

To the Reader

Experiencing Social Psychology: Readings and Projects is designed to supplement your introductory textbook. To make this handbook as useful and adaptable as possible, we have chosen to organize the chapters around 13 topics that are generally considered to be the central concerns of social psychologists. Each chapter begins with a brief general introduction, placing the topic within the context of contemporary theory and research and relating it to conditions of daily life.

In each chapter we have included at least two readings, each of which is preceded by a short introduction, which highlights its significance in relation to the chapter topic. These readings, which have been adapted from their original sources, represent a mixture of current topics and classic issues. They are meant to extend the ideas you encounter in your textbook or to indicate recent thinking and controversies in a given area. Throughout the book we have also inserted brief excerpts from works of literature, anecdotes, cartoons, and research and application highlights, which illustrate important principles in thought-provoking ways.

It is our strong conviction that the best way to learn about social psychology is to do it, to take part in the research adventure from which the information and theoretical positions described and analyzed in your textbook are derived. The insights you gain from course lectures, your textbook, and the readings and boxed features in this book will almost certainly take on a special immediacy and significance when you put them to the test of empirical investigation.

With this in mind, we have included several research projects in each chapter. Here you can test some of the ideas and concepts developed in your text or by your instructor and see how they apply to you and to your friends. Some of the projects cast you in the role of the investigator who collects data from surveys and rating scales or by observing other people. Others require you to be your own subject. In addition, we have included projects that can be done in field settings on campus, in your neighborhood, or at work. Others might be done as part of a class project organized by your instructor. Your active participation in carrying out these projects will help reinforce what you have already learned and will show you—through your own work—the basic forms of research that psychologists engage in.

We hope that our book serves its intended purpose well and helps you learn more about the complex, varied, and fascinating field of social psychology and leads you to a better understanding of your own behavior and the behavior of those around you.

Ayala Malach Pines
Christina Maslach