz Heider stimulated two theoretical traditions, consistency and attribution theory, which influenced the research agenda of social psychology for the post-war period.

- Although there were researchers conducting social psychological research in Europe, European social psychology developed only in the mid-1960s.

- The development of European social psychology was greatly stimulated by the foundation of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology in 1966.

Note

1   Early research reports referred to those who took part in psychological research as 'subjects'. It is now standard practice to refer to them as 'participants'.

Suggestions for further reading

Berscheid, E. (1992). A glance back at a quarter century of social psychology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*, 525–533. A personal reflection by a leading scholar on developments in North America in the 25 years up to its publication.

Cartwright, D. (1979). Contemporary social psychology in social perspective. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *42*, 82–93.
A lively attempt to put social psychology into historical perspective, famous for highlighting the 'influence' of Adolf Hitler.

Farr, R.M. (1996). *The roots of modern social psychology 1872–1954*. Oxford: Blackwell. Scholarly treatment of the background to the modern era, with special reference to the relationship between social psychology and other social sciences.

Gilbert, D.T., Fiske, S.T. & Lindzey, G. (Eds.) (1998). *The handbook of social psychology* (4th edn, Vol. 1, pp. 3–95). New York: McGraw-Hill. Two chapters deal with different aspects of modern history, those by E.E. Jones and S.E. Taylor.

Goethals, G.R. (2003). A century of social psychology: Individuals, ideas, and investigations. In M. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.), *Sage handbook of social psychology* (pp. 3–23). London: Sage. A short and approachable historical overview.