

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Workshop 2022

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What is social psychology?

- How others' behaviours affect a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and vice versa.

N=234	Disagree %	Agree %
I don't blindly follow what others tell me to do	14.7	85.3
I am not influenced by how others behave	64.3	35.7
I – not others – decide how I act	16.5	83.5

Social influence...

- We are often easily influenced, especially...
 - by people who might *appear* authoritative
 - when social norms are operating [everyone else seems to think this is appropriate] and we don't want to 'stand out' by acting differently
 - when we are in a large group, so that we feel 'de-individuated'
 - when there are no apparent consequences to our behaviour
 - when our actions are harmless

[but when it *really* matters, how do you think you will behave?]
- We might all be very different people BUT...
 - often the SITUATION influences how we behave

Once upon a time, a husband and wife lived together in a part of the city separated by a river from the places of employment, shopping, and entertainment. The husband has to work nights. Each evening he left his wife and took the ferry to work, returning in the morning.

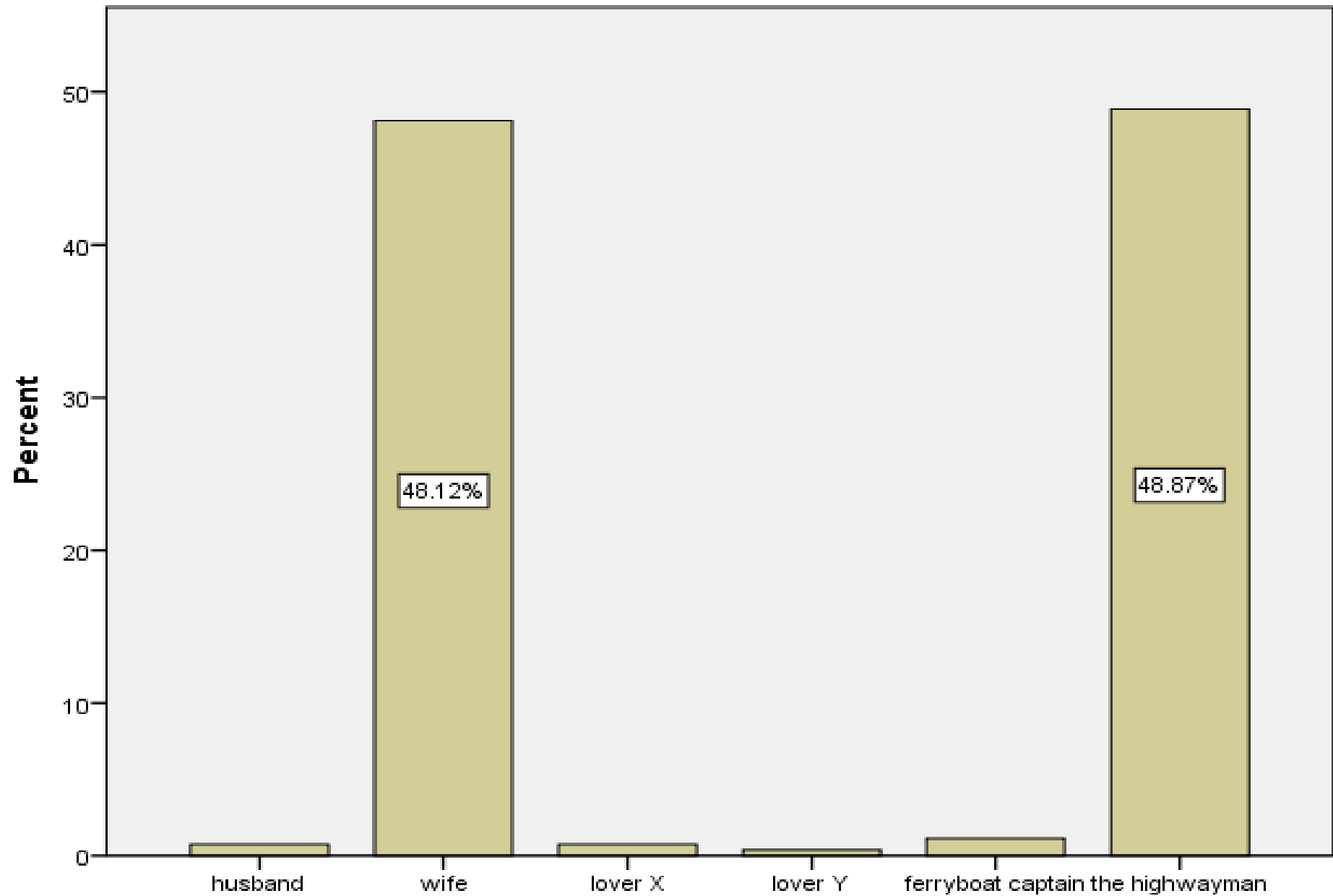
The wife soon tired of this arrangement. Restless and lonely, she would take the next ferry into town each night and develop relationships with a series of lovers. Anxious to preserve her marriage, she always returned home before her husband. In fact, her relationships were always limited. When they threatened to become too intense, she would precipitate a quarrel with her current lover and begin a new relationship.

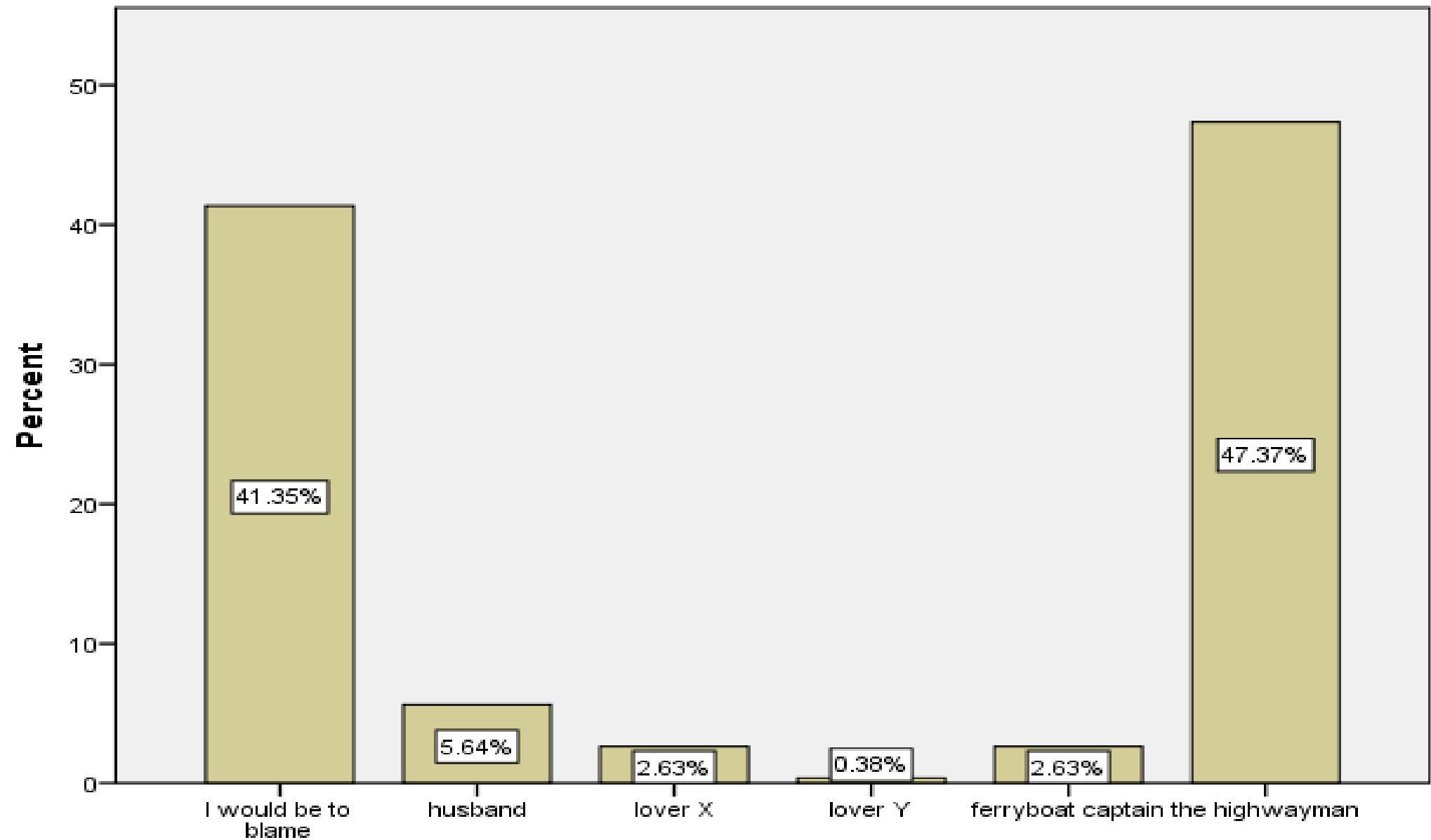
One night she caused such a quarrel with a man we will call Lover X. He slammed the door in her face, so she started back to the ferry. Suddenly she realised that she had forgotten to bring money for her return fare. She swallowed her pride and returned to Lover X's apartment to borrow the fare. After all, she did have to get home. But Lover X was vindictive and angry because of the quarrel. He slammed the door on his former lover, leaving her with no money.

She remembered that a previous lover, whom we shall call Lover Y, lived just a few doors away. Surely he would give her the ferry fare. However, Lover Y was still so hurt from their old quarrel that he, too, refused her the money. Now, the hour was late and the woman was getting desperate. She rushed down to the ferry and pleaded with the ferryboat captain. He knew her as a regular customer. She asked if he could let her ride free and if she could pay the next night. But the captain insisted that rules were rules, and that he could not let her ride without paying the fare. Dawn would soon be breaking, and her husband would be returning from work. The woman remembered that there was a bridge about a mile further on. But the road to the bridge was a dangerous one, known to be frequented by highwaymen. Nonetheless, she had to get home, so she took the road. On the way a highwayman stepped out of the bushes and demanded her money. She told him she had none. He seized her. In the ensuing tussle, the highwayman stabbed the woman, and she died.

Thus ends our story. There have been six characters: Husband, Wife, Lover Y, Lover X, Ferryboat Captain, and Highwayman.

Think about this: Who was most responsible for the woman's death?





IF YOU WERE IN THE WIFE'S SHOES, WHO WOULD BE TO BLAME FOR YOUR DEATH?

The actor-observer effect

- Originally 48% blamed the wife; 52% blamed external actors
- When I asked who was to blame if it happened to YOU, 41% now blamed themselves – BUT blaming external actors increased to 60%!
- So, many of you exhibited the actor-observer effect: When something bad happens to us, we *discount* our role in it and *augment* the role of others.
- This effect will be greater when the cause is much more ambiguous/unclear

Social perception

ATTRIBUTIONS...

- The fundamental attribution error: We tend to make internal attributions for others' behaviour
- Actor-observer effect: We tend to be kinder to ourselves when we are put in the same situation

I can read your mind!

1. think of a number between 1 and 10
2. multiply that number by 2
3. Add 8
4. divide by 2
5. subtract your original number
6. you should have a number between 1 and 26
7. match it with its corresponding letter in the alphabet [e.g., 1 = A)
8. think of any country in the world that begins with that letter
9. Use the second letter in that country's name and think of an animal that begins with that letter
10. YOU ARE THINKING OF...

AN ELEPHANT FROM DENMARK

How did this trick work?

1. think of a number between 1 and 10 5
2. multiply that number by 2 10
3. Add 8 18
4. divide by 2 9
5. subtract your original number 4 **** this is purely maths voodoo! You always end up with 4 after following these steps, no matter what the first number is. *****
6. match it with its corresponding letter in the alphabet [e.g., 1 = A) D
7. think of any country in the world that begins with that letter

DENMARK ***** this is where heuristic processing comes in; there are 6 countries in the world whose names start with 'D' but Denmark is the one we know best

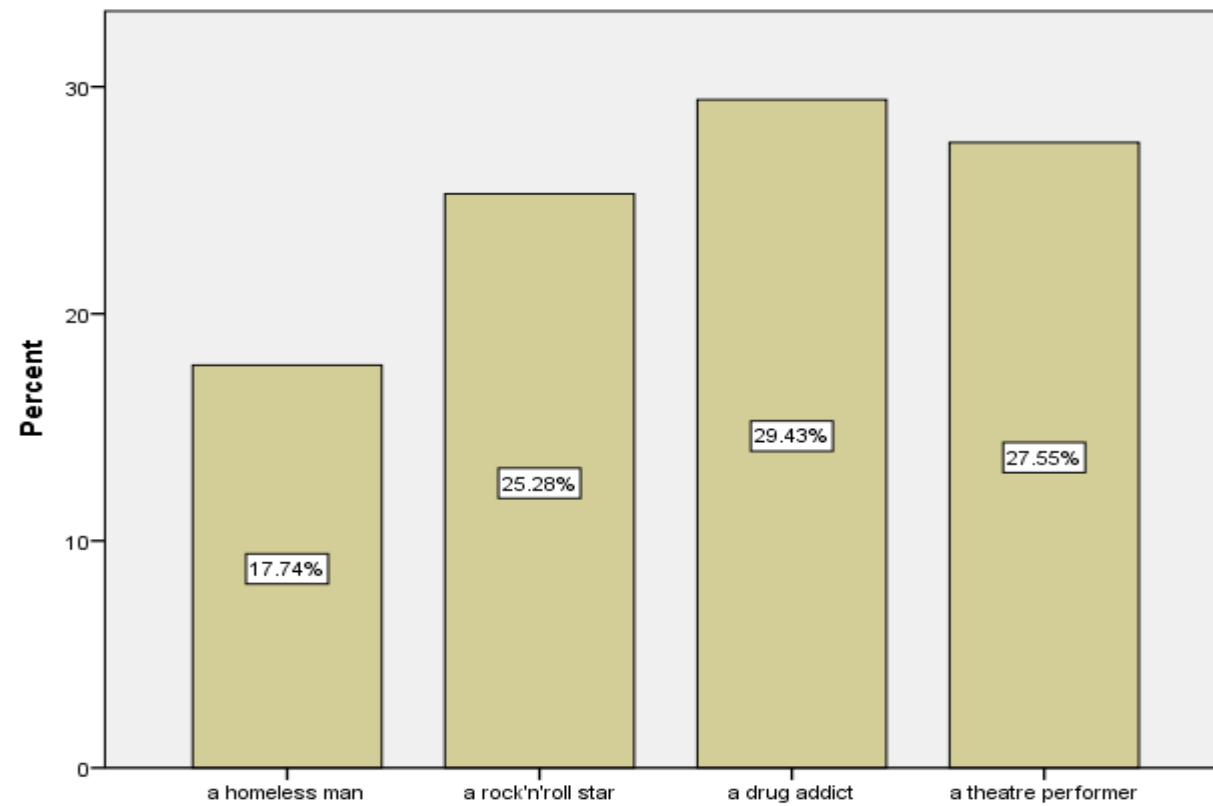
8. use the second letter in that country's name and think of an animal that begins with that letter

E = ELEPHANT ***** more heuristic processing: I am aware of at least 15 animals whose names start with 'E', but elephants are the ones that [literally!] stick out the most, so we access them first.

Social cognition

- We process social information extremely quickly
- To make our lives easier, we develop mental shortcuts
- We do it with people (schemas) and with groups of people (stereotypes)—*even* if we have never had any contact with them
- So, sometimes there are negative consequences, such as discriminatory behaviour/conflict etc
- Interpersonal: often initial impressions count (e.g., primacy effect)...

Who is this man?



BAD SAM





	Male Sam <i>M</i>			Female Sam <i>M</i>		
	Better looking n = 81 [scales 1-5]	Less good looking n = 74	<i>p (< .05 indicates that diffs are meaningful)</i>	Better looking n = 36	Less good looking n = 40	<i>p</i>
Good looking	3.02	2.58	.009	3.39	3.60	.303
Attractive	2.95	2.46	.002	3.19	3.30	.633
Nice	3.77	3.00	< .001	3.33	3.08	.211
Kind	3.64	2.86	< .001	3.39	2.83	.003
Fun	2.83	2.57	.079	2.75	2.88	.538
Reliable	3.22	2.59	< .001	3.14	2.88	.144
Friendly	3.65	2.78	< .001	3.11	2.78	.127
Trustworthy	3.26	2.65	< .001	3.19	2.88	.063
Domineering	2.36	3.36	< .001	2.75	3.15	.074
Selfish	2.58	2.99	.007	2.86	3.05	.301
Would be remorseful	2.87	2.27	<.001	2.89	2.77	.615
Probably done it before to others	3.27	3.69	.003	3.19	3.44	.169
Good reason Sam not show up	3.31	2.86	.004	3.22	3.41	.355
Give another chance I would forgive Sam	2.88	2.09	<.001	2.81	3.05	.299
	2.99	2.58	.014	2.94	3.13	.231

What do we learn from this?

An example of heuristic processing in action – we need to make quick social judgements all the time

[1] we ascribe qualities to people that they may not necessarily possess, based on how they look

[2] we give the benefit of the doubt to people we are attracted to, even after they have done something hurtful to us

- at a deeper level, we give the benefit of the doubt to people we like/rely on/invested with; usually not a problem and if the relationships is functional and healthy, it's a good idea – but think about the deeper implications for stalking/domestic abuse situations or leaders with charisma

[3] don't judge a book by its cover!

e.g., extraverts and socially confident people: take time to get to know the shy ones at uni...

Summary

- We're always 'doing' social psychology
- How we think and feel affects how we behave around others/interpret their actions, etc; how others behave affect how we behave, and think and feel...
- Thanks for watching and listening! All the best with your exams!