

WHAT IS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY?

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LECTURE AGENDA

- What is social psychology? What do we focus on?
- The Power of Social Situations
- The Power of an Individual
- Where do I stand?
- How do social psychologists do research?

Social Psychology

The scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors are influenced by the real or imaginary presence of other people (called **social influence***)

*effect that the words, actions or mere presence of other people have on our thoughts, feelings, or behaviors

Social Psychology

- The level of analysis in social psychology is **an individual in a social situation*** (this can mean another person, social event, social context such as a classroom, organization etc.)
- Social psychology seeks to find out the common characteristics or properties of human nature that make almost everyone susceptible to **social influence***

*terms that will be repeated through out the course- please understand thoroughly

Social Psychology

While subjects like sociology, economics, anthropology and political science also study the influence of social factors on human behavior- the difference is in the **level of analysis**.

Usually, their focus is societies, cultural groups at large.

The Power of Social Situations

Try answering the following:

- a) How much time do you spend thinking about others?
- b) Think of two non-negotiable, current needs of i) your own ii) your parents/caregiver in relation to you. Make sure that y'all agree on one and disagree on the second one. What is the effect of this on you?

The Power of Social Situations

- Humans have a tendency to explain their own as well as behavior of others (called **attribution**)
- Our behaviors are tied to **explanations** we make to ourselves about social situations

The Power of Social Situations

What would be your behavior like in a class that **a)** incentives attendance and **b)** does not bother about attendance?

How about in an exam where **a)** cheating is severely punished **b)** cheating is ignored

Quick Check

Any other way that comes to your mind on how social situations create social influence?

The Power of Social Situations

Social situations come with **rewards we value**

The school of **behaviorism** explains this- when behavior is followed by a reward, we are likely to experience the power of that situation on us.

Behaviorists claimed that **all behavior** could be understood by examining rewards and punishments in an individual's social environment!!

The Power of Social Situations

Were behaviorists missing out on anything? Are they on free-will or determinism side?

The Power of an Individual

Early behaviorists explained human behavior in a very mechanistic way, especially overlooking the *importance of how people interpret* their social situations



The Power of an Individual

The relationship between the social situation and the individual is a two way street:

- a) Situation influences an individual
- b) People's behavior depends on how they perceive, comprehend and interpret the social world (called **construal**)

What do you see in the image?



What do you see in the image?



The Power of an Individual

Gestalt psychology (a school of psychology) stresses on the importance of studying the subjective way in which an object appears in people's minds rather than the objective, physical attributes of the object. Therefore:

Humans interpret more than what is visible due to their subjective experiences that in turn guide how they interpret the situation

The Power of an Individual

How/why do people arrive at these subjective interpretations?*

Two basic needs drive these construal/interpretations:

- i) Need to be right (**social cognition** motive)
- ii) Need to be loved (**self-esteem** motive)

*How we wish humans were as simple as the images we just saw. But they aren't- they are very complex!

The Power of an Individual

This also explains why social situations affect us differently: the subjective construal (interpretations) that stem from individual needs (which also vary in magnitude across individuals) creates this difference

This also explains why we all do not respond to all social situations- we do choose them selectively on the basis of our needs to make decisions/judgements

Free-will vs Determinism

In the light of our debate and then lecture: where do you see yourself in this tug of war between social situation and an individual?

Methods in Social Psychology

1. Systematic Observation

- **Naturalistic observation** – observation of behaviour in natural settings and recording it systematically
- Participant vs non-participant observation
- The problem of **reactivity** can be avoided- a phenomenon that occurs when individuals alter their performance or behavior due to the awareness that they are being observed. The change may be positive or negative, and depends on the situation.
- Very labour intensive
- Hawthorne effect

Methods in Social Psychology

2. Surveys

- Each participant indicates a response based on a rating scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly Agree)- usually can be given weights /scores ranging from 1 to 7 , 1 to 5 etc.
- Data is collected from a **sample**- which means a part of the whole population (example, all college students = universe/population; students out of these who participate in the survey = sample)
- Statistical techniques are used to analyse the scores received
- **Social Desirability Bias** - tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. It can take the form of over-reporting "good behavior" or under-reporting "bad," or undesirable behavior.

TEACHER EVALUATION FORM

(To be filled by the student)

This checklist includes statements for evaluating „Teaching Performance” of a teacher. You as a student are requested to give your sincere comment against each of the statements. Your sincere evaluation will be helpful for improving „teaching quality” of your honorable teacher community. Be honest!!

Course Title and Number: _____

Name of Instructor: _____

Semester _____ Faculty: _____ Degree _____

Evaluate the following aspects of the teaching performance in terms capacity to provide quality education by marking “√” in the box of corresponding column according to the scale given:

5–Strongly agree; 4–Agree; 3–Neutral; 2–Disagree; 1–Strongly disagree;

Aspects related to Teaching Performance	Scale				
	5	4	3	2	1
A: Subject Matter Knowledge					
1. Have sound and updated knowledge on subject					
2. Gives adequate information considering students level					
3. Makes topics easily understandable					
4. Gives appropriate and lively examples from real life situation to motivate the students for learning					
5. Provides additional material apart from the textbook					
B: Presentation and Management					
1. Has clear and audible voice					
2. Keeps class lively using wit (humor) & body language					
3. Encourages students” participation (question-answer)					
4. Controls and maintain conducive environment for learning					
5. Provide and maintain lesson plan					

Methods in Social Psychology

Why should qualitative (e.g. observation) and quantitative (e.g. surveys) methods be combined?

Methods in Social Psychology

3. Experiments

- While correlational research explains that a relationship exists, experiments aim at explaining why these relationships exist
- Experimental methods usually involve the researchers systematically changing/altering one or more variables to determine whether such changes affect some aspects of behaviour
- The variable that is systematically altered by the researcher is called as the **Independent Variable (IV)**
- The variable that changes/or not due to an alteration in the IV is called the **dependent variable (DV)**
- Any variable other than the IV that can affect the DV has to be controlled. If the variable is not controlled, **confounding** can happen. This means that we cannot truly determine if the changes on DV can be explained by the IV and to what extent. The variable confounding the relationship between IV and DV is called as the **confounding/extraneous** variable

Methods in Social Psychology

- Usually have an **experimental** and a **control** group
- Usually, the **random assignment of participants** is ensured in an experiment to counter experimenters bias
- **Experimenters bias** : Where expectations or preconceptions of the experimenters bias the result. Few ways experimenters can do this is , by intended/unintended procedural or recording biases/mistakes; revealing the expected results
- **Double-blind procedure** : Design in which neither the experimenter nor the participant are aware of the allocation of participants to research group

Methods in Social Psychology

Identify DV, IV and confounding variables in the marshmallow experiment (video).

Methods in Social Psychology

Identify DV, IV and confounding variables in the marshmallow experiment (video).

Ethical Issues in Research in social sciences

- Informed Consent
- Confidentiality
- Deception
- Debriefing
- Withdrawing

Scientific Terms Covered

- Social influence
- Social situation
- Attribution
- Behaviorism
- Gestalt Psychology
- Construal
- Social cognition motive
- Self esteem motive
- Naturalistic Observation
- Participant- nonparticipant observation
- Reactivity
- Social desirability bias
- Independent, dependent and confounding variables
- Experimental and control group
- Experimenter bias, double blind procedure
- Informed Consent
- Confidentiality
- Deception
- Debriefing
- Withdrawing