NINTH EDITION

Social Psychology

SAUL KASSIN • STEVEN FEIN • HAZEL ROSE MARKUS

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We dedicate this book to Bob Zajonc,
an inspiration to us all.

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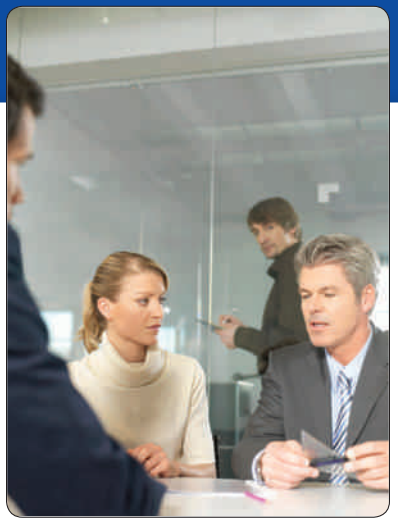

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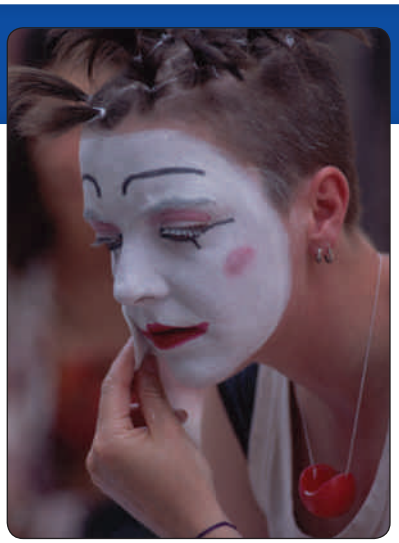

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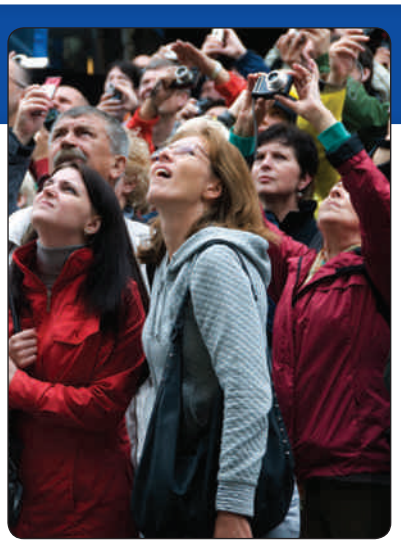

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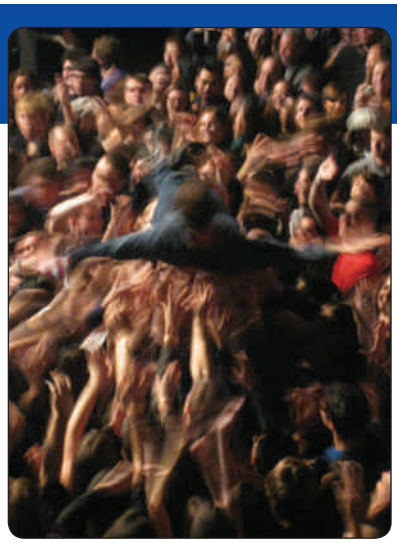

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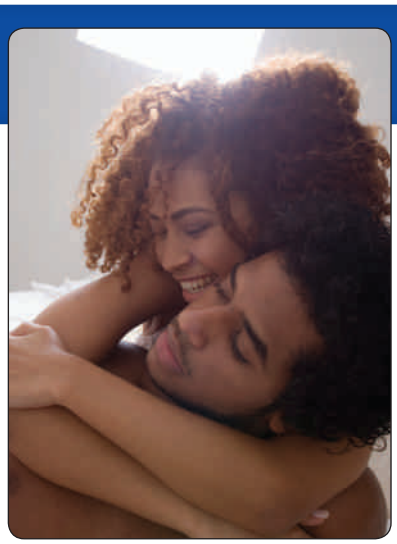

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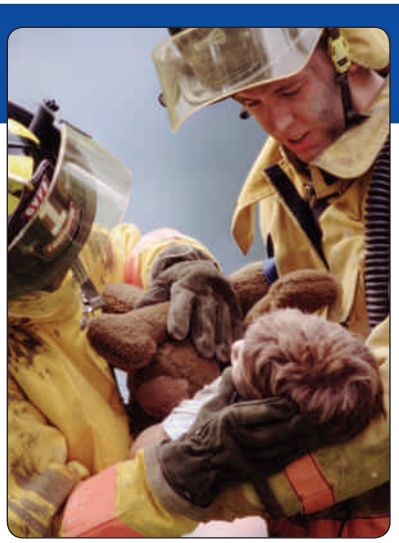

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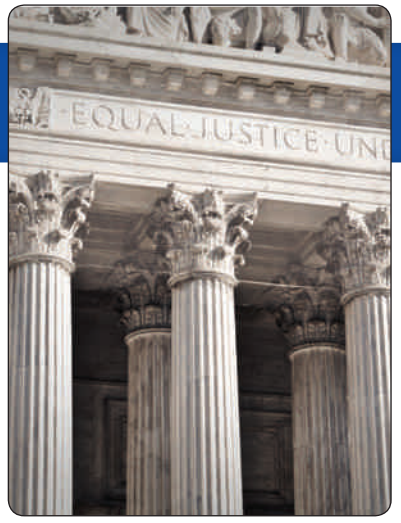

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PREFACE

The world of the twenty-first century is an exciting and tumultuous place right now—more so, it seems, than any time in recent memory. On the one hand, thanks to Twitter, Skype, YouTube, and other social media, it has never been easier to talk or share information, opinions, pictures, music, and footage of live events as they occur with people from all corners of the world. On the other hand, deep social and political divisions, religious and ethnic conflicts all over the world, economic turmoil, and an ever-present threat of terrorism surround us. As Charles Dickens (1859) said in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

Encircled by its place in science and by current world events, social psychology—its theories, research methods, and basic findings—has never been more relevant or more important. We used to think of social psychology as a discipline that is slow to change. As in other sciences, we thought, knowledge builds in small increments, one brick at a time. Social psychology has no "critical" experiments, no single study can "prove" a theory, and no single theory can fully explain the complexities of human social behavior. While all this remains true, the process of revising this textbook always seems to shows us how complex, dynamic, and responsive our field can be. As the world around us rapidly changes—socially, politically, technologically, and in other disciplines—so too does social psychology.

At the same time, social psychology was recently rocked by scandal and controversy. In 2011, a well-known social psychologist in the Netherlands was found to have falsified data that had appeared in several dozen articles. That case was followed by two other instances of fraud. In addition, an article purporting to provide evidence of extrasensory perception, or ESP, was published in social psychology's top journal until questions were raised about the methods and statistical analyses. Then a controversy erupted over the question of whether social psychology research was inadvertently biased by political ideology. As a result of these recent events, the discipline is now undergoing a process of self-examination. Noting that crisis can beget opportunity, the Society of Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) has initiated new workshops, policies, and standards of responsible conduct—all designed to prevent future instances of intentional and unintentional bias.

Goals for This Edition

We had three main goals for this revision.

1. Our first goal was to present the most important and exciting perspectives in the field as a whole. To communicate the breadth and depth of social psychology, we have self-consciously expanded our coverage to include not only the classics but also the most recent developments in the field—developments that capture new thinking about social neuroscience, embodied cognition, evolutionary theory, implicit processes, and cultural influences.
2. In light of the fraud scandals that have surfaced, our second goal was to try to vet brand new findings in an effort to ensure that the social psychology we present will prove accurate over time. No method of vetting is perfect. But as a departure from

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past practice, we have chosen to exclude from this edition any research presented at professional conferences or reported in the news that has not been published in a peer-reviewed journal. For articles newly published, we sought to determine if the findings were consistent with other research.

3. Finally, we want this book to serve as a good teacher outside the classroom. While speaking the student's language, we always want to connect social psychology to current events in politics, sports, business, law, entertainment, the use of social networking sites, and other life domains. We will say more about this later in the preface, in a section on "Connections with Current Events."

What's New in This Edition

As in the past, we have tried to capture some subtle but important shifts within the field so that the reader can feel the pulse of social psychology ***today*** in each and every page of this textbook.

The Content

Comprehensive, Up-to-Date Scholarship Like its predecessors, the ninth edition offers a broad, balanced, mainstream look at social psychology. Thus, it includes detailed descriptions of classic studies from social psychology's historical warehouse as well as the latest research findings from hundreds of new references. In particular, we draw your attention to the following topics, which are either new to this edition or have received expanded coverage:

- Introductions to social neuroscience, evolutionary, and cultural perspectives (Chapter 1)
- Introductions to behavioral economics, embodied cognition, and other interdisciplinary approaches (Chapter 1)
- The challenges of doing research across cultures (Chapter 2)
- New ways of conducting research online (Chapter 2)
- Discussion of recent cases of academic fraud (Chapter 2)
- God, religion, and self-awareness (Chapter 3)
- The evolution of self-deception (Chapter 3)
- Generational differences in the self (Chapter 3)
- Mind perception (Chapter 4)
- Embodiment effects in social cognition (Chapter 4)
- New research on motivated "wishful seeing" (Chapter 4)
- Racism as seen in the Trayvon Martin shooting and other news events (Chapter 5)
- Evolutionary perspectives on intergroup perception biases (Chapter 5)
- Social neuroscience perspectives on intergroup perception biases (Chapter 5)
- Benefits of extended contact and intergroup friendships (Chapter 5)
- Effects of being stigmatized (Chapter 5)
- Political attitudes and the "political brain" (Chapter 6)

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- Attitude embodiment effects (Chapter 6)
- Perceptual consequences of cognitive dissonance (Chapter 6)
- Digital social influence, as seen in the Arab Spring (Chapter 7)
- Imitation in nonhumans and infants (Chapter 7)
- fMRI images of conformity and exclusion (Chapter 7)
- Cultural influences on group cohesiveness (Chapter 8)
- Culture and diversity in groups (Chapter 8)
- Group dynamics challenges posed by "virtual teams" (Chapter 8)
- The phenomenon of online dating (Chapter 9)
- The speed-dating phenomenon and research paradigm (Chapter 9)
- Gender differences in the expression of romantic love (Chapter 9)
- Evolutionary psychology of conspicuous consumption (Chapter 9)
- Prosocial media effects (Chapter 10)
- The evolution of empathy (Chapter 10)
- Applications of bystander research to bullying (Chapter 10)
- The struggle for self-control in aggression (Chapter 11)
- Social neuroscience perspectives on aggression and its control (Chapter 11)
- Effects of social rejection and ostracism on aggression (Chapter 11)
- Policy research on how to improve eyewitness justice (Chapter 12)
- Post–9/11 research on lie detection and intelligence gathering (Chapter 12)
- Cultural perspectives on law and justice (Chapter 12)
- The Progress Principle of motivation in the workplace (Chapter 13)
- The symbolic power of money (Chapter 13)
- The psychological consequences of unemployment (Chapter 13)
- The link between socioeconomic status and health (Chapter 14)
- Cultural differences in social support seeking as a means of coping (Chapter 14)
- The emerging science on how to increase happiness (Chapter 14)

As this nonexhaustive list shows, this ninth edition contains a good deal of new material. In particular, you will see that we have zeroed in on developments within five important domains: social neuroscience, embodied cognition, evolutionary theory, implicit processes, and cultural perspectives. Across chapters, as always, we have also made it a point to illustrate the relevance of social psychology to current events and to ask students to reflect on their commonsense conceptions.

Social Neuroscience The first domain concerns social neuroscience and the fMRI brain-imaging studies that are poised to enlighten our understanding of the human social experience. Social neuroscience has not fully arrived, and researchers are still raising questions about how to interpret the newly observed links between brain activity and self-referential thoughts, social perceptions, motives, emotions, and behavior. While we acknowledge the current limitations, we also want to provide students with a glimpse of this exciting new fusion of social psychology and neuroscience.

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Embodied Cognition More and more, social psychologists are finding that human thought is "embodied"—that the way we view ourselves and others is influenced by the physical position, orientation, sensations, and movements of our bodies. By varying whether people nod or shake their heads, stretch their arms inward or outward, stand on a surface that is hard or soft, or hold an object that is hot or cold, a number of new studies illustrate *embodiment effects* in self and other perceptions, beliefs, evaluations, and attitudes.

Evolutionary Theory We continue in this edition to represent various evolutionary perspectives on human nature, at the heart of which is the notion that we humans, like other species, have an ancestral past that predisposes us, albeit flexibly, to behave in ways that are adapted to promote survival and reproduction. Evolutionary psychologists today seek to explain a wide range of social phenomena—such as snap judgments in social perception, prejudice, helping, aggression, beauty, mate selection, and romantic jealousy. To some extent, this perspective is still controversial. To another extent, it has become part of the mainstream, with respected journals filled with studies and critiques of evolutionary psychology. This edition fully integrates the approach, its findings, and its limitations with the rest of social psychology.

Implicit Processes More and more, social psychologists across a range of research areas are finding it informative to use both implicit and explicit processes, especially for the purpose of supplementing self-report measures of beliefs and preferences. In matters relating to the unconscious, psychology owes a debt of gratitude to Freud. After some resistance, social psychologists have also come to realize the value of the conscious–unconscious distinction in the study of self-esteem, priming, stereotyping, prejudice, attitudes, ambivalence, social influence, attraction, and other core topics. Hence, we describe recent work involving the Implicit Association Test, or IAT, and the ongoing debate about what it measures, what it means, and what behaviors it predicts.

Cultural Perspectives On the heels of our highly expanded coverage over the past two editions, we have continued in this edition not only to cover but also to fully integrate current research on cultural influences in social behavior. Social psychologists have long been fascinated by similarity and difference—among cultural groups and between racial and ethnic groups within cultures. As the people of the world have come into closer contact, researchers have broadened their scope from the situational snapshot to a fuller account of people in their cultural milieu. Cultural phenomena, once marginalized, are now fully integrated into social psychology. As in our previous edition, every chapter now contains one, two, or three sections on the role of culture. These sections appear within the body of the text and are richly accompanied by photographs, not boxed or set apart.

As social psychology is now a truly international discipline, this book also includes many new citations to research conducted throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, and other parts of the world. We believe that the study of human diversity—from the perspectives of researchers who themselves are a diverse lot—can help students become better informed about social relations as well as about ethics and values.

Connections with Current Events To cover social psychology is one thing; to use its principles to explain events in the real world is quite another. More than a decade ago, the events of 9/11 changed the world. In different ways not fully discernible, so did the recent and severe economic recession in the United States and Europe; the presidential election of Barack Obama; the change that has swept through the Arab world; and the

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increasing ease with which people meet and interact through online social networking sites. More than ever, we are convinced that connecting theory to real life is the best way to heighten student interest and involvement. Over the years, teachers and students have told us how much they value the "newsy" features of our book.

The ninth edition, like its predecessors, is committed to making social psychology *relevant.* Almost every page includes a passage, a quote, a figure, a table, a photo, or a cartoon that refers to people, places, events, social trends, and issues that are prominent in contemporary culture. The reader will find stories about the killing of Osama Bin Laden; the near economic collapse and its aftermath; the shooting in Florida of Trayvon Martin; the sex abuse scandal and coverup at Penn State University; the trials of Amanda Knox in Italy; the 2012 presidential election; *The Hunger Games*; ongoing political debates over health care reform, gay marriage, and immigration policy; and the role of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube during the revolutions of the Arab Spring.

As in our last edition, you will also find—in the margins—various quotations, song lyrics, public opinion poll results, "factoids," and website addresses. These high-interest items are designed to further illustrate the connectedness of social psychology to a world that extends beyond the borders of a college campus.

Social Psychology and Common Sense In an earlier edition, we introduced a feature that we remain excited about. Building on a discussion in Chapter 1 about the links (and lack thereof) between social psychology and common sense, each substantive chapter opens with *Putting Common Sense to the Test,* a set of true–false questions designed to assess the student's intuitive beliefs about material later contained in that chapter. Some examples: "Sometimes the harder you try to control a thought, feeling, or behavior, the less likely you are to succeed," "People often come to like what they suffer for," "Opposites attract," and "Groups are less likely than individuals to invest more in a project that is failing." The answers to these questions are revealed in a marginal box after the topic is presented in the text. These answers are then explained at the end of each chapter. We think that students will find this exercise engaging. It will also enable them, as they read, to check their intuitive beliefs against the findings of social psychology and to notice the discrepancies that exist.

The Organization

Of all the challenges faced by teachers and textbooks, perhaps the greatest is to put information together in a way that is both accurate and easy to understand. A strong organizational framework helps in meeting this challenge. There is nothing worse for a student than having to wade through a "laundry list" of studies whose interconnections remain a profound mystery. A strong structure thus facilitates the development of conceptual understanding.

But the tail should not wag the dog. Since organizational structure is a means to an end, not an end in itself, we want to keep it simple and unobtrusive. Look through the Table of Contents, and you will see that we present social psychology in five major parts—a heuristic structure that instructors and students have found sensible and easy to follow through eight editions. The book opens with two *Introduction* chapters on the history, subject matter, and research methods of social psychology (Part I). As before, we then move to an intraindividual focus on *Social Perception* (Part II), shift outward to *Social Influence* (Part III) and *Social Relations* (Part IV), and conclude with *Applying Social Psychology* (Part V). We realize that some instructors like to reshuffle the deck to develop a chapter order that better fits their own approach. There is no problem in doing this. Each chapter stands on its own and does not require that others be read first.

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The Presentation

Even when the content of a textbook is accurate and up to date, and even when its organization is sound, there is still the matter of presentation. As the "teacher outside the classroom," a good textbook should facilitate learning. Thus, every chapter contains the following pedagogical features:

- A narrative preview, chapter outline, and commonsense quiz (beginning with Chapter 3).
- Key terms highlighted in the text, defined in the margin, listed at the end of the chapter, and reprinted in an alphabetized glossary at the end of the book. Both the list and the glossary provide page numbers for easy location of each term.
- Numerous bar graphs, line graphs, tables, sketches, photographs, flowcharts, and cartoons that illustrate, extend, enhance, and enliven material in the text. Some of these depict classic images and studies from social psychology's history; others, new to the ninth edition, are contemporary and often "newsy."
- At the end of each chapter, a comprehensive bulleted review summarizing the major sections and points.

Teaching and Learning Support Package

For the Instructor

Instructor's Resource Manual with Test Bank Every chapter includes learning objectives, a detailed chapter outline, lecture and discussion ideas, classroom activities, handouts, multimedia resources, and multiple-choice and essay questions.

PowerLecture with ExamView This one-stop lecture and class preparation tool contains ready-to-use PowerPoint® slides that enable you to assemble, edit, publish, and present custom lectures for your course. PowerLecture lets you bring together text-specific lecture outlines and art from the ninth edition along with videos or your own materials, culminating in a powerful, personalized media-enhanced presentation. The DVD-ROM also includes the ExamView® assessment and tutorial system, which guides you step by step through the process of creating tests.

CourseMate Interested in a simple way to complement your text and course content with study and practice materials? Psychology CourseMate includes an interactive eBook with highlighting and note-taking features and an interactive glossary, as well as interactive learning tools like quizzes, flashcards, videos, and more! Engagement Tracker, a first-of-its-kind tool, monitors student engagement in the course.

WebTutor WebTutor™ offers a full array of text-specific online study tools, including learning objectives, glossary flashcards, practice quizzes, and web links. All content is assignable and feeds into the gradebook in your learning management system where you can track student grades and progress.

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Revealing Psychology These social psychology video segments are informative, engaging, and fun. Hidden cameras reveal people's surprising and amusing reactions when social forces conspire against them. How do you behave when people invade your personal space? Do you help a person who lies sprawled on a busy street? How often do you lie in a 10-minute conversation? These real-world vignettes reveal human foibles and at the same time dramatically illustrate underlying psychological principles. They are available to instructors on DVD for classroom presentation.

Social Psych in Film DVD This DVD, with closed captioning, contains more than 25 clips from popular films and classic experiments that illustrate key concepts in social psychology. Clips from films like *Apollo 13, Schindler's List, Snow Falling on Cedars,* and *In the Name of the Father* are combined with overviews and discussion questions to help bring psychology alive for students and to demonstrate its relevance to contemporary life and culture.

ABC Video: Social Psychology, Volumes I & II ABC Videos feature short, high-interest clips from current news events as well as historic raw footage going back 40 years. Perfect for discussion starters or to enrich your lectures and spark interest in the material in the text, these brief videos provide students with a new lens through which to view the past and present, one that will greatly enhance their knowledge and understanding of significant events and open up to them new dimensions in learning. Clips are drawn from such programs as *World News Tonight*, *Good Morning America*, *This Week*, *PrimeTime Live*, *20/20*, and *Nightline*, as well as numerous ABC News specials and material from the Associated Press Television News and British Movietone News collections.

Research in Action, Volumes I & II *Research in Action* features the work of research psychologists to give students an opportunity to learn about cutting-edge research—not just who is doing it, but also how it is done, and how and where the results are being used. By taking students into the laboratories of both established and up-and-coming researchers, and by showing research results being applied outside of the laboratory, these videos offer insight into both the research process and the many ways in which real people's lives are affected by research in the fields of psychology and neuroscience.

For the Student

Readings in Social Psychology: The Art and Science of Research, Fifth Edition This item contains original articles, each with a brief introduction, and questions to stimulate critical thinking about "doing" social psychology. The articles represent some of the most creative and accessible research, both classic and contemporary, on topics of interest to students.

CourseMate The more you study, the better the results. Make the most of your study time by accessing everything you need to succeed in one place. Psychology CourseMate includes an interactive eBook with highlighting and note-taking features and an interactive glossary, as well as interactive learning tools like quizzes, flashcards, videos, and more!

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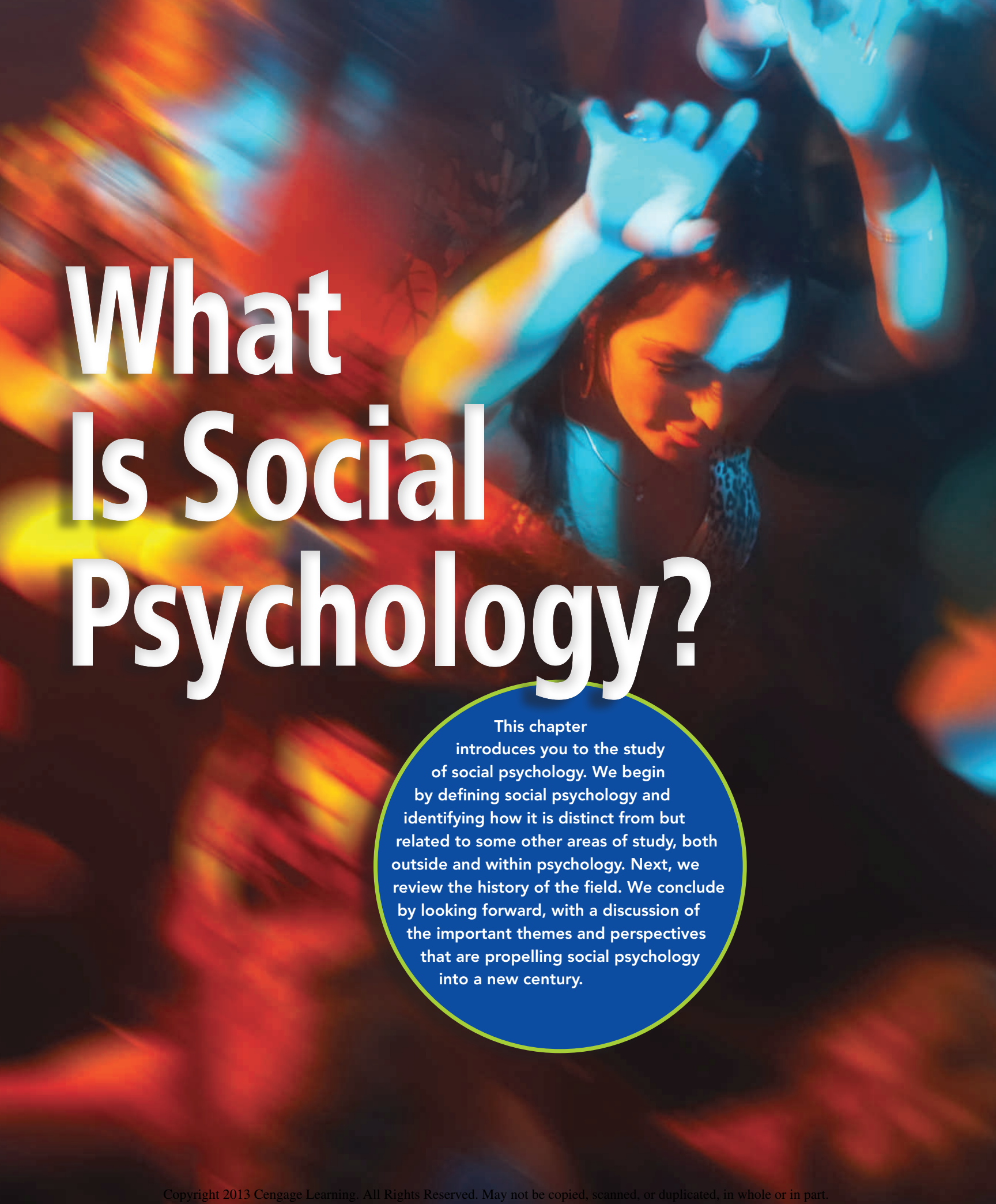

What Is Social Psychology?

This chapter introduces you to the study of social psychology. We begin by defining social psychology and identifying how it is distinct from but related to some other areas of study, both outside and within psychology. Next, we review the history of the field. We conclude by looking forward, with a discussion of the important themes and perspectives that are propelling social psychology into a new century.

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1

What Is Social Psychology? (6)

- Defining Social Psychology
- Social Psychological Questions and Applications
- The Power of the Social Context: An Example of a Social Psychology Experiment
- Social Psychology and Related Fields: Distinctions and Intersections
- Social Psychology and Common Sense

A Brief History of Social Psychology (12)

- The Birth and Infancy of Social Psychology: 1880s–1920s
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Social Psychology in a New Century: What Is Trending Today? (16)

- Integration of Emotion, Motivation, and Cognition
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- Cultural Perspectives
- Behavioral Economics, Embodied Cognition, and Other Interdisciplinary Approaches
- New Technologies and the Online World

Review
Key Terms
Media Resources

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A few years from now, you may receive a letter in the mail inviting you to a high school or college reunion. You'll probably feel a bit nostalgic, and you'll begin to think about those old school days. What thoughts will come to mind first? Will you remember the poetry you finally began to appreciate in your junior year? Will you think about the pride you felt when you completed your first chemistry lab? Will a tear form in your eye as you remember how inspiring your social psychology class was?

Perhaps. But what will probably dominate your thoughts are the people you knew in school and the interactions you had with them—the long and intense discussions about everything imaginable; the loves you had, lost, or wanted so desperately to experience; the time you made a fool of yourself at a party; the effort of trying to be accepted by a fraternity, sorority, or clique of popular people; the day you sat in the pouring rain with your friends while watching a football game.

We focus on these social situations because we are social beings. We forge our individual identities not alone but in the context of other people. We work, play, and live together. We hurt and help each other. We define happiness and success for each other. And we don't fall passively into social interactions; we actively seek them. We visit family, make friends, have parties, build networks, go on dates, pledge an enduring commitment, decide to have children. We watch others, speculate about them, and predict who will wind up with whom, whether in real life or on "reality" TV shows such as *The Real World* or *The Bachelor*. Many of us text or tweet each other about everything we're up to, or we spend lots of time on social networking sites such as Facebook, interacting with countless peers from around the world, adding hundreds or even thousands of "friends" to our social networks.

"You carry [your friends and family] with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you."

—Frederick Buechner

You've probably seen or at least heard about the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*. When the hero, George Bailey, was about to kill himself, the would-be angel Clarence didn't save him by showing him how much personal happiness he'd miss if he ended his life. Instead, he showed George how much his life had touched the lives of others and how many people would be hurt if he was not a part of their world. It was these social relationships that saved George's life, just as they define our own.

One of the exciting aspects of learning about social psychology is discovering how basic and profoundly important these social relationships are to the human animal. And research continues to find new evidence for and point to new implications of our social nature. Consider, for example, this set of conclusions from recent research:

- Having close friends and staying in contact with family members is associated with health benefits such as protecting against heart disease, infection, diabetes, and cancer, and with living longer and more actively (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2013; Luo et al., 2012).
- Children who are socially excluded from activities by their peers are more likely than other children to suffer academically as well as socially in school even several years later (Buhs et al., 2010; Rodkin & Ryan, 2012).
- Experiencing a social rejection or loss is so painful that it produces activity in the same parts of the brain as when we feel physical pain. Being treated well and fairly by other people, on the other hand, activates parts of the brain associated with physical rewards such as desirable food and drink (Eisenberger, 2012; Eisenberger & Cole, 2012).

Craig Sjodin/ABC via Getty Images

Millions of people tune in to watch strangers relate to each other on popular "reality" shows. Pictured here is a group who appeared in a recent season of *The Bachelorette*, as viewers wondered which man might get engaged to the featured bachelorette. The enormous popularity of shows like these illustrates part of the appeal of social psychology—people are fascinated with how we relate to one another.

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- As many doctors can tell you, there is something very real about a "broken heart." For example, a person is more than 20 times more likely than usual to suffer a heart attack within one day of the death of a loved one (Mostofsky et al., 2012).

Precisely because we need and care so much about social interactions and relationships, the social contexts in which we find ourselves can influence us profoundly. You can find many examples of this kind of influence in your own life. Have you ever laughed at a joke you didn't get just because those around you were laughing? Do you present yourself in one way with one group of people and in quite a different way with another group? The power of the situation can also be much more subtle, and yet more powerful, than in these examples, as when another's unspoken expectations about you literally seem to cause you to become a different person.

The relevance of social psychology is evident in everyday life, of course, such as when two people become attracted to each other or when a group tries to coordinate its efforts on a project. Dramatic events can heighten its significance all the more, as is evident in people's behavior during and after war, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters. In these traumatic times, a spotlight shines on how people help or exploit each other, and we witness some of the worst and best that human relations have to offer. These events invariably call attention to the kinds of questions that social psychologists study—questions about hatred and violence, about intergroup conflict and suspicion, as well as about heroism, cooperation, and the capacity for understanding across cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and geographic divides. We are reminded of the need for a better understanding of social psychological issues as we see footage of death and destruction in the Middle East or Congo or are confronted with the reality of an all-too-violent world as nearby as our own neighborhoods and campuses. We also appreciate the majesty and power of social connections as we recognize the courage of a firefighter, read about the charity of a donor, or see the glow in the eyes of a new parent. These are all—the bad and the good, the mundane and the extraordinary—part of the fascinating landscape of social psychology.

Ed Ou/The New York Times/Redux

AP Photo/The Enterprise, Wayne Titcock

Egyptian youth post video to Facebook and Twitter of footage they shot earlier that day of revolutionary protests in Tahrir Square in 2011 (left). Social networking sites played a key role in protests for social and economic reform that broke out throughout the world that year, including in this "Occupy" protest at the University of California, Davis, in which a police officer sprays pepper spray into the face of a student (right). Social psychologists study important issues such as the ones raised here, including about the expanding role of social networking and technology in our lives, and how people deal with conflict.

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Not only will you learn interesting and relevant research findings throughout the book, you also will learn *how* social psychologists have discovered this evidence. It is an exciting process and one that we are enthusiastic about sharing with you. The purpose of this first chapter is to provide you with a broad overview of the field of social psychology. By the time you finish it, you should be ready and (we hope) eager for what lies ahead.

What Is Social Psychology?

We begin by previewing the new territory you're about to enter. Then we define social psychology and map out its relationship to sociology and some other disciplines within the field of psychology.

Defining Social Psychology

Social psychology is the scientific study of how individuals think, feel, and behave in a social context. Let's look at each part of this definition.

IT Stock/Jupiter Images

Our social relationships and interactions are extremely important to us. Most people seek out and are profoundly affected by other people. This social nature of the human animal is what social psychology is all about.

Scientific Study There are many approaches to understanding how people think, feel, and behave. We can learn about human behavior from novels, films, history, and philosophy, to name just a few possibilities. What makes social psychology different from these artistic and humanistic endeavors is that social psychology is a science. It applies the *scientific method* of systematic observation, description, and measurement to the study of the human condition. How, and why, social psychologists do this is explained in Chapter 2.

How Individuals Think, Feel, and Behave Social psychology concerns an amazingly diverse set of topics. People's private, even nonconscious beliefs and attitudes; their most passionate emotions; their heroic, cowardly, or merely mundane public behaviors—these all fall within the broad scope of social psychology. In this way, social psychology differs from other social sciences such as economics and political science. Research on attitudes offers a good illustration. Whereas economists and political scientists may be interested in people's economic and political attitudes, respectively, social psychologists investigate a wide variety of attitudes and contexts, such as individuals' attitudes toward particular groups of people or how their attitudes are affected by their peers or their mood. In doing so, social psychologists strive to establish general principles of attitude formation and change that apply in a variety of situations rather than exclusively to particular domains.

Note the word *individuals* in our definition of social psychology. This word points to another important way in which social psychology differs from some other social sciences. Sociology, for instance, typically classifies people in terms of their nationality, race, socioeconomic class, and other *group factors*. In contrast, social psychology typically focuses on the psychology of the *individual*. Even when social psychologists study groups of people, they usually emphasize the behavior of the individual in the group context.

social psychology The scientific study of how individuals think, feel, and behave in a social context.

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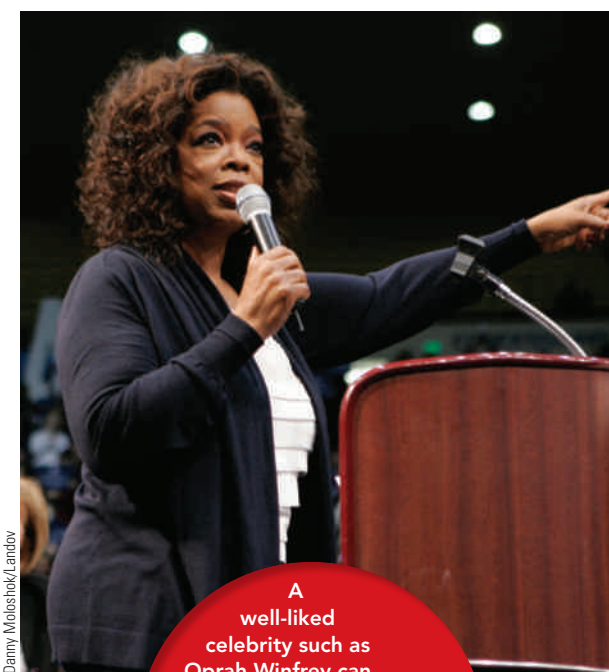
A Social Context Here is where the "social" in social psychology comes into play and how social psychology is distinguished from other branches of psychology. As a whole, the discipline of psychology is an immense, sprawling enterprise, the 800-pound gorilla of the social sciences, concerned with everything from the actions of neurotransmitters in the brain to the actions of music fans in a crowded club. What makes social psychology unique is its emphasis on the social nature of individuals.

However, the "socialness" of social psychology varies. In attempting to establish general principles of human behavior, social psychologists sometimes examine nonsocial factors that affect people's thoughts, emotions, motives, and actions. For example, they may study whether hot weather causes people to behave more aggressively (Anderson & DeLisi, 2011). What is social about this is the behavior: people hurting each other. In addition, social psychologists sometimes study people's thoughts or feelings about nonsocial things, such as people's attitudes toward Nike versus Adidas basketball shoes. How can attitudes toward basketball shoes be of interest to social psychologists? One way is if these attitudes are influenced by something social, such as whether LeBron James's endorsement of Nike makes people prefer that brand. Both examples—determining whether heat causes an increase in aggression or whether LeBron James causes an increase in sales of Nike shoes—are *social* psychological pursuits because the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors either (a) *concern other people* or (b) *are influenced by other people*.

The "social context" referred to in the definition of social psychology does not have to be real or present. Even the implied or imagined presence of others can have important effects on individuals (Allport, 1985). For example, if people imagine receiving positive or negative reactions from others, their self-esteem can be affected significantly (Libby et al., 2012; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). If children imagine having contact with a child from another country, their attitudes toward individuals from that country can become more positive (Vezzali et al., 2012). And if college students imagine living a day in the life of a professor, they are likely to perform better later on an analytic test; if they imagine instead being a cheerleader, however, they perform worse (Galinsky et al., 2008)!



Danny Moloshok/Landov

A well-liked celebrity such as Oprah Winfrey can influence the attitudes and behaviors of millions of people. For many years, when Oprah recommended a book, for example, sales of the book were likely to skyrocket.

Social Psychological Questions and Applications

For those of us fascinated by social behavior, social psychology is a dream come true. Just look at Table 1.1 and consider a small sample of the questions you'll explore in this textbook. As you can see, the social nature of the human animal is what social psychology is all about. Learning about social psychology is learning about ourselves and our social worlds. And because social psychology is scientific rather than anecdotal, it provides insights that would be impossible to gain through intuition or experience alone.

The value of social psychology's perspective on human behavior is widely recognized. Courses in social psychology are often required or encouraged for students interested in careers in business, education, medicine, law, and journalism as well as in psychology and sociology. Although many advanced graduates with a Ph.D. in social psychology hold faculty appointments in colleges or universities, others work in medical centers, law firms, government agencies, the military, and a variety of business settings involving investment banking, marketing, advertising, human resources, negotiating, and social networking.

The number and importance of these applications continue to grow. Judges are drawing on social psychological research to render landmark decisions, and lawyers are depending on it to select juries and to support or refute evidence. Businesses are

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TABLE 1.1
Examples of Social Psychological Questions

Social Perception: What Affects the Way We Perceive Ourselves and Others?

- Why do people sometimes sabotage their own performance, making it more likely that they will fail? (Chapter 3)
- How do people in East Asia often differ from North Americans in the way they explain people's behavior? (Chapter 4)
- Where do stereotypes come from, and why are they so resistant to change? (Chapter 5)

Social Influence: How Do We Influence Each Other?

- Why do we often like what we suffer for? (Chapter 6)
- How do salespeople sometimes trick us into buying things we never really wanted? (Chapter 7)
- Why do people often perform worse in groups than they would have alone? (Chapter 8)

Social Interaction: What Causes Us to Like, Love, Help, and Hurt Others?

- How similar or different are the sexes in what they look for in an intimate relationship? (Chapter 9)
- When is a bystander more or less likely to help you in an emergency? (Chapter 10)
- Does exposure to TV violence or to pornography trigger aggressive behavior? (Chapter 11)

Applying Social Psychology: How Does Social Psychology Help Us Understand Questions About Law, Business, and Health?

- Can interrogators really get people to confess to serious crimes they did not commit? (Chapter 12)
- How can business leaders most effectively motivate their employees? (Chapter 13)
- How does stress affect one's health, and what are the most effective ways of coping with stressful experiences? (Chapter 14)

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using cross-cultural social psychological research to operate in the global marketplace, and they are consulting research on group dynamics to foster the best conditions for their work forces. Health care professionals are increasingly aware of the role of social psychological factors in the prevention and treatment of disease. Indeed, we can think of no other field of study that offers expertise that is more clearly relevant to so many different career paths.

The Power of the Social Context: An Example of a Social Psychology Experiment

The social nature of people runs so deep that even very subtle clues about our social connection with others can have a profound effect on our lives. Think about your first weeks of high school or college. If you're like most students, there probably were times when you felt insecure and wondered if you fit in there. For some groups of students, however, these fears are especially frequent and strong. Students from underrepresented racial or ethnic minority groups are especially vulnerable to such doubts about social belonging on campus. Social psychological research suggests that these concerns can interfere with the academic performance.

Gregory Walton and Geoffrey Cohen are among the social psychologists who have studied this issue. They wondered if they could improve the academic success of African American students at a selective, predominately European American university by protecting them against the heightened "belonging uncertainty" that often plagues these students. To test this idea, Walton and Cohen (2011) conducted an experiment in which they provided some students in their first semester at college with a brief bit of information suggesting how typical it is that most students—regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity—go through periods of social stress and uncertainty during their freshman year, and that these struggles tend to go away soon after their first year. Walton and Cohen wanted to assess how these students would do during their four years of college compared to other students who did not receive any information about social belonging concerns.

Walton and Cohen found that giving this information to African American students raised their grade-point averages (GPAs) significantly higher relative to other African American students who were not given this information. Take a look at ● Figure 1.1. The bars in this graph illustrate the spring-term senior year GPAs of African American students who either did not (the left bar) or did (the right bar) receive the information about social belonging in the fall term of their first year in college. As the difference in

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height of these two bars indicate, the African American students who read about how common and temporary these social doubts are got better grades than those who did not read this information. And keep in mind that they read this information in their first semester at college, and the GPAs reflected in Figure 1.1 are from the spring term of their senior year!

Walton and Cohen found that the information about social belonging concerns did not affect the GPAs of white students. The researchers believe that the white students were much less likely to have persistent doubts about their social connection to the majority of students at their campus, and therefore providing them information about social belonging did not have much impact on them. For the African American students, on the other hand, the information they received about how typical and temporary these doubts are in one's first year may have come as great relief, reduced their fears about being outsiders, and enabled them to reach their academic potential. The social context—or *perceived* social context—had a significant effect on the students' success at college. You'll learn more about this and related research by Walton and Cohen in Chapter 5.

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According to social psychological research described in this chapter and elsewhere in the book, how socially connected students feel with their fellow students can have a significant effect on their academic success.

Social Psychology and Related Fields: Distinctions and Intersections

Social psychology is sometimes confused with certain other fields of study. Before we go on, it is important to clarify how social psychology is distinct from these other fields. At the same time, it is important to illustrate some of the ways that interesting and significant questions can be addressed through interactions between social psychology and these other fields (see Table 1.2 on page 10).

Social Psychology and Sociology Sociologists and social psychologists share an interest in many issues, such as violence, prejudice, cultural differences, and marriage. As noted, however, sociology tends to focus on the group level, whereas social psychology tends to focus on the individual level. For example, sociologists might track the racial attitudes of the middle class in the United States, whereas social psychologists might examine some of the specific factors that make individuals more or less likely to behave in a racist way toward members of some group.

In addition, although there are many exceptions, social psychologists are more likely than sociologists to conduct experiments in which they manipulate some variable and determine the effects of this manipulation using precise, quantifiable measures.

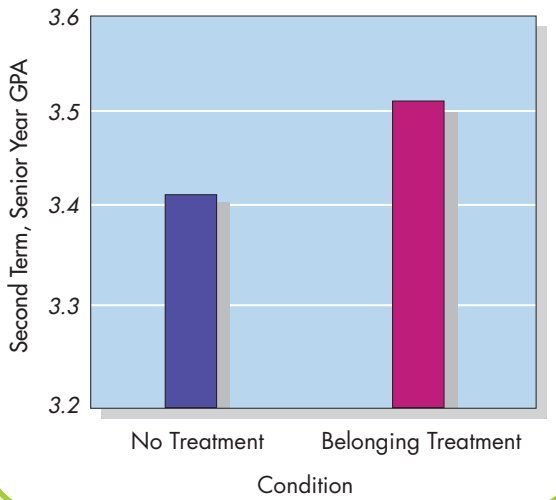
Despite these differences, sociology and social psychology are clearly related. Indeed, many sociologists and social psychologists share the same training and publish in the same journals. When these two fields intersect, the result can be a more complete understanding of important issues. For example, interdisciplinary research

FIGURE 1.1

Social Belonging and GPA

In a 2011 experiment by Gregory Walton and Geoffrey Cohen, some students during their first semester at college were given information designed to reduce their doubts about fitting in and socially belonging at their school, and other students were not given this information. For African American students, this manipulation had a significant effect on their grade point averages (GPAs) through their subsequent college years. In this graph, the bars represent the average GPAs of the African American students in the second term of their senior year who either did not (the left bar) or did (the right bar) receive this information designed to reduce uncertainty about belonging.

Adapted from Walton & Cohen, 2011. © Cengage Learning



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