

# Social Psychology Under Analysis

Mark R. Leary (Ed.)

**The State of Social Psychology: Issues, Themes, and Controversies**  
Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989.

141 pp. ISBN 0-8039-3621-4 (hardcover); 0-8039-3622-2 (paperback).  
\$25.00 hardcover; \$12.95 paperback

Review by

Mahzarin Banaji

*Mark R. Leary, associate professor of psychology at Wake Forest University (Winston-Salem, North Carolina), is coauthor, with R. S. Miller, of Social Psychology and Dysfunctional Behavior: Origins, Diagnosis, and Treatment. ■ Mahzarin Banaji is assistant professor at Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut).*

**T**he *State of Social Psychology: Issues, Themes, and Controversies* aims to examine the condition of social psychology in the 1980s. Its origin lies in the 1987 meeting of the Society of South-eastern Social Psychologists, which will explain the geographic proximity of the institutional affiliations of the authors. Beginning with the preface, by Kenneth Gergen, it immediately reveals its specific mission: to identify the research topics, intellectual styles, reinforcement schedules, and sociopolitical factors that create and maintain a marginalized subculture within social psychology. Together, the chapters in this volume represent a view of the inequities, inadequacies, and failures of social psychology evidenced in the late 1980s, with many proposals for change. I agree with the importance of several of the issues that are raised, in fact with the continuing need for such analyses, but less with the message of some of the examinations.

This slim volume (the average length of chapters is eight pages) is divided into three sections intended to cover conceptual and methodological issues, the relation between social psychology and other fields, and the multiple roles of a social psychologist. In an informative analysis, Latane reports on the general health of the field by assessing membership and subscription rates of journals, the ratio of editors to journal pages, and so on. From this analysis emerge some pertinent facts: The current membership of the American Psychological Association's Division 8 (Personality and Social Psychology) is approximately 3,000 (the highest was 5,000 in the early 1970s), which constitutes only 5 percent of the Association's membership. In 1961, it took 115 reviewers to publish 230 arti-

cles in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, whereas in 1986, it took almost 1,000 reviewers to produce 293 articles in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP)*; the average length of an article in *JPSP* is now twice (12 pages) what it was 25 years ago. Perhaps such data ought to be collected routinely (by the Society for Experimental Social Psychology?), with greater attention to comparisons with other sciences with which we compete for research funds. In addition, Latane urges that we look for creative ways to improve data collection procedures, using as a case in point a computer-administered panel study involving several research projects and a large subject pool for longitudinal data collection.

Other chapters in the section also address important if familiar issues. How do some topics, theories, and methodologies acquire privileged status while others come to be regarded as peripheral or nonessential? What are the factors that create the success or failure of individual scientists and their efforts? The unique position of these questions in social psychology is not always made clear, and I found some observations to be rather baseless (e.g., what's the evidence that the popularity of social cognition may derive from its "easier" methodologies?). Other issues are more provocative, for example, Prentice-Dunn's claim that as a discipline we are less respectful of concepts labeled in lay language (e.g., loneliness, helping). If true, this practice may be dangerous because it signals to investigators and funding agencies that social psychology is a less-than-legitimate science. In physics, for example, lay language is routinely employed, without censure, to identify and describe physical

phenomena and processes (*strangeness* is a property of quarks, as are *truth*, *beauty*, and *charm*! Quigg, 1985).

McCallum and McCallum stress the need for more general theory to bridge existing distinctions between mainstream and peripheral topics. My own constitution permits me to be calm in the absence of grand theories that explain everything, but I am in accord with their suggestion that the discipline ought to more explicitly seek integrative analyses. The last three chapters in the first section (Solano; Senn; Axsom) represent the continuing battle cry from the 1970s for a truly "social" psychology—attention to "real" interactions, to the "contextualized" study of social behavior, and a corresponding deemphasis on individualistic approaches. It is my opinion that such arguments derive from an unfounded belief that characterizes psychological science, namely, that high ecological validity of method ensures greater yield in knowledge and external validity. The belief that social psychological processes studied in isolation are less informative about social behavior than those that concur with lay definitions of social psychology must be rejected. I applaud these authors for pointing to variables, methodologies, and approaches that are ignored, but I remain unconvinced that real interactions are not studied in spite of the availability of tractable methods or that the traditional approach has led to simplistic findings.

The second section contains three well-informed articles (Walden; Stokes; Maddux) that identify the need and procedures for forging links between social psychology and developmental, industrial/organizational, and clinical/counseling psychology. Each provides a discussion of the research issues that are of mutual interest and provides examples of current research (e.g., on attribution, nonverbal behavior, social referencing, and emotional expression) that have profited by such cross-disciplinary connections. The third section is devoted to the conflict between the role of scientist and teacher (Nocks; Weber; Leary and Williams). These chapters offer sensitive and empowering treatments of the issues that confront many academics who must carry a heavy teaching load and yet satisfy personal and professional demands of research productivity. Although their suggestions may not be easily adopted (e.g., creating an individualized system of differential weighting of teaching, research, and administrative contributions), each contains some persuasive arguments. In

a concluding commentary, Hendrick offers a generous and thoughtful review of the contributions as well as an analysis of the unique position of social psychology in psychology and in social science. This book could be read by various segments of the social psychology population—by those who are dissatisfied with traditional approaches to research, by those instructors who devote a major portion of

their intellectual life to teaching, and by those who occupy positions in the mainstream of social psychology but are sensitive to the concerns of the field as a whole.

#### Reference

Quigg, C. (1985). Elementary particles and forces. *Scientific American*, 252, 84–95.

## Evolutionary Psychology and the Need for Interdisciplinary Social Science

Jerome H. Berkow  
*Darwin, Sex, and Status: Biological Approaches to Mind and Culture*  
Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1989. 453 pp.  
ISBN 0-8020-5773-X. \$45.00

Review by  
David M. Buss

*Jerome H. Berkow, professor of social anthropology at Dalhousie University (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada), is coauthor, with J. Blain, of the chapter "Father Involvement, Reproductive Strategies, and the Sensitive Period" in K. MacDonald (Ed.) Sociobiology and Human Development. ■ David M. Buss, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) and recipient of the American Psychological Association Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contribution to Psychology, is coeditor, with N. Cantor, of Personality Psychology: Recent Trends and Emerging Directions.*

Barkow's book presents a far-ranging theoretical treatment of the evolution of human psychology and culture. It covers some basics of evolutionary biology; tackles the problems of the self, attention, awareness, and culture; outlines interesting hypotheses about prestige, self-esteem, and sexuality; and offers a compelling argument that understanding human behavior requires multiple levels of explanation that are "vertically integrated." Perhaps most important, this book represents a major advance in thinking over earlier, more simplistic sociobiological analyses of human behavior. Although Barkow is critical of some of these earlier attempts, he makes one thing clear: Evolutionary biology is crucial for understanding human psychology and culture, but it will not be the only tool.

Barkow's book is surely a step in the right direction in the emerging field of evolutionary psychology and will be of special interest to psychologists working on the topics of competition, the self,

sexuality, consciousness, deceit, social influence, altruism, and human culture. It documents a welcome trend toward the recognition that evolved psychological mechanisms must be central to the study of evolution and human behavior. *Darwin, Sex, and Status* has the additional virtue of successfully transcending disciplinary boundaries, particularly those of anthropology and psychology.

A strong point is the explication of a number of testable hypotheses throughout the book, which are nicely brought together in a compendium at the end. These hypotheses are especially strong in the area of human sexuality, although many are simply restatements of the predictions of Trivers (1972), Symons (1979), and others. Unfortunately, a skeptic could still level the oft-stated criticism that this field contains a large number of speculations, hypotheses, and just-so stories but a meager empirical base to give credence to them. Although the study of evolution and human behavior is mushrooming at a daunting pace

that defies the capacities of most of us to keep abreast, it is unfortunate that Barkow does not take advantage of the dozens of published empirical studies, particularly those in psychology journals, that bear directly on many of his hypotheses. Although some antedate the publication of the book and hence were inaccessible to Barkow, others predate the books' publication and could have been used to strengthen his arguments. Below, I document some areas in which empirical research bearing on his hypotheses now exists.

**Male preferences for long-term mates**  
Barkow argues that men should prefer in long-term mates women who are young (cue to reproductive value), who give the man confidence in his paternity of offspring (so he will not invest resources in unrelated children), and who show intelligence, social skills, and resourcefulness (cues to the woman's parental skills). Cross-cultural evidence is now strong that men worldwide do prefer marriage partners who are younger than they are (Buss, 1989a). Men in many cultures value chastity in a potential mate more than women do, but this sex difference is far from universal (Buss, 1989a). Infidelity by women, however, appears to be one of the most prevalent causes of divorce worldwide (Betzig, 1989), providing strong support for the paternity confidence hypothesis. Finally, it has been documented for decades that men place a premium on intelligence in long-term mates (e.g., Hudson & Henze, 1969), a finding that has recently been replicated across 37 societies (Buss, 1989a).

#### Female preferences for long-term mates

Barkow reiterates Trivers's (1972) prediction that women will focus in the long-term mate search on men who show the ability and willingness to invest resources in her and her children. Although the willingness preferences remain largely unexamined empirically, research in the United States has long documented that women value resources and status in mates, as well as cues to resource acquisition such as ambition and industriousness (e.g., Hill, 1945). This finding has recently been documented across widely varying cultures (Buss, 1989a) and is apparently not altered when women have personal access to resources (e.g., Townsend, 1989).