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Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft in Social Psychology

William Ickes and
Eric S. Knowles (Eds.)
Personality, Roles, and Social Behavior
New York: Springer-Verlag New York,
1982. 380 pp. $27.50

Review by
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A fundamental human problem is the conflict between our lives as individuals and our lives as group members. A major theme in early development is the establishment of ego boundaries, and the self-concept emerges as we develop a sense of how we differ from others of our species. At the same time, humans are social by nature: We are built to live together rather than in isolation from one another, and in part we define ourselves by the groups to which we belong. It is not surprising, then, that the psychology of personality has faced a kind of continual identity crisis. The editors of *Personality, Roles, and Social Behavior* seek to address this crisis directly, if not to resolve it.

The problem is how to give a coherent account of the behavior of individuals in social interaction. The approach of psychology is through the analysis of both enduring and momentary dispositions, such as traits, attitudes, emotions, and motives, which are considered to be properties of the individual that have some form of existence independent of the situation in which the person is found. The approach of sociology is through the analysis of roles—patterns of behavior that are imposed by the sociocultural environment, which impinges on the individual. Interactionism in personality theory acknowledges the truth of both positions, arguing that social behavior is a product of both the individual's dispositions and the demands and constraints of the social situation. Ickes and Knowles seek to expand the scope of the interactionist argument by introducing an explicitly sociological perspective. But they and the other contributors to this volume are not satisfied merely to import the concepts and principles of another discipline. Rather, they seek to fuse psychology and sociology in order to produce an integrated social science.

Two essays by the editors place the other contributions in context. The first, by Knowles, is an extended and scholarly meditation on the classic distinction, drawn by Tönnies in 1887, between persons as members of a community and persons as individuals. Whereas Tönnies argued that *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* were ideal types of opposing organization, each represented to some degree in all existing forms, Knowles takes the position that they are opposing and conflicting forces. He then uses this dialectical opposition in the analysis of social theories rather than social organizations. The two opposing levels of analysis are apparent in theories concerned with group behavior. Groups are composed of individual members, but they also have lives of their own. Less intuitive, perhaps, is his discovery of the same kind of tension in role theory and the psychology of personality theory.

Knowles identifies role theory as fundamentally *Gesellschaft* because it is concerned with the disparate ways in which we present ourselves in different situations, and personality theory as fundamentally *Gemeinschaft* because it is concerned with the unity of the individual. Knowles's conclusions seem right on the mark: Theories of social interaction should consider both the factors that unite us and those that keep us separate, determine the circumstances under which the former or the latter will be paramount, and ultimately move beyond such simple oppositions to a truly synthetic theory of individuals in groups.

The final essay, by Ickes, describes the development of a research paradigm designed to reveal the influence of individual personality and social roles on interpersonal behavior. In a highly personal document, Ickes charts his growing disenchantment with the artificiality of the social-psychological laboratory and the low predictive utility of standard personality constructs. Such considerations led him to formulate a set of prescriptive rules for social research, involving a preference for overt behavior over self-report, controls for experimenter bias, naturalistic settings where the meaning of both stimulus and response are surrounded by a high degree of consensus, multiple-act criteria, and the use of psychologically weak manipulations to ensure that individual differences are revealed. Some of the prescriptions are noncontroversial, although the author may be a bit too sanguine about the ability of experimentalists to control for demand characteristics by using nonbiasing instructions and by eliminating the experimenter from the test situation. In advocating the use of weak manipulations and aggregate measures, however, he runs the risk of obscuring the contribution of situational factors, which seem crucial to any at-

on social-psychological processes in general.

The core of the present volume is a section of three papers titled "Social Attribution." As do several of the contributors throughout the book, the writers in this section contend that attribution theory will be a more comprehensive and more meaningful portrayal of people's lives to the extent that social context and influence are taken into account. Deschamps (translated by Hewstone) contends that the attribution process is a function of the category memberships (both real and symbolic) of an individual. The concept of category membership refers to the individual's participation in an array of groups based on sex, ethnicity, education, wealth, and so on, and continuing from birth to death. In its focus on the centrality of social categorization, Deschamps's provocative line of reasoning owes much to the eminent, late social psychologist Henri Tajfel, who was the series editor of European Monographs in Social Psychology, in which the present volume is included. Also persuasive is Hewstone's own argument in another chapter that the language a person uses (including language at a microlinguistic level) can influence social judgments. As Hewstone notes, the speech characteristic of accent may enable the perceiver to identify the speaker in either a general or a particular way, which in turn has certain imputed traits built into the identity. Hewstone calls on the work of Eiser and colleagues on language and attitudes and van der Pligt's (1981) critique of attribution studies. In this integration, he also reminds us of the superlative work by Kanouse and colleagues in the late 1960s and early 1970s on language and explanation—work that unfortunately has disappeared from the landscape of contemporary research on attributional processes.

A chapter by Lloyd-Bostock in the section on social attribution is "must reading" for students of attribution in the legal context. Lloyd-Bostock suggests that both the law and psychological theory have often worked with an overly simple model of attributional processes, and she believes that both lawyers and psychologists have proceeded as if it makes sense to talk about attributions of cause and responsibility without reference to why the judgment is made. She reports part of her own research involving interviews with victims of se-

rious accidents to reveal how attributions of fault are influenced (sometimes unconsciously) by social context factors such as the prospect of damages, the effects of blaming on personal relationships, and the effects of legal structures (e.g., relying on one's lawyer to supply an explanation of an accident, or defining and interpreting the accident in legal terms). Finally, Lloyd-Bostock provides a superb example of the typically contextualized nature of attributions of responsibility. She notes that after the tragic collision of two jumbo jets at Santa Cruz, Spain, in 1977, the London Sunday Times concluded by attributing responsibility: " 'Blame for the world's worst aviation tragedy will no doubt be apportioned in time. One name will certainly not feature in any official inquest, however: Antonio Cubillo. It was he who, no matter how indirectly, must shoulder responsibility for what happened at Santa Cruz' " (p. 275). She notes further that Cubillo was the leader of the movement that claimed responsibility for a bomb at Las Palmas airport—resulting in an overloading of planes diverted to Santa Cruz.

The last section of the book, "Attribution Theory and Personality Research," contains two chapters. One by Monson presents a set of interesting propositions drawn from a combined focus on the traits-versus-situation controversy in personality theory and the actor-observer hypothesis (Jones & Nisbett, 1972) in attribution work. For example, Monson suggests that using Kelley's logic regarding covariation, one can predict that actors who exhibit behavior that is inconsistent with their personality traits should offer relatively more situational attributions than should observers for the same behavior.

The final chapter, by Kelley, is called "Epilogue." In truth, though, his statement is an original theoretical analysis focusing on the properties of perceived causal structures composed of chains and networks of thoughts. Interwoven among Kelley's ideas are comments on many of the chapters in the book and how they deal with the notion of perceived causal structure. Although the mapping of people's perceived causal structures promises to be an imposing task, Kelley correctly notes that such a task is much more consistent with Heider's (1958/1982) conception of causal perception than are those that have commonly been pursued in attribution

work. Kelley also endorses a theme of the present volume by emphasizing the need to locate studies of attributions in the broad context of interpersonal communication. His analysis is reminiscent of his 1972 paper on causal schemata in its richness. It ultimately may be regarded as a seminal contribution.

Overall, Jaspars, Fincham, and Hewstone's volume offers valuable perspectives on some of the issues confronting attribution theory and research in the 1980s. The editors began their introductory chapter (p. 3) by quoting Kelley and Michela's (1980) definition of attribution research as the study of "causal explanations given for events by ordinary people" (p. 460). The basic theme of this quote is echoed several times throughout the book, and some parts of the book are concerned with the relationships between attribution theory and research and "everyday people" and common life events (e.g., Lloyd-Bostock's chapter). It is somewhat disappointing, however, to see so little discussion of the role of attributions in "the psychopathologies of everyday life," such as depression, anxiety, and marital distress. Of course, this was not meant to be a volume on "applied attribution theory," so the absence of such material is a minor sin of omission. If, however, the editors had wished to suggest some exciting new directions as well as to help close the gap between attribution theory and research and its social roots, a discussion of the relationship between attribution theory and "clinical" phenomena might have been productive. This point notwithstanding, Jaspars et al.'s volume leaves little doubt about the continued prosperity of, and the array of stimulating problems in, contemporary attribution theory and research.

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tempt to synthesize *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

Ickes's paradigm entails a waiting room, into which two subjects selected on the basis of some set of demographic and personality variables, and possibly subject to some experimental manipulation, are thrust and left to behave. Their interactions are videotaped secretly and then coded for the dependent variables of interest. The situation as described is fairly naturalistic, is flexible in application, permits analysis of effects at the level of both the individual and the dyad, and has yielded a number of interesting empirical results. The only thing that seems missing, in view of the strategic and goal-oriented nature of so many naturally occurring social interactions, is a reason for the subjects to be together in the first place. Ickes refers to a couple of such studies in passing; we can hope to see many more in the future.

The remaining essays in the volume explore particular aspects of the interface between the sociological and psychological approaches to social interaction. Half of them are written by sociologists, emphasizing *Gemeinschaft*, and the others are written by psychologists, emphasizing *Gesellschaft*. All, however, seek to promote a fusion of the sociological and the psychological approaches to social interaction. Although the papers were written independently of each other, several themes crop up time and time again. There is, first and foremost, the challenge to the traditional concept of roles as imposed on the individual by the society at large. Then there is social exchange theory, which represents dyadic relationships in terms of the costs and benefits accruing to each partner by virtue of their interaction. Finally, there is symbolic interactionism, with its assertion that mind and self, the two central features of personality, are derived from interaction with other people and things.

Secord, for example, turns to the gender variable in order to challenge the classic Parsonian conception of roles as imposed on the individual by the society at large. He argues that individual motives and goals shape social structures, just as social forces shape individuals. In much the same vein, Athay and Darley seek to redefine the construct of role in such a way as to permit individuals a fair degree of freedom of action, while at the same time respecting the norma-

tive standards represented by social roles.

The remaining chapters present more concrete examples of the kind of synthesis sought by the editors. Davis presents a thorough review of the various factors influencing the listener's responsiveness to the speaker in dyadic communication. Patterson outlines the various functions of nonverbal communication and their implications for the assessment of individual differences in nonverbal behavior and their determinants. Wegner and Giuliano introduce the concept of social awareness (by which they mean how the actor's attention is distributed among the self, the other, and the group) and analyze some of its determinants and consequences. Stryker and Serpe review the evolution of identity theory from its background in symbolic interactionism, summarize its principles, and show how it has guided a program of research on religious activity. Lofland uses research on the experience of loss (through death, desertion, or separation) to provide a unique perspective on the ways in which people behave when they are together. Gordon and Gordon report on a job training program for displaced homemakers, which shows how changes in social structure can lead to changes in personality, which lead in turn to a shift in social roles. And McCall summarizes an extensive program of research on discretionary justice, analyzing the diverse determinants of such decisions as whether to arrest or prosecute, how to sentence, and whether to grant parole. It was perhaps inevitable that these chapters would not hang together to form a coherent package. Yet each one of them makes for interesting and rewarding reading, and each achieves its goal of integrating the contributions of personality factors, role demands, and situational factors to social behavior.

There is much to be admired in this book, but some things seem to be missing as well. For example, the discussions of role theory are devoid of any consideration of the contributions of Sarbin, Coe, and others who have written extensively on those roles that are freely adopted by, rather than imposed on, the individual. And the discussions of personality focus too much on conventional trait conceptions. Nevertheless, the volume will serve nicely as an introduction to psychosociology or sociopsychology, whichever label is preferred. More im-

portant, by raising the issue of the integration of group and individual approaches, and proposing some solutions, it moves us further toward a comprehensive science of interpersonal relations. ■

Are We Not All Psychologists?

Jacques-Philippe Leyens
Sommes-Nous Tous des Psychologues?
Approche Psychosociale des Théories
Implicites de la Personnalité
Brussels, Belgium: Pierre Mardaga,
1983. 288 pp. FB 920,—; FF 132,—

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Everybody—professional psychologists and laypersons alike—forms impressions of and passes judgments on other people. Laypersons are said to be using implicit personality theories. What about psychologists? Leyens's book is an attempt to answer this question. The author is especially concerned with clinical psychologists, who, like everybody else, make the "fundamental attribution error," overemphasizing personality and neglecting situational factors. The belief that social circumstances would often be a better explanation for behavior prompted the author to subtitle his book "A Psychosocial Approach to Implicit Theories of Personality." The title and subtitle were chosen to reflect the author's wish that everybody, whether psychologist or layperson, be at least in part a social psychologist: "Le titre de cet ouvrage . . . est donc né du désir que tous les psychologues, professionnels ou amateurs, soient, au moins en partie, des psychologues sociaux!" (p. 8).

The first part of the book focuses on how people form and organize their impression of others. The existing knowledge, drawn from American and