Has Social Psychology Always Been Cognitive? What Is “Cognitive” Anyhow?

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Contrary to the claim that social psychology has always been cognitive, important early researchers actually had an associationistic perspective. Today’s cognitivism is more similar to contemporary associationism than is often supposed because it no longer maintains the necessity of an active mental transformation of sensory input and recognizes automatic, passive processing. However, many social cognitivists still prefer analyses assuming mental activity, and the authors note how this preference influences current social psychological research. Social psychology can benefit from the recognition of the commonalities between social cognition and the theoretical perspective held by earlier investigators.

[The] adoption of the cognitive view among social psychologists has been so complete that it is extremely difficult for most of the workers in the field to conceive of a viable alternative.

Markus and Zajonc, 1985, p. 137

It is now commonplace for social psychologists to contend that their discipline has always had a cognitive perspective in analyzing the phenomena of interest to them. For example, in his essay “The Sovereignty of Social Cognition,” Ostrom (1984) asserted that “The cognitive approach to understanding social behavior has always ruled over social psychology” (p. 29). Ross and Nisbett (1991) voiced the same general point, but in a somewhat more restricted manner, in their discussion of the field’s basic assumptions. Social psychology, they said, “was the one field of psychology that could never really be ‘behaviorized.’ Its most astute practitioners always understood that it is the situation as construed by the subject that is the true stimulus” (p. 11).

To cite only one more example, Fiske and Taylor (1991) provided a more detailed statement of social psychology’s supposed continuing cognitive perspective in their text Social Cognition. It is worth quoting them at length because their scholarly and thoughtful work seems to reflect fairly accurately the views of most of the cognitively oriented social psychologists working today and also because they explicitly posed several of the issues with which we will here be concerned.

In contrast to experimental psychology, social psychology has consistently leaned on cognitive concepts, even when most psychology was behaviorist. Social psychology has always been cognitive in at least three ways. First, since Lewin, social psychologists have decided that social behavior is more usefully understood as a function of people’s perceptions of their world, rather than as a function of objective descriptions of their stimulus environment. . . .

[Second,] social psychologists view not only causes but also the end result [italics in the original] of social perception and interaction in heavily cognitive terms. . . . Thought often comes before feeling and behaving [and is] the main reaction that social researchers measure. . . . Thus, social psychological causes are largely cognitive, and the results are largely cognitive.

A third way in which social psychology has always been cognitive is that the person in-between the presumed cause and the result is viewed as a thinking organism [italics in the original]; this view contrasts with viewing the person as an emotional organism or a mindless automaton. (pp. 9-10)

This article has three main purposes. To start with, employing Fiske and Taylor’s (1991) characterization of

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the cognitive perspective, it will take a brief but wide-ranging look at the history of social psychology in the past 100 years to see whether the discipline has indeed always been cognitive in its fundamental orientation. After this short review, we will examine more closely just what is meant by the contention that social psychology has always been cognitive. What are this perspective’s core assumptions that presumably differentiate it from other, historically important theoretical viewpoints? Whatever the precise nature of these assumptions, there is no doubt that contemporary social psychology is dominated by a preference for cognitively oriented theorizing, and we will conclude with a suggestion as to how this perspective may be affecting present-day research in the field.

HAS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY ALWAYS BEEN “COGNITIVE”?

Quite a few of those who contend that social psychology has always been cognitive in its approach seem to believe that Kurt Lewin was the field’s most significant progenitor. Both Ross and Nisbett’s (1991) and Fiske and Taylor’s (1991) books, for example, imply that social psychology virtually began with Lewin. Contrary to such an unfortunate misrepresentation of the field’s history, however, the readily available historical surveys offered by G. W. Allport (1985), Jackson (1988), Jones (1985), and Markus and Zajonc (1985) have shown not only that this discipline was greatly influenced by important investigators and theorists long before Lewin came on the scene, but also that many of them did not have the theoretical and methodological preferences listed by Fiske and Taylor. Indeed, it is clear that noncognitive theories were once dominant in interpretations of various aspects of human behavior. Because of these other sources, the present article will mention only four examples of once significant noncognitive theoretical formulations. We should note, however, contrary to the comment made by Ross and Nisbett (1991, p. 11) referred to at the start of this article, that the psychologists who advanced these particular analyses are among the “most astute practitioners” of the discipline.

Consider the studies of social facilitation, a phenomenon of great interest to many social psychologists. Starting with Triplett’s (1897) still-celebrated pioneering experiments, and then continued much further by other researchers, including F. H. Allport’s (1924) all-but-forgotten investigations and writings (his 1924 book was the first social psychology text making great use of experimental research), quite a few studies demonstrated that people’s performances on various tasks were often affected by the mere presence of others. Although it was recognized that the subjects’ thoughts at times affected what happened, F. H. Allport used mostly associationalistic concepts to account for many of the findings, essentially maintaining that the watching audience stimulated the individual in a fairly automatic manner. Much more recently, Zajonc (1965) extended and refined F. H. Allport’s analysis by integrating the earlier formulation with the general associationistic-behavior theorizing favored by Hull and Spence (e.g., Hull, 1952). It is unfortunate that the ingenious research program on social facilitation that Zajonc initiated is now dormant.

The research on suggestion and imitation provide yet other examples of noncognitive analyses. Suggestion and imitation were two of the central problems in social psychology (along with sympathy) from its very beginning as a special field, at least until the immediate post-World War II years (see G. W. Allport, 1985; Newcomb & Hartley, 1947). Many of the leading social psychological theorists in this era believed they could best account for social development and the uniformities in everyday conduct in terms of suggestion and imitation. What is noteworthy for our purposes is that their formulations were often highly associationistic in nature (see G. W. Allport, 1985; Jackson, 1988). In the case of prestige suggestion, for instance, it was held that the ideas advanced by prestigious persons were accepted uncritically because the positive feelings evoked by these individuals had generalized to their expressed opinions.

Imitation was also often explained noncognitively. What is most relevant to us here is that the pioneering theorists’ noncognitive approach to imitation was then followed by Miller and Dollard (1941), two very astute theoreticians, in a monograph entitled Social Learning and Imitation that was especially important in social psychology for a while. They interpreted many (but not all) imitative actions as “matched-dependent” behavior in which the model’s behavior served as a discriminative cue for the observer. This somewhat restricted analysis was, of course, then supplanted by Bandura’s more comprehensive and more sophisticated conceptualization (Bandura & Walters, 1963), a formulation, it should be noted, that was very much in the neassociationistic tradition.

If present-day social psychologists have forgotten the research on social facilitation effects, prestige suggestion, and imitation, they certainly should be more aware of the great number of studies highlighting the role of classical conditioning in the formation and change of attitudes (convenient summaries of some of this research are provided by Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, chap. 9; Insko, 1967, chap. 2). Consistent with the associationistic interpretation of prestige suggestion, a long series of experiments, starting before World War II, demonstrated that many persons develop relatively favorable opinions of attitude objects that just happen to be paired with pleasant experiences such as the consumption of free food (Insko, 1967, pp. 30-33).
Essentially noncognitive formulations also guided important attitude change studies in the 1950s and 1960s. Miller and Campbell (1959), as one illustration, attempted to explain primacy and recency effects in response to persuasive communications on the basis of analyses of forgetting dating back to the early years of the 20th century. A much better example can be found in many of the original investigations conducted by the Yale Attitude Change project under the leadership of Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and others (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1955). Few social psychologists realize today that much of the early research carried out by this project grew out of a general stimulus-response learning theory orientation (Insko, 1967, chap. 2). Thus the Yale group’s initial conceptualization of how role playing could lead to attitude change was essentially based on the associationistic notion that the repeated practice of ideational responses would promote the acquisition of these ideas much as the practice of motor responses promotes motor learning.

This brief survey of significant noncognitive theories in social psychology is only intended to show that, contrary to some enthusiasts’ claims, this discipline has not always been cognitive in its primary outlook (as this approach has been summarized by Fiske and Taylor, 1991). We certainly do not argue that the noncognitive formulations were necessarily superior to more recent analyses taking the cognitive perspective. Social psychology has advanced in many ways, and the field has benefited greatly in many respects from cognitively oriented theorizing. We will mention only two examples (of many others that could also be cited) that seem especially important historically.

Asch’s (1948) reformulation of prestige suggestion seemed to have a decided impact on social psychology shortly after the Second World War. Following Gestalt psychology’s basic perspective, Ash maintained that rational thought rather than the automatic generalization of affect was primarily responsible for the ready acceptance of the opinions voiced by prestigious persons. He demonstrated, quite persuasively, that if people come to agree with the statement “a little rebellion now and then is a good thing” when the idea is attributed to Thomas Jefferson, often it is because they now understand this statement to have socially desirable implications. Although this interpretation might seem obvious and commonplace nowadays, the senior author of this article has the impression from his graduate student period that Asch’s 1948 article, together with the very important social psychology text by Krech and Crutchfield also published in 1948, contributed markedly to the cognitive takeover in social psychology, along with Lewin’s influence and Festinger’s exceedingly impressive research and theorizing.

At any rate, another significant gain came about when Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) reinterpreted Kelman’s (1953) study of role-playing-produced attitude change. Kelman had tried to induce differences in the degree to which subjects mentally practiced certain attitudinal ideas by varying the amount of incentives for this rehearsal, assuming that the greater practice would promote more acceptance of these ideas. However, the results were not in accord with Kelman’s expectation. Festinger and Carlsmith designed their now classic forced compliance experiment to show that the theory of cognitive dissonance provided a better explanation of Kelman’s findings than the latter’s learning-theory-based formulation.

SOCIAL COGNITION’S BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Although Fiske and Taylor’s (1991) and Ross and Nisbett’s (1991) characterizations of the social cognition perspective are helpful, we would do well to go beyond these general summaries and look more closely at just what theoretical assumptions are typically made by those taking this approach. Almost every type of theorizing in contemporary psychology, with the obvious exception of Skinnerian behaviorism, now recognizes that mental processes can have an important mediating role in determining human behavior (Landman & Manis, 1983). Precisely what kinds of mental processes do cognitivists posit that distinguish them from other kinds of psychological theorists? Are they actually as different in the specific nature of their theorizing as they seem to believe?

In the 1970s and early 1980s, when research on information processing in experimental psychology was first helping to shape the social cognition approach, discussions of this general line of thought seemed to be fairly clear as to just what kinds of mental processes were assumed to be important. Perhaps because they were intent on differentiating their theorizing from classical associationism, many of the writers who helped popularize the contemporary cognitive approach highlighted the role of active mental transformations of sensory input. For them, this orientation assumed active processing rather than only a passive transmission of information. Thus, to cite only one example from general cognitive psychology, Reed (1988), quoting Neisser (1967), regarded cognitions as the “processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used” (p. 3). The significant notion here is that the mental representation involved in a cognition is constructed actively. And so, Reed observed that “Transformation of the sensory input means that our representation of the world is not a passive registration of our surroundings but an active construction that may involve both reduction and elaboration” (p. 3).
Social psychologists adopting this theoretical outlook generally also saw this emphasis on active mental processing as the defining characteristic of their approach. Isen and Hastorf (1982) described cognitive psychology as the "field that is concerned with the processes by which knowledge is constructed, represented, and used" (p. 3). Somewhat more recently, Markus and Zajonc (1985) made a similar point in their discussion of the cognitive perspective in contemporary social psychology. As they put it, this view generally assumed that "the essential link in the behavioral process" was "an active cognitive construction of the environment" (p. 138). Zajonc (1984) has reiterated this position, saying "Cognition need not be deliberate, rational, or conscious. But it must involve some minimal 'mental work' " (p. 261).

Fiske and Taylor's (1991) conception of cognitive social psychology apparently also included this emphasis on active mental processing. According to them, as we noted above, the cognitively oriented social psychologist regarded the human being as a "thinking organism" and not as an automaton (p. 10).

To confuse matters somewhat, however, in recent years proponents of the cognitive perspective seem to have gotten away from this emphasis on active mental processing as the defining feature of their approach and now give notions of passive information transmission an important role in their theoretical formulations. Lazarus (1984, 1991), among others, has taken this extremely broad view of cognitive analyses, essentially holding that the term cognition embraces virtually every case of information transmission, even at the relatively primitive neural level (see for example, Lazarus, 1991, pp. 144-145).

Social psychological research into priming effects provides a better known example of the now broadened conception of what is involved in the cognitive framework. A good many investigations have now demonstrated that under certain circumstances, exposing people to a particular category of ideas or events "primes" them to think in a semantically related manner so that their judgments of a given ambiguous target are then influenced. Most of the leading social psychological analyses of this type of effect attempt to explain the phenomenon in purely cognitive terms (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), and so, to take only one case, Wyer and Srull (1986) employed the metaphor of the mind as a "storage bin." In their model the priming operation basically served to raise the primed concepts to "the top of the mental heap" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 263).

However substantively desirable it has been for cognitive social psychologists to depart from their perspective's distinguishing emphasis on the active mental transformation of sensory input, their new wider conception faces some methodological as well as metatheoretical problems. In the conceptual category, some writers, especially in the field of emotion (e.g., Berkowitz, 1993a, 1993b; Izard, 1993; Zajonc, 1984), have questioned whether it is indeed advisable "to define cognition so broadly as to include all information processing" (Izard, 1993, p. 69), as Lazarus and others have done. These critics maintain that such a wide-ranging conception actually is detrimental to the development of precise theoretical accounts of emotion. Philosophers of science generally agree that truly adequate theoretical propositions are capable of being falsified. Formulations resting on exceedingly broad concepts are often difficult to test and found to be incorrect. Zajonc (1984, p. 260) contends that this is true of Lazarus's theory of emotions, holding that cognitive processes, including appraisals, operate even when there is only "primitive sensory registration." The notion of cognitive appraisal in this line of thought is so vague, Zajonc argues, that this presumed process "cannot be observed, verified, or documented." It is, therefore, impossible to falsify Lazarus's proposition stating that appraisals are necessarily involved in emotional states.

Turning from theory testing, we might also wonder whether the contemporary cognitive perspective is as different from other modes of analysis as is widely supposed. It could be argued that the absence of theoretical inferences regarding the active construction of mental representations actually blurs the difference between cognitive analyses and other metatheoretical positions.

In their discussion of social cognition, Landman and Manis (1983) noted the narrowing differences between the cognitive perspective and modern neoassociationistic formulations, especially if the former outlook is no longer said to emphasize the active transformation of external sensory input into a qualitatively different internal representation. As these writers pointed out, present-day neoassociationistic theorists, like more cognitively oriented psychologists, recognize that the meaning of external stimuli can greatly determine what responses will be made to them. And equally important, many of the former even posit cognitive structures, organized arrangements of knowledge, as do the latter. For neoassociationists, then, as well as for self-labeled cognitivists, active cognitive processes play a major role in many different aspects of human behavior. However, as Landman and Manis (1983, p. 71) also observed, the former neoassociationists are probably still somewhat readier to postulate passive mechanisms of processing than are the latter, and in doing so, they have more of a "bottom-up" orientation, "assigning greater functional importance to stimulus features" (p. 70). Thus the advocates of this position are generally more likely than cognitivists to say that "perception, memory, and other cognitive activities [can be] built up from the features of the input, or [can
be] more ‘data driven’ than ‘theory driven’” in their formation and operation (p. 70).

Still, for our present purposes, it is worth noting how much similarity there is between the modern cognitive and neoassociationistic perspectives. We can see this particularly in Landman and Manis’s (1983) discussion of some of the early research into priming effects. In talking about Bargh and Pietromonaco’s (1982) experiment, in which the initial priming was done subliminally, they maintained that the results “represent rather strong support for the operation of a passive frequency-based principle of association” (Landman & Manis, 1983, p. 74). If many of the findings obtained in priming research are consistent with the neoassociationistic approach, as Landman and Manis suggest, maybe these two perspectives are not as radically different as many social psychologists seem to believe.

We wonder if the failure to recognize this point has not slowed, to some extent, the cumulative development of psychology. Posner (1982) noted that

the first difficulty in perceiving the cumulative nature of theories arises because much work in psychology is fueled by tests between complex theoretical views that differ only in subtle ways. These theories often have common assumptions, but similarities between them that amount to a common core of agreed principles are overlooked. (p. 168)

Social psychology could benefit substantially from an awareness of the conceptual commonalities between some of our predecessors’ theoretical formulations and present-day cognitively oriented theorizing. In not regarding the earlier theoretical approach as entirely different from their own analyses, contemporary social psychologists might be more open to the social psychological research of prior generations than they currently appear to be. At the very least, there could then be a greater sense of the cumulative development of theory and empirical work in social psychology.

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Although the cognitive and neoassociationistic perspectives may be more similar than is widely supposed, there is also little doubt that they differ in some important respects. Rephrasing our earlier summary of Landman and Manis’s (1983, p. 70) discussion of the cognitive and neoassociationistic orientations, we can say the former is more apt to prefer theoretical accounts of psychological phenomena that assume the intervention of active mental processes. This preference is certainly shown in Fiske and Taylor’s (1991) contention that for social cognitivists, “the person in-between the presumed cause and the end result is viewed as a thinking organism [italics in the original]” rather than as “a mindless automaton” (p. 10).

The preference for theories positing active mental processing can be seen throughout many different areas of social psychology. We have already noted, for example, that many positive (i.e., “assimilation”) priming effects can be explained in associationistic terms. However, very few contemporary social psychologists seem to have recognized this, and there even appears to be an avoidance of relevant associationistic concepts (Berkowitz, 1993b, p. 185).

Another possible illustration of this preference for cognitively phrased theorizing can be found in Chaiken’s heuristic-systematic model of attitude change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, chap. 7). Chaiken and her colleagues maintain that people employ two basic ways of processing communications that attempt to persuade them: systematic processing in which there is a relatively careful scrutiny of the presented information and heuristic processing in which simple decision rules are used with little cognitive effort (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, pp. 326-327). In one illustrative experiment, clearly reminiscent of earlier studies dating back to the investigations of prestige suggestion, Chaiken and Eagly (see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, pp. 333-334) proposed that messages sent by highly salient and likable communicators are accepted fairly readily because the recipients follow the heuristic “people generally agree with people they like.” However plausible this analysis might be, Eagly and Chaiken’s discussion of this type of finding completely neglects the possibility that the affect and/or positive thoughts evoked by the highly visible attractive communicator had generalized to the message associated with her or him in a relatively automatic manner without the intervention of any decision rules. Elsewhere in their text, Eagly and Chaiken offer a generally sympathetic discussion of the possible role of classical conditioning in producing attitude change. In this case, however, evidently because of an assumption of the necessity of relatively active mental processes (even at a low level), they not only favor an interpretation positing the intervention of such a process—the use of a decision rule—but also neglect an alternative conception supported by decades of earlier research (as we have seen) that might be considered as somewhat more parsimonious than their theorizing (at least in this instance).3

Social psychology has clearly benefited from cognitively oriented research in important ways, as we acknowledged earlier. Yet we also wonder whether the social cognition preference for particular kinds of theoretical interpretations and even measures, as outlined by the passage from Fiske and Taylor (1991) we quoted earlier, has not led to some losses as well.
We have already pointed to one consequence of the current preference for particular modes of analyses and research: Social psychology seems to have lost much of its history. All too many workers in this field have turned their backs on the pioneers who struggled to establish their discipline on a firm scientific basis. One unfortunate result of this is that present-day researchers seem to neglect, and as a result deny themselves, the relevant findings, ideas, and knowledge gained by their predecessors. Contemporary social psychologists might conceivably benefit from a consideration of the research of prior years, but because these earlier findings are embedded in an apparently different theoretical framework, they are very apt to be disregarded.

Then, too, because it is widely assumed that thoughts almost always intervene to affect a person’s reaction to the surrounding situation, many social psychologists prefer to measure their subjects’ thoughts rather than their overt behaviors, as Fiske and Taylor (1991) indicated and Ostrom (1984, p. 29) agreed. Furthermore, even when they do record their subjects’ behavior, they appear to give more weight to what the participants say than to what they do. Action is ambiguous, they evidently believe, “and subject to multiple interpretations” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 551). What they do not consider, however, is that verbal reports are also highly susceptible to distortions (see, for example, Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) and, indeed, may well be more easily influenced than people’s actions are by the desire to create a favorable impression and/or by lay theories about psychological phenomena (also see Berkowitz, 1995b).

Setting aside this possibility of distortions, the emphasis on self-reports and the recording of thoughts seems to have resulted in a decline of certain research methods and even a loss of entire topics that once were prominent in the social psychological literature. Then, too, there have been substantive changes as well. Studies of how people acted toward each other in their interpersonal relationships were an important part of our field in prior decades, but now this area seems to have been left almost entirely to Departments of Communication. In support of this observation, Devine (1993) noted that in the study of prejudice and intergroup tension, which are fundamentally interpersonal phenomena, contemporary analyses are primarily intrapersonal. The emphasis has been on understanding the origin and nature of majority group members’ prejudiced attitudes and on developing strategies to change those attitudes. She pointed to her own, highly cognitive analysis of prejudice of majority group members as being limited in its ability to directly address the interpersonal challenges of intergroup contact. She argued that her analysis is rather one sided. For example, minority group members, rather than being viewed as active participants, are considered as passive elicitors of prejudice. Moreover, very little attention has been focused on the nature of the reciprocal dynamic between majority and minority group members as they attempt to manage their interpersonal encounters. To address such issues, Devine argues that analyses must move beyond the intrapersonal analyses.

We can also ask, What has happened to the investigations of nonverbal behaviors and signals that once were so intriguing to some of us? Instead of going on with a catalogue of now-forgotten topics, perhaps we can gain some solace from the developing signs of a renewed interest in social behavior. And so, Fiske (1992) has now argued that social psychologists should pay more attention to action. Adopting a functional stance, she now maintains that “thinking is for doing, that social understanding operates in the service of social interaction” (p. 877).

Perhaps more important than the (at least past) inattention to behavior, the almost complete dominance of the cognitive perspective seems to have resulted in a denial or at least minimalization of psychological phenomena not readily explained in terms of assumed active mental processes. This is especially the case in the study of emotions. As just one of many examples that could be mentioned (Berkowitz, 1993a, 1993b), cognitively oriented psychologists typically play down the implications of the many studies demonstrating the influence of facial feedback and other bodily movement on emotions (Adelmann & Zajonc, 1989; Leventhal & Tomarken, 1986). Several of the major texts on emotions taking a strong cognitive stance ignore this research altogether (e.g., Lazarus, 1991), whereas a number of social psychological discussions of these findings say only that the existence of these bodily produced effects is still “controversial” (e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 417).

This is our main point. More than anything else, we hope that social psychology can extend its conceptual horizons and recognize not only the full richness of its history but also the true complexity and many-faceted nature of human beings. Because of its apparently too-narrow outlook, the strong social cognition perspective may not be giving sufficient attention to relatively non-cognitive psychological reactions, the situations in which they occur, the historically significant social psychologists from our past who studied them, and the important research and concepts not couched in cognitive terms that might help explain these phenomena.

Our comments are offered in the context of appreciating the gains made by considering social cognitive analyses for phenomena that have historically been of interest to social psychologists (Devine, Hamilton, & Ostrom, in press). Our sense is that additional gains might be made by being more open to theoretical frameworks that do not fit neatly within the social cognitive
tradition. Perhaps Markus and Zajonc's (1985) observation with which we opened this article can be taken as a challenge to contemporary social psychologists to consider conceptual alternatives to the social cognitive view.

NOTES

1. On the basis of his experience as a graduate student starting in early 1948, the senior author of this article has the decided impression that Lewin's contribution to our field was twofold. Lewin and his students and colleagues demonstrated, first of all, that many socially important problems, such as the comparative effectiveness of authoritarian and democratic leadership or how to change food habits or how to lower employee resistance to needed technological changes, could be investigated experimentally. This demonstration excited the field and helped to encourage others to study a variety of matters they otherwise might not have had the audacity to investigate. But more relevant to the present discussion, Lewin also helped foster a cognitive approach in the theoretical analysis of social phenomena. However, it should be noted that although this general influence was indeed important, the specific theoretical concepts in his "field theory" were not adopted by many social psychologists (with the possible exception of his analysis of how social changes might best be promoted). Thus Festinger (1950) theoretical analysis of social communications in small group settings, which attracted a great deal of attention at the time, did not employ any of Lewin's specific concepts, although it was in general accord with the spirit of his approach.

2. Berkowitz (1993b) has suggested that the assimilation effect often does not arise when the subjects are aware of the priming episode because the awareness activates controlled processing countering the more automatic priming effect.

3. Another way of putting this is that the salient attractive communicator had primed positive thoughts in the message recipients that then automatically colored their interpretation of the message. See Herr (1986) for evidence supporting this possibility. In either case, whether one speaks in terms of an automatic generalization or priming, there may be no need to propose that the message recipients had actively thought of a decision rule, even at a low level.

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