1. The Social Mind: Introduction and Overview

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Introduction

Human beings are an intrinsically gregarious species. Much of our remarkable evolutionary success is probably due to our highly developed ability to cooperate and interact with each other (Buss, 1999). It is thus not surprising that the study of interpersonal behavior has long been one of the core concerns of social psychology. Understanding how people relate to each other and how their mental representations about other individuals and groups guide their interpersonal strategies has never been of greater importance than it is today. Throughout most of our evolutionary history, human beings lived in close, face-to-face groups where almost all interaction involved intimately known others. In contrast, with the development of large-scale industrialized societies since the 18th century, our interactions have become increasingly complex and impersonal. Most of our encounters now involve people we know superficially at best (Durkheim, 1956; Goffman, 1972). Effective social interaction thus requires ever more sophisticated and elaborate cognitive and motivational strategies. The scientific study of how people understand and represent the social world around them and how they plan and execute their interactions with others is thus of critical importance.

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Of course, the study of interpersonal processes has a long and proud tradition in our discipline. However, during the past several decades social psychology has been increasingly dominated by an individualistic social cognitive paradigm that has focused predominantly on the study of individual thoughts and motivations (Forgas, 1981). Perhaps inevitably, the study of "real" interpersonal processes has declined in relative importance (Wegner & Gilbert, 2000). Although we have made major advances in understanding how people process information about the social world, relatively few attempts have been made to explore how processes of social cognition and motivation may influence interpersonal behaviors. One of our objectives in this volume is to draw on the best of the achievements of recent cognitive and motivational research in social psychology and to show how this knowledge can be applied to understanding interpersonal phenomena.

We argue in this book that a juxtaposition of the "social" and the "individual" in our discipline is neither helpful nor necessary. Any meaningful explanation of interpersonal behavior must be based on a careful analysis of the thoughts and motivations of individual social actors. In turn, social factors such as our personal relationships, group memberships, and culture play a critical role in shaping our mental representations and motivations. One of the oldest debates in the history of psychology is about whether our discipline should be concerned with the study of "mind" or "behavior" (Hilgard, 1980). It seems to us that any meaningful approach to social psychology necessarily involves paying as much attention to the thoughts, motivations, and feelings of social actors as to their interpersonal behaviors. In other words, the interaction between the mental and the behavioral aspects of social life should be the proper focus of our research. The term *social mind* featured in our title is intended to signify this close interdependence between the mental and the behavioral, the social and the individual spheres in our discipline. The contributions to this volume all report theories and research that illustrate the benefits of adopting such an integrative approach to the analysis of social cognition and motivation on the one hand and interpersonal behavior on the other.

The substantive task of this book is thus to explore the role of mental representations about the social world in how people understand themselves and others, and how cognitive and motivational processes influence their interpersonal behaviors. Of course, the idea that there is a close interdependence between interpersonal behavior on the one hand and cognitive and motivational processes on the

other has an interesting history in our discipline, as the next section will argue.

The Background

The close links between symbolic mental processes and interpersonal behavior have long been recognized in social science theorizing. Several influential theories sought to deal with this question. The theories of Max Weber (1947), although rarely invoked in social psychology nowadays, provide one outstanding example of such an approach. Weber assumed a direct relationship between the individual's cognitions, beliefs and motivations – the social mind – and larger social systems and structures. Weber's well-known analysis of large-scale sociohistorical processes, such as his theory linking the advent of capitalism with the spread of the Protestant ethic and values, is fundamentally social psychological in orientation. In this work, as well as most of his other writings, Weber assumes that individual beliefs and motivations – such as the spreading acceptance of the Protestant ethic – are the fundamental force shaping large-scale social and economic processes, such as the advent of capitalist social organization (Weber, 1947). Max Weber's concern with mental representations as the key to understanding interpersonal and societal processes is particularly noticeable in his work on bureaucracies. Here he argues that understanding the mind set of the bureaucrat is essential to understanding how bureaucracies function; on the other hand, the explicit rule systems that define bureaucracies play a critical role in shaping and maintaining the social mind of the bureaucrat that, in turn, governs his or her behaviors.

Weber was also among the pioneers who argued that any understanding of social and interpersonal behavior must involve a study of the externally observable causes of that behavior, as well as the subjectively perceived meanings that are attached to an action by the actor. Weber's methodologies involved an ingenious attempt to combine empirical, quantitative data about social processes with the simultaneous analysis of subjective beliefs and motivations of individuals. Several of the chapters here report important progress in research on the interface of individual minds and social behavior that has a distinctly Weberian flavor (e.g., those of McGuire and McGuire, Nezlek, Baumeister and Catanese, Hogg, and Kerr). Indeed, one could make a plausible case that Max Weber was one of the precursors of the

social cognitive approach, and it is rather unfortunate that his work and theories remain largely unrecognized and unappreciated by social psychologists today.

Another important theoretical framework that is highly relevant to the concerns of the present book is symbolic interactionism, and the work of George Herbert Mead in particular. Mead's *social behaviorism*, later to be renamed *symbolic interactionism*, was perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to create a theory of social interaction that would synthesize the behaviorist and the phenomenologist, the environmentalist and the mentalistic approaches to human behavior. Mead argued that interpersonal behavior is best understood as both the product and the source of the symbolic representations and expectations of social actors – their social mind. These mental representations, in turn, are partly "given," determined by prior experiences and symbolic representations of social encounters, and partly "creative," constructed by social actors in the course of their encounters with others. Mead's theory is in a sense an attempt to combine phenomenological concerns with symbolic meanings and intentions with the dominant behaviorist orientation of experimental psychology at that time. According to Mead, by internalizing and symbolically representing the social interactions people participate in, the individual acquires social expertise, which lies at the core of the socialized "me." However, social interactions are not acted out in a repetitive, determinate, stereotypical fashion in everyday life. It is the role of the unique, creative "I" to continuously reassess, monitor, and redefine social interactions as they progress, injecting a sense of indeterminacy and openness into our interactions.

Symbolic interactionism has failed to become a dominant theory within social psychology, probably because the methodologies available at the time did not provide a suitable empirical means for studying individual mental representations. The social cognitive paradigm that has been in ascendancy for at least two decades now has changed much of this. Social cognitive research essentially deals with the same kinds of questions that were also of interest to Mead: How do individual thoughts, beliefs, representations, and motives influence interpersonal behavior, and how are such mental representations constructed and maintained? Social cognitive research has now developed a range of ingenious techniques and empirical procedures that for the first time allow a rigorous empirical analysis of Mead's ideas. Many of the chapters in this book address issues that are directly

relevant to symbolic interactionist concerns (e.g., those of Andersen and Berenson, Fletcher and Simpson, Nezlek, Rhodewalt, Sedikides and Gaertner). Like these authors, symbolic interactionists were also interested in these questions: How do people's ideas and beliefs about relationships, the self, or other people influence their interpersonal behaviors? and How are such beliefs created and maintained in the course of social interactions? Symbolic interactionist ideas continue to provide a huge and largely untapped reservoir of theories and hypotheses about the links between social mind and social behavior, and one of the key antecedents to the issues explored in this book.

It is interesting to note that even though the theoretical systems developed by Max Weber and George Herbert Mead had only a weak direct influence on social psychology, within sociology they gave rise to a strong and thriving micro-sociological tradition (Coser, 1971). In fact Weber's and Mead's influence on social psychology has been largely indirect, transmitted to us through the work of writers such as Erving Goffman (1972). Goffman provided some of the most stimulating conceptual accounts of the intricate relationship between an individual's thoughts and motivations, planned self-presentational strategies, and observable public social behavior. Goffman's dramaturgical account of social interaction is essentially based on his extended analysis of the cognitive and motivational strategies that shape the social minds of actors. Consistent with the micro-sociological tradition, Goffman's method of explaining the puzzles of interpersonal behavior was largely based on analytical, interpretive methods. Social psychologists cover much the same ground, relying on the whole armory of empirical methods. The work presented here by Andersen and Berenson, Baumeister and Catanese, Rhodewalt, Schütz, Sorrentino et al., Tice and Faber, and Williams et al. all touches on issues that are directly relevant to our understanding of strategic self-presentation in interpersonal situations, as also analyzed by Goffman.

A further historical tradition that is directly relevant to the theme of our book can be found in the various phenomenological theories in social psychology. Although the introspective method for studying phenomenological mental experiences pioneered by Wundt and Titchener was largely rejected in later psychological research, phenomenological theories continue to exert a great influence on our discipline (Bless & Forgas, 2000). In fact, the phenomenological perspective produced some of our most stimulating and enduring ideas and research paradigms in experimental social psychology. A classic example is Fritz

Heider's pioneering work (Heider, 1958) exploring the kinds of knowledge and motives that social actors need to possess in order to plan and execute strategic interpersonal behaviors successfully.

Heider's work is fundamentally a theoretical analysis of the nature of the social mind: What are the characteristics of social knowledge, how is it acquired and organized, and how does it guide interpersonal behaviors? Heider's phenomenological speculations about the nature and functions of the minds of social actors had a major impact on our discipline and gave rise to some of our most productive empirical research paradigms. Phenomenological ideas provided the initial impetus and defined the scope of such key areas of research as the study of person perception and attribution, balance and dissonance theories, and research on attitude organization and attitude change. Without Heider's commitment to taking seriously and trying to understand the social mind of social actors, social psychology would have developed as an entirely different discipline. Several chapters here report research concerned with the social understanding of actors that show considerable affinity with Heider's theoretical ideas (e.g., those of Cooper, Forgas, McGuire and McGuire, Nezlek, Schütz, Sorrentino et al., and Tice and Faber).

Heider is just one of the key representatives of the phenomenological tradition. Kurt Lewin is another defining figure who also believed that the study of how interpersonal behavior is directed by the mental representations and motivations of individuals should be within the focus of social psychological inquiry. Lewin's field theory in particular represents an explicit affirmation of the principle that the way people mentally represent and experience social situations must be the core research question guiding our discipline. Lewin's ideas have, of course, left an indelible mark on our field. His emphasis on the need to understand the subjective representations of social actors – their social mind – eventually gave us some of our most successful research paradigms, including much research on group dynamics, social influence processes, and cognitive dissonance. One can easily discern a conceptual link between the Lewinian approach to the analysis of social influence and group processes in the work reported here by Crano, Kerr, Huguet et al., and Kaplan and Wilke, as well as that of Williams et al.

This necessarily brief survey of the various historical antecedents of an interest in the social mind is, of course, far from complete. Our purpose in touching on these earlier theories is simply to illustrate

that social psychology has a rich tradition of fruitful theorizing that addresses exactly the same questions that contributors to this volume are also concerned with: What are the features and characteristics of thought systems? How are mental representations about the social world, other people, intimate relationships, and the like formed, and how do they, in turn, influence our interpersonal strategies? To what extent can we understand group behavior in terms of the implicit representations people have about the role of their own group and its relative position compared to the positions of other groups? In order to answer questions such as these, we need to be mindful of earlier theories of the social mind that could inform our enterprise today.

However, we are now also in a much better position than earlier researchers to find answers to questions such as these. The past several decades in social psychology have been characterized by the rapid ascendancy of the social cognitive paradigm. For all its failings, this is a framework that clearly accepts that the mental representations, feelings, and intentions of social actors are the key determinants of interpersonal behavior. Social cognitive research has produced an impressive corpus of findings and empirical methods that are directly relevant to studying the social mind. Many of the contributions included here offer excellent illustrations of how social cognitive methods can be applied to study the links between social cognition and motivation and strategic interpersonal behaviors (e.g., the chapters by Andersen and Berenson, Forgas, Huguet et al., Sedikides and Gaertner, Sorrentino et al., and Tice and Faber).

What are the fundamental dimensions that define people's social experiences? Can we identify basic characteristics that play a key role in influencing a wide range of interpersonal plans and behaviors? Several chapters here suggest that the answer to questions such as these may be a cautious "yes." A number of contributors to this volume find that thoughts and concern about being accepted and *liked*, and concern about being *competent*, in control, and respected, appear to be distinct and orthogonal features of the social minds of actors. Interestingly, this dichotomy appears to be important in other areas of social psychology as well. For example, there is considerable evidence from person perception research suggesting that liking (social evaluation) and competence (task and intellectual evaluation) are also fundamental dimensions in the way people are perceived (Rosenberg & Sedlak, 1972). Indeed, it is rather pleasing to find that the same dimensions that define our perceptions of and reactions to others also emerge as critical when

it comes to understanding how the thoughts and motivations of social actors influence their social behaviors. The fundamental importance of dimensions such as liking/social acceptance and respect/social control in strategic social behavior is illustrated in a number of chapters here, including those by Andersen and Berenson, Crano, Kerr, Nezlek, Rhodewalt, Schütz, and Williams et al.

Our concern with the social mind as a crucial factor in interpersonal behavior is not an isolated phenomenon. As foreshadowed in the theories of Weber, Mead, Goffmann, Heider, and Lewin, there is a growing recognition in the field that understanding the mechanisms that link people's thoughts, ideas, representations, and motivations with their actual social behaviors is one of the core objectives of social psychology. In a recent volume concerned with the social psychology of subjective experience, Wegner and Gilbert (2000) argued that even though "those of us who constitute the field 'know' that the social interaction of individuals is its intellectual core, in reality the center around which modern social psychology actually turns is the understanding of subjective experience" (p. 4). Even though the study of interpersonal behavior is supposed to be the central territory of social psychology, in fact the most exciting recent developments have taken place in other areas, such as research on social cognition and social motivation that focuses on isolated individuals rather than actual social behavior. As Wegner and Gilbert (2000) note, "a curious by-product of social psychology's expansion has been a kind of urban blight at its official core. Topics such as social interaction, relationships, and groups – which are clearly 'downtown' social psychology in the official story of the field – have suffered massive decay over the last few decades" (p. 7). One of the objectives of this book is to argue that the study of social cognition and motivation on the one hand and interpersonal behavior on the other hand need not be competing endeavors. Rather, interpersonal behavior is best understood through a careful analysis of the thoughts and motivations of social actors – their social minds.

We hope to achieve this objective by discussing four interrelated issues in this book. The chapters included in Part I are concerned with the question of "What is the fundamental nature of social thinking and social motivation, and how do these processes influence interpersonal behavior?" Part II contains contributions that discuss the nature of the socially constructed self and highlight some important individual difference variables involved in strategic interpersonal behavior. Part III deals with the role of social cognition and social

motivation in personal relationships, and Part IV looks at the role of these factors in group phenomena.

Part I. The Social Mind: Basic Issues and Processes

The first part of the book considers some *basic conceptual issues* about the interplay of mental representations and interpersonal behavior and contains four chapters. In the first chapter, William and Claire McGuire summarize their integrative theory and empirical research on one of the fundamental questions of the study of social mind: the issue of how *phenomenal thought systems* develop around foci of meaning like oneself and others. Their ingenious experiments analyze how thinkers carry out various directed-thinking tasks, such as listing designated types of characteristics of a target person. The aim of these studies is to discover the content and structure of people's thought systems and how they are affected by cognitive and affective variables. McGuire and McGuire report that the affective qualities of the object of thinking (e.g., likability) are often far more important than cognitive qualities in making judgments. Male and female thinkers also differ on a number of dimensions of thought systems about people. The conceptual framework and methods developed by McGuire and McGuire represents one of the most ambitious and integrative attempts to come to terms with the social minds of social actors, and should have important theoretical and practical implications for how we understand and study interpersonal behaviors.

As McGuire and McGuire demonstrate, affective features are critical in determining how people see and represent the social world around them. This theme is picked up in the next chapter in this part, by Forgas, who analyzes the *role of affective states or moods in strategic interpersonal behaviors*. Although recent research in social cognition has told us much about the role of rational information processing strategies in guiding interpersonal behaviors, the influence of affective states on strategic interaction has been relatively neglected. This chapter argues that even mild and temporary mood states are likely to have a significant and predictable influence on the way people perceive, plan, and execute interpersonal behaviors. Further, extrapolating from the author's Affect Infusion Model (AIM; Forgas, 1995), the chapter develops a theoretical framework that predicts that affect infusion into social interaction should be most likely to occur in social situations that require more elaborate, substantive processing for a behavioral

response to be produced. Numerous recent experiments are discussed indicating that positive and negative affective states have a marked influence on the interpretation of social behaviors, responses to approaches from others, the planning and execution of negotiation encounters, and the production and interpretation of strategic interpersonal messages such as requests. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the critical role of affect in how people represent and respond to the social world. These findings also have important implications for applied areas such as organizational, clinical, and health psychology.

Cognitive dissonance research represents one of the most important attempts to come to terms with the dynamic, motivated character of the social mind in social psychology. Surprisingly, the precise motivational basis for the dissonance effects has remained elusive. The chapter by Joel Cooper presents a major review of research on dissonance motivation and develops an integrative explanation of this phenomenon. Since the time of Festinger's original assumption that inconsistency leads to dissonance arousal, influential alternative views have been advanced as to just how or why this occurs. For example, theorists such as Aronson suggested that the self is necessarily involved in dissonance. In contrast, Cooper and Fazio proposed that feeling responsible for aversive or unwanted consequences is the key factor that produces dissonance. Others, such as Steele, echoed Aronson's emphasis on the self and suggested that the need to affirm the self rather than to reestablish consistency is the critical factor driving the effect. This theoretical controversy concerning the fundamental nature of dissonance processes has provided some fascinating insights into the "social mind" and opened up new areas of research such as investigations into hypocritical behavior by Aronson. Nonetheless, there remains little consensus about the primary motivational basis of cognitive dissonance.

The model proposed here by Cooper assumes the existence of a mutual influence between cognition and motivation, as also implied in Festinger's original model. The chapter shows that the degree to which the self is involved in dissonance, versus the degree to which dissonance supersedes the self, is a function of the cognitive accessibility of particular standards. Cooper presents data that show that when people's personal standards for behavior are chronically or situationally accessible, dissonance follows a path predicted by self-consistency theorists. When normative standards are accessible, on the other hand, people's experience of dissonance follows the "New Look" model of