



# **Introduction to Social Psychology**

**ECO 215**

Real humans or  
Rational robots



What is your ***first  
impression*** about  
the ladies?





What is your ***impression*** about the boys?



Where do you  
want to spend  
some time **alone**  
**and/or with**  
friends?





Which 'food' is intriguing to you (**conformity**)?



Did you also use an avatar DP?



Did you also try bottle shower snap  
(**conformity**)?





Do you feel **FOMO**?



Will you be a ***bystander***?



Will you be **hungry** or a **bystander**?



Are you ***persuaded?***



Which bag will you use for shopping?



# Chapter 1: Basics of social psychology

## *Learning Objectives*

**Evaluate** diverse topics that social psychology seeks to understand

**Examine** major avenues that social psychology is currently exploring

**Understand** methods social psychologists use to gain insight into the questions posed

**Explain** theories play a key role in social psychological research

# Introducing social psychology



How/why people think



How/why people feel



How/why people behave

Social psychology as the scientific field that seeks to **understand the nature and causes of individual thoughts, feelings, and behavior in social situations.**

# Social psychology: what is it

Social psychology investigates the **ways in which our thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by the social environments in which we find ourselves—by other people or our thoughts about them.**

Social psychology-

Covers ***Human experience***

*Explains* ***Influences on the individual's thought and behavior***

*Exhibits a* ***Scientific nature***

# Social psychology: why should it be scientific

**“Look before you leap.”**

**“He who hesitates is lost.”**

**“A penny saved is a penny earned.”**

**“You have to spend money to make money.”**

Both suggested by common sense and popular culture—are contradictory.

Common sense often suggests a confusing and inconsistent picture of human behavior. Yet, it can offer intriguing hypotheses that can be tested in controlled research.

**Only a scientific approach that examines social thought and behavior in different contexts and populations, provides more conclusive evidence.**

# Social psychology: committed to core values

**Accuracy** emphasizes the importance of systematic and reliable observation. Casual observations, like “people watching,” often lack the rigor required for meaningful conclusions, implying subjective and influenced by personal biases, making it difficult to maintain a standard measure, casual behaviour others attempting the same task may yield different results.

**Achieving accuracy involves Careful Data Collection, Error Reduction and Replication.**

**Objectivity** stresses the need for impartiality when collecting and assessing information, ensuring that personal biases, emotions, or preconceived notions do not influence the findings. Casual "people watching" typically lacks objectivity, shaped by personal experiences or cultural background, so interpretations are different.

**Achieving objectivity involves Standardized Methods, Independent Verification (Unbiased Conclusions) and Awareness of Bias.**



# Social psychology: committed to core values

***Skepticism* reflects a dedication to critical evaluation and the refusal to accept conclusions without strong, repeated evidence.** In casual behaviour, it not possible to confirm the consistency or reliability of the findings and they are more likely to be influenced by random errors or unaccounted variables.

**Achieving skepticism involves Verification Through Replication, Guarding Against Assumptions and Continuous Scrutiny.**

***Open mindedness* signifies a willingness to revise even deeply held beliefs in the face of credible evidence that contradicts them.** Clinging to preconceived notions stifles scientific discovery and perpetuates misinformation.

**Achieving open mindedness involves Adaptation to Evidence, Acceptance of Surprising Insights, and Promotion of Innovation.**

# Social psychology: committed to core values



*How do people respond to discounts?*

# Social psychology: committed to core values

*If you say, "People love free things!"* (common sense)

This casual observation lacks **accuracy**. You did not verify with other evidence (e.g., sales numbers from supermarkets, receipts, or controlled experiments in a lab store, ensuring the results reflect actual purchasing behavior.)

This observation lacks **objectivity**. You let your personal beliefs ("Free deals always work better") and bias.

This observation lacks **skepticism**, You did not seek repeated observations across different settings and individuals. You did not test the effect across different products (bread, shampoo, electronics) to rule out alternative explanations.

This observation lacks **open-mindedness**, You did not accept that discounts may work differently for other cultural and income groups.

# Social psychology: Individual behaviour

Social psychologists examine-

## **Social factors:**

- how **groups** influence individual behavior;
- how **culture** becomes internalized and affects individual preferences; and
- how **emotions and moods** affect the decisions made by the individual.

## **Non-social factors:**

- how the **information** we receive is framed, can exert powerful effects on us, often by influencing our emotions and social thoughts.

*Social Contexts/Experiences  $\Rightarrow$  Self-Identities  $\Rightarrow$  Social Behavior*

# Social psychology: Individual behaviour



Think about this situation:

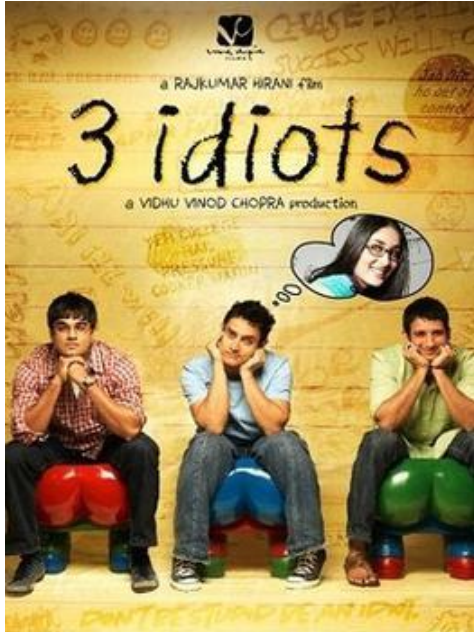
**institutions promoting the model of self (independent self)**

*American universities tend to promote an independent model of self, which is more consistent with a middle-class standard of behavior than the self that is formed as a result of growing up in a working-class environment.*

*Authorities (Front Man, guards) → institution-shaped dependent selves (roles > individuality) and the games made players act independently*



# Social psychology: Individual behaviour



Think about this situation:  
**institutions shaping the self (interdependent self)**

***Raju** feels his worth depends on securing a stable job to support his poor family → his self is dependent on family expectations.*

***Farhan** wants to be a wildlife photographer, but his self is shaped by his father's wish for him to become an engineer → his identity is institutionally and familially imposed.*

# Social psychology: causes of social behavior

Social psychologists are primarily interested in understanding the many factors and conditions that shape the social thought and behavior of individuals—their actions, feelings, beliefs, memories, and judgments.

## **The Actions and Characteristics of Other Persons**

## **Cognitive Processes**

## **Environmental Variables: Impact of the Physical World**

## **Biological Factors**

# Social psychology: causes of social behavior



## The Actions and Characteristics of Other Persons

We are often affected by others people's expression of emotions. Even though in one case the person is expressing positive emotion toward us and in the other the person is expressing negative feelings, in both these instances we may be motivated to approach the other person.

We are also influenced by others' **appearances!**

# Social psychology: causes of social behavior



## Cognitive Processes

We try to make sense of people in our social world by attributing their actions to something about them (e.g., their traits) or something about the circumstances (e.g., unforeseeable situation). This means we engage in lots of social cognition—thinking long and hard about other people—what they are like, why they do what they do, how they might react to our behavior, and so on.

# Social psychology: causes of social behavior



## Environmental Variables: Impact of the Physical World

Aspects of the physical environment can indeed influence our feelings, thoughts, and behavior, so these variables, too, certainly fall within the realm of modern social psychology.

*The magnitude of climate's influence is substantial: change in climate toward warmer temperatures or more extreme rainfall, the frequency of interpersonal violence rises 4% and the frequency of intergroup conflict rises 14%.*

(Hsiang et al., 2013)



# Social psychology: causes of social behavior



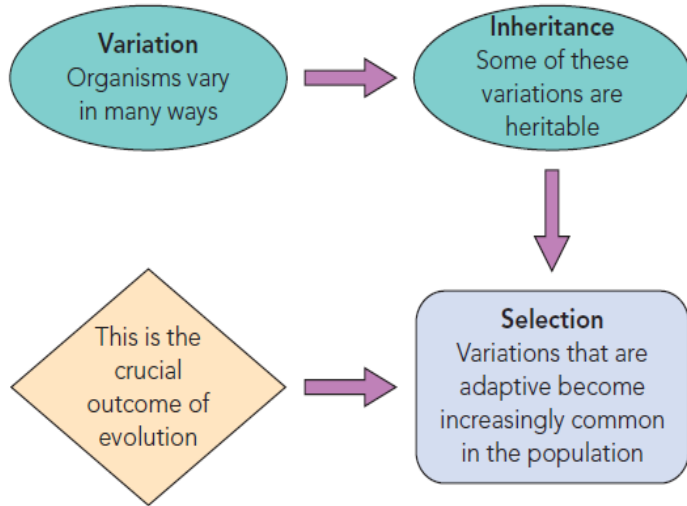
## Biological Factors

Some suggest that our preferences, emotions, and behaviors may be linked, to some extent, to our biological inheritance—although social experiences too, have a powerful effect and may interact with genetic factors in generating the complex patterns of our social lives.

*The poor health of the mother and living in an overcrowded family were also significant in predicting psychopathy in adulthood, as well as both psychopathic personality and psychopathic behaviour.*

(Zara et al., 2024)

# Social psychology: causes of social behavior



## Biological Factors: Evolutionary psychology perspective

Variation refers to the fact that organisms belonging to a given species vary in many different ways.

Inheritance refers to the fact that some of these variations can be passed from one generation to the next through complex mechanisms.

Selection refers to the fact that some variations give the individuals who possess them an “edge” in terms of reproduction: They are more likely to survive, find mates, and pass these variations on to succeeding generations.

This change in the characteristics of a species over time—immensely long periods of time—is the concrete outcome of evolution.

# Social psychology: causes of social behavior



**Biological Factors: Evolutionary psychology perspective**

***Think of a gendered behaviour.***

Your grandparents, parents and you think that cars are appropriate for a boy and dolls for a girl. **(inheritance)**

Your grandparents, and parents think that cars are appropriate for a boy and dolls for a girl. But you give your child gender neutral toys. **(selection)**



# Social psychology: causes of social behavior



“A woman is dangerous when she is armed with beauty and a sense of humor, as she becomes irresistibly addictive.”

Alfredo Cano

## Biological Factors: Evolutionary psychology perspective

### *How you find a person attractive*

People are often attracted to traits like symmetry, clear skin, and fit bodies because they signal good health, strong immunity, and “good genes,” which historically increased reproductive success.

### **(inheritance)**

Traits like humor are especially valued—particularly by women—because humor can signal intelligence, relationship interest, and romantic availability.

### **(selection)**

# Social psychology: causes of social behavior

## Biological Factors: Evolutionary psychology perspective

*The evolutionary perspective does not suggest that we inherit specific patterns of social behavior; rather, it contends that we inherit tendencies or predispositions that may be apparent in our overt actions, depending on the environments in which we live.*

*This perspective does not suggest that we are “forced” or driven by our genes to act in specific ways. Rather, it merely suggests that because of our genetic inheritance, we have tendencies to behave in certain ways that, at least in the past, may have enhanced the chances that our ancestors would survive and pass their genes onto us.*

# Social psychology: Basic principles in a changing social world

- Social psychologists seek to uncover the basic principles that govern social life-determine what factors influence attraction, helping, obedience, the attitudes we form, and so on.
- However, social psychologists recognize that cultures differ greatly and that the social world in which we live is constantly changing.
- Cultures differ tremendously and this complicates the task of establishing general principles of social behavior and social thought.

# Social psychology: Basic principles in a changing social world

An example of a cultural code.



Which outfit is appropriate for work in your society?

# Social psychology: Basic principles in a changing social world

An example of a cultural context.



Will you make choices that are the same as other people you know, or will you try to be “different” and stand out?



# Social psychology: Basic principles in a changing social world

An example of a cultural value.



Does your culture accept old age homes well?  
Does your culture allow you live independently (Individualistic society) or interdependently (Collectivist society)?

# Social psychology: Basic principles in a changing social world

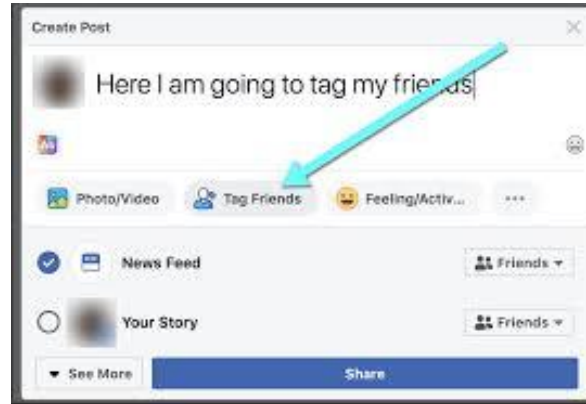
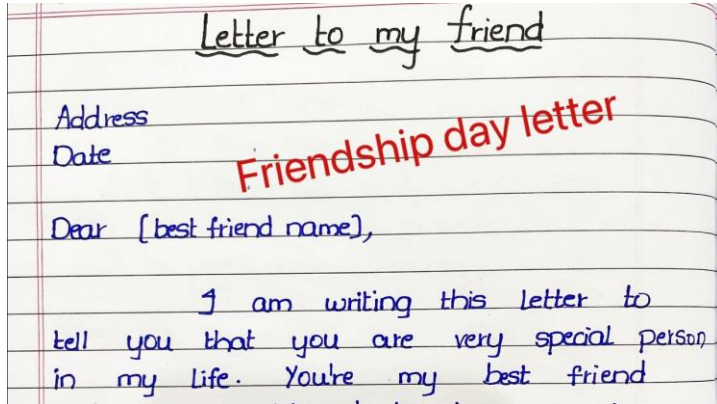
An example of a cultural value.



As an Asian, what would you like more- uniqueness or harmony?  
Would your American friend like the same as you do?

# Social psychology: Basic principles in a changing social world

An example of changing inter-relationship in a culture.



Do you feel the same connection with your friend as your dad does with his?

*Foundations of attraction or emotions may not change as persuasion does not usually change with time.*

# Social psychology: Cognition and behaviour

In modern social psychology, behavior and cognition are seen as intimately, and continuously, linked.

## Two sides of the same coin- cognition and behaviour

**Cognition** refers to the **mental processes** involved in acquiring, processing, storing, and using information.

**Behaviour** refers to the **observable actions or responses** of an organism, often influenced by internal states, environmental stimuli, or learned experiences.

Consumer Decision-Making	
Cognition	Behaviour
A consumer mentally processes information about two smartphones — comparing <b>price, features, reviews, and brand reputation</b> .	After processing this information, the consumer <b>purchases one phone</b> (observable action). The choice may also be influenced by <b>learned habits</b> (brand loyalty) or <b>environmental stimuli</b> (a limited-time discount).

# Social psychology: Emotions and social relations

Research findings indicate that you would do much better when that person is in a good mood, because positive moods (or affect as social psychologists term such feelings) do increase our tendency to offer help to others.

More recently, social psychologists have been investigating **the role of moods** in a wide range of social behaviors.

**Social relationships** are also important for **people's well-being**.

Research findings reveal that it is because single people often contribute more to their communities (by volunteering), if they have more friends, and, crucially, they often belong to more groups.

Belonging to multiple social groups that the individual values not only predicts better psychological well-being, but those who do so live longer than those who belong to few social groups.

# Social psychology: Social diversity

Sensitive to the fact that individuals' cultural, ethnic, and racial heritage often plays a key role in their conceptions of themselves (e.g., identity), and this, in turn, exerts important effects on social thought and behavior.

**Social psychology has adopted a multicultural perspective—one that recognizes the potential importance of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, social class, religious orientation, and many other social group dimensions.**



*Multinational work teams:*

*A total of 28 from 87 participants gave examples of issues, several indicating that there are communication and language problems (e.g., “pronouncing the words correctly”, “linguistic aspects and misinterpretation of the language”, misunderstandings regarding the tasks” and “different interpretations of words”).*

*The more different participants rated themselves compared to their colleagues in terms of value orientations, the more conflicts they perceived and the worse was the reported team atmosphere.*

*(Voss et al., 2014)*

# Social psychology: methods of research

## Three methods-

- **Systematic observation**- describing the world around use
- **Correlation**- the search for relationships
- **Experimental method**- knowledge through systematic intervention
- **Further thoughts on causality**- the role of mediating variables
- **Meta-analysis**- assessing a body of knowledge



# Social psychology: methods of research

## Systematic observation

Systematic observation—carefully observing behavior as it occurs. it is observation accompanied by careful, accurate measurement of a particular behavior across people.

**Naturalistic observation**— observation of people's behavior in natural settings.

**Survey method**-researchers ask large numbers of persons to respond to questions about their attitudes or behavior.

Surveys offer several advantages. Information can be gathered about thousands or even hundreds of thousands of persons (suitable for a large sample) with relative ease, and the responses of different categories of people can be compared, can be conducted online.

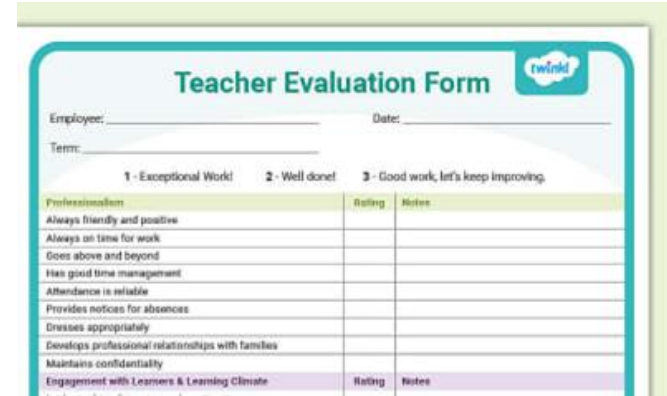
Surveys must meet certain requirements. First, the persons who participate must be representative of the larger population about which conclusions are to be drawn—which raises the issue of sampling. Second, the way in which the items are worded can exert strong effects on the outcomes obtained.

# Social psychology: methods of research

## Systematic observation



You want to study the habit of people touching their hair. You observe people at a restaurant.



Teacher Evaluation Form		
Employee: _____	Date: _____	
Term: _____		
1 - Exceptional Work!    2 - Well done!    3 - Good work, let's keep improving.		
<b>Professionalism</b>	Rating	Notes
Always friendly and positive		
Always on time for work		
Goes above and beyond		
Has good time management		
Attendance is reliable		
Provides notices for absences		
Dresses appropriately		
Develops professional relationships with families		
Maintains confidentiality		
<b>Engagement with Learners &amp; Learning Climate</b>	Rating	Notes

You want to evaluate students' perception about teaching quality in your department.. You survey students.

# Social psychology: methods of research

## Correlation

Some events appear to be related to the occurrence of others: As one changes, the other changes, too.

When two events or attributes are related in this way, they are said to be correlated or that a correlation exists between them. Correlation refers to a tendency for one event to be associated with changes in the other.

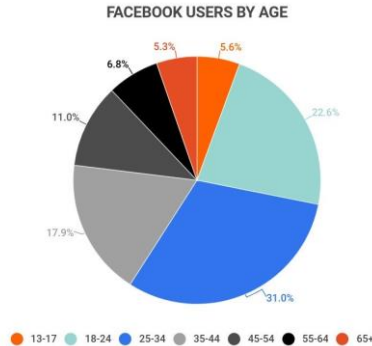
When a correlation exists, it is possible to predict one variable from information about the other variable.

The stronger the correlation between two variables, the more accurate the prediction can be made. Correlations can range from 0 to  $-1.00$  (negative correlation) or  $+1.00$  (positive correlation); the greater the departure from 0, the stronger the correlation.

However, the fact that two variables are correlated in no way guarantees that they are causally related—that changes in one cause changes in the other. Correlational research cannot establish the direction of the relationships between variables, or whether either variable causes the other.

# Social psychology: methods of research

## Correlation



You want to study the demographics of facebook users. You hypothesize that people using Facebook tend to be relatively young.



You want to study residents' use of solar home systems. You hypothesize that residents who are forward-looking tend to install solar home systems.

# Social psychology: methods of research

## Experimental method

This method provides an explanation to a correlation between variables: what causes what.

Experimentation involves the following strategy: One variable is changed systematically, and the effects of these changes on one or more other variables are carefully measured. If systematic changes in one variable produce changes in another variable, it is possible to conclude with reasonable certainty that there is indeed a causal relationship between these variables: that changes in one do indeed cause changes in the other.

The experimental method involves two key steps: (1) The presence or strength of some variable believed to affect an aspect of social behavior is systematically changed, and (2) the effects of such changes (if any) are carefully measured. The factor systematically varied by the researcher is termed the independent variable, while the aspect of behavior studied is termed the dependent variable.

Condition 1: Random assignment of participants to experimental conditions. This means that all participants in an experiment must have an equal chance of being exposed to each level of the independent variable.

Condition 2: All factors other than the independent variable that might also affect participants' behavior must be held constant.

# Social psychology: methods of research

## Experimental method



You want to study the impact of counselling on students' performance (GPA). So, you arrange weekly counselling sessions for 50 students (treatment group) and you do not give any session to another 50 students (control group)

. Assume that the average study hour of both groups (treatment and control) is the same.

# Social psychology: methods of research

## Further thoughts on causality

Social psychologists take experimentation one step further in their efforts to answer the question “Why”—to understand why one variable produces changes in another.

The answer to why it is caused, these variables are termed mediating variables, ones that intervene between an independent variable and changes in social behavior.



You want to study the impact of training on job performance. You observe that if a person receives training, can improve skills and thus performs better. Skill is the mediating variable.



# Social psychology: methods of research

## Meta-analysis

One way researchers assess the extent to which two variables are related when tested in a variety of settings, the strength of an intervention, or the relative accuracy of different theories in terms of their predictions concerning research outcomes is to conduct a meta-analysis of the studies that have been conducted.

Meta-analysis is a highly useful statistical technique that permits an assessment of how well findings replicate—whether the same pattern of results is obtained despite variation in how particular studies were conducted. It can also point to gaps in existing research and features of research settings that moderate the strength or even direction of effects obtained.

You aim to study the caring behavior of men and women. To do this, you analyze 100 journal articles that present varying findings on the topic. By synthesizing the results of these studies, you identify a relationship between caring behavior and gender roles.



How many faces  
do you have?