

Introduction To

Social Psychology

A European Perspective

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A European Perspective
Fourth Edition

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To

Claudia, Rebecca and William Hewstone

Maggie and Katherine Stroebe

and

Jessie and Julie Jonas



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Preface to the Fourth Edition

This is the fourth, and completely revised, edition of this widely selling textbook, designed to teach social psychology to an audience of students at universities throughout Europe and many other parts of the world. When, in 1986, we set out with the aim of publishing such a book, we certainly did not imagine either that it would end up being translated into a host of foreign editions (ranging from Croatian to Japanese) or that we would be publishing this new edition more than 20 years later.

In that period of time, of course, the world has changed quite dramatically, and we have tried to reflect those changes in the material we cover and the examples used to illustrate social psychological phenomena. The European Community, for example, has enlarged significantly, and there is continuing debate about the relationship between national and superordinate ('European') identity; there have also been appalling genocides in the heart of Europe (in ex-Yugoslavia) and a long way away from it, in Rwanda (see Chapter 14). The terrifying scourge of AIDS threatens the health of millions across the globe, and a significant part of the fight against this disease is built on social psychological principles of changing health-related behaviours (see Chapter 15). And the response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, which dominated the news in late December 2004, challenged existing conceptions of altruism and helping behaviour (see Chapter 9). These are just some of the real-life examples the chapters in this volume address, and just a few of the ways in which one can demonstrate that social psychology is a discipline that has an important role to play in contemporary society.

Notwithstanding the success of previous editions, this new volume represents the most thorough revision, in terms of topics covered and pedagogical aids. The volume contains chapters dealing with all the core topics one would expect to find in an introduction to social psychology (methods, social cognition, attitudes, aggression, prosocial behaviour, relationships, social influence, group processes and intergroup relations). We have also added three new chapters to this edition. First, there is an Introduction (Chapter 1), which will help orient all new readers to the field of social psychology as a whole; it covers how we address research questions, how social psychology is defined and distinguished from related disciplines, what are the main historical developments, and what are the most notable emerging theoretical perspectives. We strongly recommend that all students read this chapter before launching into the specific core topics of social psychology, covered in the remaining chapters. Second, there is a chapter on the self (Chapter 5), which considers the meaning and role of self and identity as social psychological concepts and deals with fascinating phenomena such as the self-concept and self-knowledge, self-esteem, and the cultural impact on self and identity. Third, there is a chapter on social psychology in action (Chapter 15), which addresses how social psychology can be applied to the 'real world' and describes the

application of social psychology to the topics of advertising, the workplace and health.

There are many didactic improvements and pedagogical aids in this new edition. Each chapter focuses on the central *theories, concepts, paradigms, results* and *conclusions*. In terms of structure, each chapter contains the following specific features, designed to improve learning and enhance the enjoyment of the task:

- A short outline written in clear English, providing an overview of the chapter.
- A list of key concepts, consisting of the main terms which a student should know about each topic area; the definitions of each key concept are provided in the text of each chapter and gathered together in an alphabetical glossary at the end of the book.
- The body of the text in each chapter is broken down into clear sections, and the reader is guided by subheadings throughout the chapter to prevent long, uninterrupted passages of text. Text is also broken up by figures, tables and occasional photographs.
- Each main section or subsection of the chapter begins with 'learning questions': these are the major questions that the student should be able to answer having read the chapter.
- Each major section of the chapter ends with a summary, and each chapter ends with a summary and conclusions in the form of bullet points.
- A list of suggestions for further reading, with a sentence indicating what the student will find in each source, concludes each chapter.
- Each chapter includes brief biographies of 'pioneers' in the field.
- Each chapter contains two to three boxes of three different types:
 - *Research close-ups*: Brief summaries of classic and contemporary research studies, explaining clearly why and how the research was done, what it found and what its implications are.
 - *Individual differences measure*: Illustrative items from scales used to measure variables discussed in the text.
 - *Everyday social psychology*: The description of a 'real-life' application of theory and research described in the chapter.

Features designed to aid learning and help both instructors and students do not end with the material *inside* the book. Extensive material is also provided on the web (www.blackwellpublishing.com/socialpsych), including learning objectives, and a large bank

of multiple choice, true or false, and fill-in-the-blank questions, as well as links to other useful websites.

As always when we come to the end of an edition, we are grateful that we are such poor predictors of how much work is involved. Had we known this at the outset, we might not have succumbed yet again to the temptation to initiate a new edition. As always in such a major enterprise, there are many others to whom we owe thanks. First and foremost, we thank our authors for their excellent manuscripts and their willingness to go through repeated

revisions in response to our editorial feedback. We would also like to thank the editorial team at Blackwell for their support in this endeavour. Last and certainly not least, we owe thanks to our families, who have patiently lived with, and through, this new edition.

Miles Hewstone, Oxford
Wolfgang Stroebe, Utrecht
Klaus Jonas, Zürich

