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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

CORE CONCEPTS AND EMERGING TRENDS



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Introducing Social Psychology

A married couple in West Hollywood, CA, celebrate the June 2015 Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage.



David McNew/Stringer/Getty Images News/Getty Images.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1.1** Define social psychology and contrast it with the other social sciences and psychology subdisciplines.
- 1.2** Identify the six fundamental questions of human existence and explain their relevance to social psychology.
- 1.3** Outline how social psychology has evolved since the early 20th century; explain how the first textbooks contributed to the development of social psychology; describe Kurt Lewin's contribution to understanding social behavior; discuss the three levels of explanation and illustrate how they can help us understand social behavior.
- 1.4** Identify the four principles of social psychology and provide an example to illustrate each.
- 1.5** Discuss the hindsight bias and its relevance to the study of social psychology; describe the four essential characteristics of science as a process; identify the three goals of science.

- 1.6** Explain what hypotheses and theories are and show their role in scientific research; contrast correlational and causal relationships; define experiment, independent variable, dependent variable, experimental group, control group, and confound, and discuss what is meant by experimental control and why it is important.



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THE MYSTERY OF ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

On June 26, 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which had denied federal medical and other job-related benefits to spouses in same-sex marriages. This decision, along with recent related efforts in many states to allow same-sex couples to marry, form civil unions, and obtain other privileges accorded to heterosexual couples across the nation, reignited longstanding debates in the United States about same-sex attraction. President Barack Obama extended health and other benefits to gay partners of federal employees one year later, in June 2014. Following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* issued on June 26, 2015, gay marriage is now allowed throughout the United States. People in the United States and around the globe—including both those who embrace and those who object to same-sex relations—have struggled to understand it. Is same-sex attraction “normal”? Or is it deviant, perhaps the product of character, spiritual, or genetic defects? The way a given culture explains the origins of social behavior impacts how it is handled in the media, by its government, and by its religious institutions. Are same-sex relations encouraged, tolerated, or outlawed? Are homosexuals persecuted, prosecuted, institutionalized, or just left alone? If it is a mental illness, can it be cured?

Like many laypeople, social psychologists have wondered about the nature and origins of sexual attraction, including between individuals of the same sex. However, social psychologists are different than laypeople because we examine such social behaviors more systematically and bring to the table a wealth of theories and research in our efforts to explain them. For instance, we may ask whether the principles underlying opposite-sex attraction and relationships apply to all people, regardless of their sexual preferences. In addition, social psychologists would consider a wide range of possible explanatory factors, including variation across cultures, social influences, genetic factors, and a person's learning history. In fact, these types of factors are the same ones that we'll look to when we try to understand other social behavior. We will return more specifically to the topic of sexual attraction later in this chapter and again in Chapter 11 on affiliation and love.

More broadly, social psychologists utilize a multilevel approach that incorporates several types of explanatory mechanisms as we try to understand human social behavior. This book provides a wide-ranging survey of the most important social psychological theories, approaches, and research findings in an effort to show you, the reader, how social psychologists have sought and continue to seek answers to fundamental questions of human existence, such as free will, human sociality, independence, and moral behavior. Rather than provide an overly detailed and exhaustive coverage of social psychology, I focus on the core of our field: delivering only the most important and useful concepts, theories, and research. I do not want readers to get lost in the forest by focusing too much on the trees! Along our path to achieving that goal, we'll touch on many fascinating topics and themes, including how we think about ourselves and other people, the roles of biology and culture in shaping human thought and behavior, attitudes and attitude change, aggression, romantic love, and prejudice, among others. Hold on for an exciting tour of the social psychology of human behavior!

Think Ahead!

1. *What is social psychology and why should you study it?*
2. *How can social psychology help to understand human nature?*
3. *What makes social psychology unique among the other sciences?*

THE PERSON IN THE CROWD
In the modern world, it can be difficult to develop a sense of individuality and self-determination in the midst of social pressures to conform.



Geoff Tompkinson / Science Source.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY MATTERS: DEFINING THE FIELD

What is social psychology? Before offering a definition, let's briefly discuss the nature of definitions. Definitions can be tricky, because they are immensely important yet at the same time exceedingly trivial. They are important because they provide a mini snapshot of the field, a first exposure for the new student. Definitions matter because we need to be able to agree on what we are talking about—we need a common language so that we can understand each other. Yet definitions are trivial as well (this is heresy coming from an academic), because

there are often many ways to define a single word, concept, or scientific discipline. Definitions are not set in stone but instead evolve over time. Moreover, definitions are somewhat independent from actual work in a field: The science, teaching, and practice of social psychology will continue to take place in thousands of laboratories, classrooms, and applied settings around the globe regardless of how a particular person or book defines social psychology. In the end to be useful, definitions must provide *clarity*, be *generally agreed upon*, and serve as a *launching point* for further investigation. Now let's move onto our definition of social psychology.

Social psychologists seek to understand how other people affect the behavior, thoughts, and feelings of individuals. We might examine, for instance, how a person's Facebook friends affect what she posts online or how being the lone minority member of a group affects that member's thoughts about himself. In both of these cases we ask about social aspects of human existence: people influencing individuals. The emphasis on *social* distinguishes our discipline from other domains of psychology, and *social* is of course the core concept in our field: **Social psychology** is the scientific study of the social experiences and behaviors of individuals. Let's examine each element of this definition.

First, social psychology is a *science*: It relies on the rigorous application of scientific methods in the same way that physics or biology does. Like these other sciences, social psychology is not a collection of commonsense, simple observations and intuitive ideas. Rather, it is a systematic examination of social phenomena that utilizes both traditional and novel scientific methods involving careful experimentation, advanced technology, and sophisticated statistical analyses (and sometimes develops new ones). For example, we investigate the sexual orientation of many people using rigorous research, as opposed to merely asking opinions from a few individuals.

Second, social psychology focuses on *individuals* rather than groups. For instance, we are interested in how a crowd affects its members but not in how one crowd influences another crowd. Third, we'd like to understand the ways in which individual social *behavior* is affected by others. Social behaviors are observable actions that stem from the direct or indirect influence of others. With regards to sexual attraction, one question social psychologists would try to answer is how other people impact who we are attracted to.

Finally, social psychologists study the individual's social *experiences*. The term *experience* encompasses conscious thoughts and feelings as well as nonconscious processes, brain activation, and hormone regulation. Thus, neurophysiological changes that are neither self-reportable nor obvious to an independent observer—say, activation of the amygdala—are included in this definition. We'll have much more to say about nonconscious processes later, but for now, suffice it to say that we are not always aware of how others affect our thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Again returning to our opening vignette, social psychologists are likely to examine how both conscious and nonconscious processes affect to whom we are attracted.

In sum, social psychologists investigate how people influence the social experiences and behaviors of other humans. For the sake of simplicity, I will often shorten "social

Social Psychology:
Scientific study of the social experiences and behaviors of individuals

experiences and behaviors” to “social behaviors” and will make it clear when I am referring only to observable actions. What social psychology is and is not will be further clarified below when we contrast it with other branches of the social sciences and of psychology.

[Dear Student: I have placed Think Again! questions throughout the text in order to help you gauge your comprehension of and memory for what you have just read. I urge you to try to answer each question you encounter right away—preferably by writing it down—and, if needed, to look back at the chapter to solidify your understanding.]

Think Again!

1. In your own words, what is social psychology?
2. Name three social behaviors that you would like to understand better and hope to learn more about in this text.

Why Social Psychology?

If you are reading this book, then you are likely already enrolled in a social psychology course. Why should you stay in it or sign up if you haven't already? Well, consider that social behavior is virtually everywhere around (and inside) us all of the time. To social psychologists, the world is our proverbial oyster. Many of the same behaviors that fascinate you, as a student, captivate our imagination and literally call out for investigation. There are four compelling reasons to study social psychology. First, social psychology investigates the most fascinating topic in the universe: us. Second, social psychology provides tremendous insight into *what people do* and *why people do it*. You'll undoubtedly come to a much deeper understanding of yourself and others by the time you finish reading this text. Students invariably tell me how much they have learned about why they and others do what they do and how they excitedly share what they learn with partners, family, and friends. For instance, they'll tell a friend that they observed a car salesperson appeal to the consistency principle and now understand why it worked (more on this later). Or they realized that others did not in fact notice their “bad hair” day as much as they had expected. You too will be applying the lessons from social psychology almost immediately—and doing so is one effective way to learn them.

Third, social psychology is *useful*: It helps us to solve serious real-world problems in ways that other sciences cannot. It aids us in improving schools, increasing helping behavior, reducing violence, and overcoming prejudice. Many of our central research streams originate in our desire to change the world for the better and are often rooted in our personal experiences and observations. For instance, Muzafer Sherif began to study social psychology after having narrowly escaped death in a violent ethnic dispute and sought to comprehend, among other things, the nature and causes of intergroup conflict

FIGURE 1.1 Muzafer Sherif on Why He Studied Social Psychology

“THEY CAME . . . AND THEY STARTED KILLING PEOPLE RIGHT AND LEFT . . .

the immediate thing that concerned me was that somebody else beside me was killed . . . I thought . . . that I’d be killed too that day. Then the soldier . . . looked at me for a few minutes. He was ready to stab me. Then he walked away . . . There and then I became interested in understanding why these things were happening among human beings”

Source: Aron & Aron (1989). *The Heart of Social Psychology*.

(reported in Trotter, 1985) (see Figure 1.1). On a less serious note, I may be walking across campus and notice a staff person throwing an empty glass bottle into a trash bin rather than the adjacent bright blue bin clearly displaying a recycling symbol and ask myself, “Hmm, why didn’t she recycle that bottle?” I could choose to conduct a study to figure out why (I have in fact studied recycling behavior).

Fourth, social psychology is *fun*. Not only do we learn the sometimes-surprising reasons people do what they do, but also we often get to concoct funny experiments to figure out why. For instance, one prominent social psychologist convinced research participants to suck on a pacifier while waiting to begin an experiment on Freud (Sarnoff & Zimbardo, 1961). I surely wish I had seen that one!

Social Psychology Is Unique

Social psychology is a diverse, dynamic discipline that investigates a wide range of topics, issues, and aspects of human social behavior. Although all of the social sciences study people, social psychology stands apart in the way that we examine the person in the group, take into account multiple levels of analysis, and focus primarily on laboratory research. Let’s briefly contrast social psychology with several other social sciences and psychology subdisciplines.

Sociology overlaps with social psychology, because it also emphasizes social aspects of human existence. However, sociology examines group-level phenomena—such as societal trends, cultural norms, the effects of race or social class, and so forth—without examining the internal processes occurring at the individual level that are affected by those phenomena. **Anthropology** is similar to social psychology in that both examine the relationship between culture and social behavior. Anthropology seeks culture-level explanations for human behavior by exploring a specific culture in-depth utilizing observational research, whereas social psychologists study cultural and noncultural explanations, primarily using laboratory experimentation, and also typically compare social behavior in multiple cultures.

Sociology:

Examines group-level phenomena—such as societal trends, cultural norms, the effects of race or social class, and so forth

Anthropology:

Seeks culture-level explanations for human behavior by exploring a specific culture in depth, utilizing primarily observational research

**Biological/
Physiological
Psychology:**

Examines the influence of genes, hormones, brain functioning and structure and other elements of the nervous system on all kinds of human behavior

**Cognitive
Psychology:**

Seeks to explain mental processes such as memory, problem solving, decision-making, language, and the nature of consciousness

**Clinical
Psychology:**

Examines the nature, causes, and consequences of mental disorders and dysfunction of individuals who deviate from the norm and seeks ways to treat them

**Personality
Psychology:**

Investigates the development and nature of personality traits over the lifespan

Biological/physiological psychology inquires about the influence of genes, hormones, brain functioning and structure, and other elements of the nervous system on all kinds of human behavior. As we've seen, social psychology takes biology into account, but it focuses exclusively on social behavior and considers other, nonbiological levels of explanation for it.

Cognitive psychology seeks to explain mental processes such as memory, problem solving, decision-making, language, and the nature of consciousness. Although social psychologists examine some of these same processes, we limit ourselves to their *social* aspects, such as *person* memory, judgments of *persons*, and so forth.

Clinical psychology examines the nature, causes, and consequences of mental disorders and dysfunction of individuals who deviate from the norm and seeks ways to treat them. Social psychology emphasizes normal psychological functioning; how *most people* act, feel, or think.

Personality psychologists investigate the development and nature of personality traits over the lifespan. Social psychologists often examine personality characteristics but are more interested in how social situations affect most people, regardless of their personalities. Both clinical and personality psychologists are primarily concerned with individual-level causes, whereas social psychologists balance individual- and group-level explanations for social behavior.

Think Again!

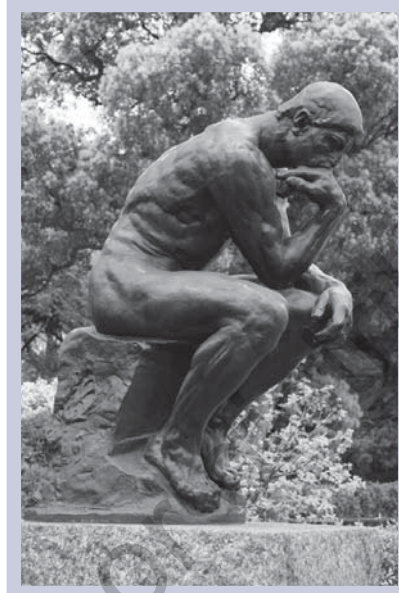
1. *Take a social behavior—say helping others—and imagine how social psychologists might study it. Then contrast that with the way other kinds of psychologists and social scientists might examine it.*

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE QUEST FOR HUMAN NATURE

What is human nature? If you had to list the fundamental topics that get to the very heart of what it means to be human, what would they be? When I ask my students, friends, or dead philosophers, several common themes emerge: Do humans have free will? Are people mostly independent or conformist? Are we rational? What is the self? Do we really need other people? Are people inherently good? These issues go a long way toward capturing the essence of humanity. (See Table 1.1.) Questions like these often come to the fore during late adolescence and early adulthood and are most salient during our college years (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). They have been pondered across thousands of years of human history and in cultures all around the globe, in part because their answers have profound implications for how we understand ourselves. The fact

that we *can* and *do* contemplate these questions in part defines the very essence of who we—as intelligent, self-aware beings—are as well as how we are different from other animals. The French sculptor Auguste Rodin captured the human propensity for wonder in his famous work, *The Thinker* (see photo).

These six enduring questions will serve as continuing themes throughout this book, providing reminders about the relevance of social psychological research to the core of human nature and to our everyday lives. One appealing aspect of social psychology is that it can shed light on these questions. Social psychology cannot give life meaning or determine what is good or evil, but it can inform our thinking about these topics by scientifically studying what we do and why we do it. Although these questions are both philosophical and psychological, we'll leave the philosophy to the philosophers and in this text focus on only their psychological, scientific aspects. Let's elaborate on these questions.



Auguste Rodin's
The Thinker

Getty—516604053.

TABLE 1.1 Life's Fundamental Questions

Question	Example
Do we have free will?	Are we in conscious control of our actions or are they determined by forces over which we have no control?
Are we independent or conformist?	How much do other people influence what you do and what you say? Are you relatively independent from others or mostly conformist?
Are we rational beings?	Can we engage in cold, rational thinking that is not affected by our feelings and motivations?
What is the self?	Who am I? What is my psychological core?
Do we need other people and, if so, why?	Why are our relationships so important, and what goals do they help us meet? Why do we need friends or lovers?
Are we inherently altruistic or selfish?	Is it possible to help another person for purely selfless reasons, with no material or psychological benefit to the helper?

Free Will

If you raise your hand to ask a question in class or choose to eat chocolate cheesecake rather than artichoke salad, are you making your decisions consciously? That is, do you do them out of your own free will? When I ask my students this, the overwhelming majority believe that yes, we have free will, and *of course* humans can consciously control what we do or think (Sharif et al., 2014). But psychologists are not so sure (Baer, Kaufman, & Baumeister, 2008; Hassin, Uleman, & Bargh, 2005). There is ample evidence that nonconscious processes—those we are *not* aware of—significantly affect what we think, feel, and do (Andersen, Moskowitz, Blair, & Nosek, 2007; Bar-Anan, Wilson, & Hassin, 2010; Evans & Frankish, 2009). For example, would you believe that exposure to words that relate to being elderly can make you act as if you were much older? In a fascinating study of nonconscious influences on behavior, participants were asked to unscramble sentences containing words suggestive of being older—like *lonely, grey, wrinkled, forgetful*—and this activity caused them to walk more slowly in comparison to a control group (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). Since this behavior change occurred below the level of awareness, it could be argued that it undermined the free will of the participants. What do you think? More broadly, in what ways do think you exercise your free will? (To gauge your own beliefs about free will, see Self-Reflection Box 1.1.)

Independence

A second important question has to do with how independent we are from outside influences. How much do other people affect what you do and what you say? Are you relatively independent from others or mostly conformist? What about obedience to authority—would you be able to resist authority when it matters most, like if someone's well being depended on it? Whereas the free will question probes the effects of internal, nonconscious processes on social thinking, feeling, and behavior, the independence question asks how external pressures—namely, people—around us can affect those same things. It is obvious that humans can sometimes change other humans. Social psychologists investigate *when* and *how* those social influences occur (Bocchiaro & Zimbardo, 2010; Cialdini, 2008; Kim & Hommel, 2015; Pratkanis, 2007a). The subject of social influence is integral to the science of social psychology and, in fact, several of the field's best-known studies deal with this very topic. In one, individuals were asked—actually, told—by an experimenter to continue giving another person severe electric shocks, even after that person had stopped responding and may have been unconscious or worse (more on this in Chapter 6) (Milgram, 1965). If you were in that situation, what would you do—go along and administer more shocks or rebel against the experimenter and refuse to follow his request?

Rationality

We are often encouraged by friends, family, and even professors to be “objective” and not allow personal feelings and motivations to interfere with judgments and decisions. Put aside your biases and look at this issue from the perspective of a disinterested third party!

SELF-REFLECTION 1.1

Do You Think You Have Free Will? (Part 1)

Do you believe that you have the free will to choose what to do or not to do? In your opinion, is your fate in your own hands? In one 36-nation study, over 70% of respondents think that it is (International Social Survey Programme, 1998). One measure of belief in free will is the Free Will and Determinism Scale (FAD-Plus, Paulhus & Carey, 2011), which can be found in Table 1.2. Take a minute and complete the questions below and then turn the page to learn more about your beliefs about free will.

TABLE 1.2 Free Will and Determinism Scale

For each statement, choose a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how much you agree or disagree and then turn the page to better understand your score.

Item	Response options				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
1. People have complete control over the decisions they make.	1	2	3	4	5
2. People must take full responsibility for any bad choices they make.	1	2	3	4	5
3. People can overcome any obstacles if they truly want to.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Criminals are totally responsible for the bad things they do.	1	2	3	4	5
5. People have complete free will.	1	2	3	4	5
6. People are always at fault for their bad behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Strength of mind can always overcome the body's desires.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Paulhus, D. L., & Carey, J. M. (2011). The FAD-Plus: Measuring lay beliefs regarding free will and related constructs. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 93, 96–104.

TURN THE PAGE TO FIND OUR ANSWERS.

SELF-REFLECTION 1.2

Do You Think You Have Free Will? (Part 2)

Add up your answers for all 7 items and then divide by 7 to get your average or mean score. Paulhus and Carey (2011) found that the average female college student scored a 3.31 and the average male college student 3.47. How do you compare? If your total is less than these, then your belief in free will is weaker than average; if it is greater, then your belief is stronger than average. Fun fact: According to one study, students who have stronger beliefs in free will were *less* likely to cheat on an experimental math task than those who have weaker beliefs (Vohs & Schooler, 2008). It seems that when people feel less responsible for their behavior, their behavior becomes less moral (Carey & Paulhus, 2013).

Often we try, but can we really do it? Do you think that it is possible to truly separate our thinking from our feeling?

Social psychologists used to assume that we could engage in rational, dispassionate, unbiased thinking—what we call “cold cognition”—but research in the past couple of decades has undermined that assumption (Gladwin & Figner, 2015; Kahneman, 2011). We now recognize that cognition is very often “hot,” which is to say that it is affected by our emotions and motivations. This is the case even when we try to be unbiased. For example, in one study participants were more likely to judge information as valid when they were in a good mood versus a neutral mood (Garcia-Marques, Mackie, Claypool, & Garcia-Marques, 2004). This demonstrates how feeling can alter thinking. Have you ever wondered whether someone who claims to be unbiased is letting his feelings affect his judgment without realizing it?

The Self

Virtually all of us, at one time or another, have asked “Who am I?” The answer to this question is called our self-concept or identity: It is the set of beliefs we have about the characteristics we possess. The self-concept is at the core of everything we think, feel, or do. It is our anchor and the filter through which we perceive ourselves and the world. Because the self lies at the center of our being, social psychologists have exerted tremendous effort to better understand how social experiences affect and are affected by it (Baumeister, 2010; Leary & Toner, 2015; Sedikides & Spencer, 2007).

One of the key influences on the self-concept is the culture that we grow up in. For instance, persons from **individualistic cultures** tend to define themselves as separate from other people, whereas those from **collectivistic cultures** are more likely to define themselves *in terms of* their relationships to others (Chua, Carbonneau, Milyavskaya, & Koestner, 2015; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Our conception of the self is closely connected to the culture in which we reside. We will have much more to say about the cultural dimension of social behavior later. For now, be aware that whether we think of ourselves as fundamentally separate from or connected to others has implications for many other

Individualistic

Culture: Type of society in which people's self-concepts tend to be stable, not tied to particular groups, and people place their personal preferences and goals above those of the group and value individual choice

Collectivistic

Culture: Type of society in which people's self-concepts tend to be intimately tied to and defined by their group memberships, people subordinate personal preferences and goals to the group's, and where individual choice is not highly valued

aspects of our lives, such as our motivations to perform well and the kinds of choices that we make. What is your self-concept, and how do you think it is affected by culture?

Sociality

One of the most fascinating and complex aspects of human nature is our *sociality*, which is our tendency to develop and maintain relationships with others (Crosier, Webster, & Dillon, 2012; Gifford, 2013; Leary, 2010; Semin & Echterhoff, 2011). Humans, like other primates, are fundamentally social creatures (Gamble, Gowlett, & Dunbar, 2014). In this text, we'll examine why our relationships are so important and what sorts of goals they help us meet. Why do you think we need friends or lovers? Each semester I ask my students to think about one of their stronger platonic (nonromantic) friendships and to write down the reasons the friendship developed and why they maintained it. Students frequently mention similarity of attitudes and interests, that they can have fun together, or the ability to depend on each other in times of need, which are all of course important. However, one factor that they often neglect is physical proximity—who they live near, work with, or sit next to in class. As we will discuss in Chapter 11, proximity is one of the strongest influences on who we befriend. In fact, a study of police cadets—who were both seated in class and assigned rooms in a residence hall alphabetically—showed that last name was a strong predictor of who became friends with whom (Segal, 1974). Cadets with last names that begin with the same or nearby letter were more likely to become friends than other pairs of cadets. Why do you think that you have the romantic and nonromantic relationships that you have? What role might proximity have played?



Will & Deni McIntyre / Science Source.

People are inherently social creatures.

Morality

One of the questions that my students love to discuss (but have a difficult time resolving) is whether or not *pure* altruism exists. Pure altruism occurs when a person helps another in a completely selfless way and derives absolutely no benefit from helping (Batson, Ahmad, & Stocks, 2011; Newman & Cain, 2014). Students offer compelling arguments on both sides of the issue. One student may say, for instance, that altruism must exist, because how else can we explain the actions of a firefighter who loses her life while heroically trying to save an unknown child? Typically, another responds that the firefighter did not expect to die and, had she lived, would have benefited, because helping makes us feel good. At the same time, still others wonder how we can even speak of human goodness when there have been so many instances of mass killing and senseless violence in our history. Some people argue that not only are humans selfish, but we can be downright evil (Miller, 2004a)!

Social psychologists have extensively studied moral behavior in order to understand the factors that lead people to engage in helpful, prosocial behavior versus undesirable, antisocial behavior. In one study, researchers gave young children a chance to “steal” extra candy during Halloween trick-or-treating. How they behaved depended on whether or not they could be personally identified (Diener, Fraser, Beaman, & Kelem, 1976). The kids were much more likely to steal when they thought they were anonymous. As you will see, whether or not a person behaves morally depends on a number of personal and situational factors. Think about a time when you helped someone else. What motivated you? Did you gain some benefit, even a small one?

These six topics—free will, independence, rationality, the self, sociality, and morality—
together get at the essence of human nature. Each has served as a launching pad for some of the most exciting and thought-provoking research in social psychology. Although the questions have spurred separate research streams, it is critical to note that these seemingly disparate topics are interconnected in important ways. For instance, the extent to which we believe we have free will is closely tied to our identity or self-concept. Identity, in turn, is connected to our sociality through the groups to which we belong and the people with whom we associate. Furthermore, the types of groups that we join and the strength of our bonds with those groups impact the extent to which we are independent or conforming. Moreover, our ability to develop and maintain friendships is partially dependent on

Think Again!

1. *What are the six enduring questions about human nature?*
2. *Which one(s) do you find most interesting? Which do you find most difficult to wrap your head around?*
3. *Can you think of examples in your own life or the lives of people around you that illustrate each of them?*

how we treat others, either morally or immorally. These examples illustrate the myriad of interrelationships among the six questions. It is easy to see, then, how social psychological science is grounded in fundamental questions about human nature. Let's turn our attention to the historical development of social psychology.

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

Early Social Psychological Studies

Several of our fundamental questions about human nature can be traced back to the ancient Greeks more than 2,000 years ago. For instance, Plato examined the nature of nonromantic (now often referred to as platonic) friendship in *The Symposium* and other dialogues. The pioneering social psychologist Gordon Allport (1985) was right when he argued that the questions that form the core of current social psychological thinking were precisely those asked by its intellectual predecessors.

The most important difference between the philosophical musings of the ancient Greeks and today's social psychology is the application of the scientific method. Unlike social psychologists, both ancient and contemporary philosophers base their theories primarily on intuition and logic and generally are not interested in collecting data to test them (Jackson, 1988). The modern origins of social psychology stem from the fertile intellectual milieu of the late 19th century, when psychology—originally viewed as a branch of philosophy—became an independent discipline (G. W. Allport, 1985). Around the turn of the century, psychologists began running experiments and collecting data to see if their hypotheses about human behavior reflected what actually happened in the real world!

One of the earliest studies was conducted by the French agricultural engineer Ringelmann in the 1880s (published in 1913) after he noted that men who participated in a rope pulling task exerted *less* effort when working in tandem with other rope pullers than when pulling alone. Ringelmann found a way to measure how much effort each person exerted on the task and concluded that individuals worked harder when alone than when in a group. Several years later Triplett (1897) observed that bicyclists rode faster when racing against others versus against a clock and developed a relatively simple laboratory study to explore the notion that people exert more effort on a task in the presence of others. He asked 40 adolescents to turn a fishing reel either alone or in the presence of another child doing the same task. Half of the children worked faster when paired with another child versus when reeling alone, one-quarter worked at a slower speed, and the remaining one-quarter neither increased nor decreased their solitary speed. Although Triplett concluded from his study that the mere presence of other individuals led to *greater* effort by facilitating the production of what he called “nervous energy” (Triplett, 1897), later analysis revealed that the differences were not statistically significant (Stroebe, 2012; Strube, 2005).

Okay, so Ringelmann found that group activities can reduce individual effort, yet Triplett came to an apparently opposite conclusion. Does the presence of others make us lazier or

harder working? The simple answer is that both tendencies occur—sometimes being in a group leads to more effort, sometimes less (Zajonc, 1965). We discuss why in Chapter 12 on group behavior. Puzzles like this are the bread and butter of social psychologists and have spurred countless creative experiments and clever theories in social psychology.

The First Textbooks

Another milestone in the history of our field was the publication of the first social psychology textbooks. In 1908 William McDougall (1908/1960) and Edward Ross (1908) separately published books titled *Social Psychology*. Why is the publication of a textbook (which seems commonplace enough) significant? Textbooks indicate that a field of inquiry has come into its own and help it to establish an identity separate from competing fields. Textbooks (like the one you are reading now) serve at least two purposes. One is a pedagogical one: They are designed to facilitate learning a particular field of knowledge. A second function is to define the focus and scope of the field of knowledge. Both of these early textbooks helped to launch social psychology as an independent discipline.

Although each of these was important and helped to publicize social psychology, neither identified many of the core concepts that are critical to contemporary social psychology. This was particularly true in McDougall's case, in which the primary emphasis was on the role of instincts in producing human social behavior. Like McDougall, contemporary social psychologists acknowledge the important role that evolutionary pressures and prewired tendencies play in the generation of social behavior (Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010). However, as discussed below, there are many other important influences on social behavior that McDougall provided little or no treatment of. In contrast, Ross's (1908) text was much closer to the heart of what we now recognize as social psychology: Social psychology, according to Ross, "deals with the uniformities due to social causes, *i.e.*, to *mental contacts* or *mental interactions*" (p. 3). According to Jones (1985), despite the early experimental findings by Ringelmann and Triplett, social psychology remained largely nonexperimental until the 1930s. It is unfortunate that the experimental gains initiated by Ringelmann and Triplett were not followed by controlled research in social psychology until decades later. Instead of empirical research, social psychologists like McDougall and Ross were primarily occupied by the "big questions" of human existence, such as the nature versus nurture controversy and whether social behavior was a product of an individual's personality or of social pressures (Jackson, 1988).

About a generation after those first texts, Floyd Allport (1924) published a textbook that helped to redefine social psychology, an event that has been called the beginning of experimental social psychology (Stroebe, 2012). Allport was very critical of existing conceptualizations of social psychology and sought to place the field on a firm scientific footing. He argued that many key concepts, such as the "group mind," were pseudoscientific; they were vague notions that were resistant to truly scientific examination and missed the critical role of the individual (Collier, Minton, & Reynolds, 1991). According to Allport, the causes of social behavior can be uncovered not through the investigation of large-scale phenomena

but rather via analysis of the psychology of the individual. Allport initiated a shift in focus from the *group* to the *individual* and from *nonscientific* to *scientific* investigations.

A Creative Synthesis: The Mutual Influences of the Person and the Situation

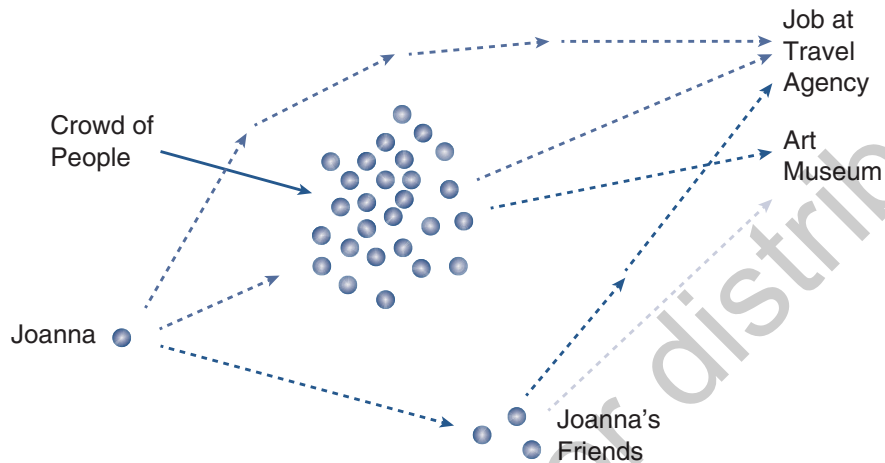
During its formative years in the early 20th century, social psychology was heavily influenced by B. F. Skinner's behaviorism—which focused solely on external causes—and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis—which emphasized internal factors. These two perspectives on the causes of social behavior were seemingly incompatible. Resolution of this disagreement between advocates of the externalist versus internalist positions was achieved by Kurt Lewin, a Jewish émigré who fled Germany to escape persecution by the Nazis. Lewin theorized that human behavior was a product of *both* the person and the situation. That is, human social behavior can only be understood when both characteristics of the person and features of the environment are considered. For instance, understanding why a young mother yelled at her son at the local grocery store requires knowledge of her internal states (thoughts, emotions, personality traits, etc.) and of the context (what the child had done, the number and nature of bystanders, etc.).

Lewin (1946) called his formulation “field theory” in order to signify the need to examine the person in the context. Let's take a person walking through a crowd as an example. Any explanation of the path she takes is incomplete unless we consider how assertively she walks, her goals in passing through, and so forth, as well as aspects of the crowd, such as its density, whether or not people are moving, and so forth (see Figure 1.2). Lewin (1946) offered a simple yet elegant representation of this formulation: $B = F(P,E)$. Behavior (B), Lewin argued, was a function (F) or product of both the person (P) and the environment (E).

Will Joanna walk around the crowd, through the crowd, or to her friends en route to her destination? This figure illustrates Lewin's formulation of behavior as the product of the person and the environment ($B = F(P,E)$). Joanna's behavior (B) depends on person (P) and environment (E) factors such as (a) her internal traits (e.g., assertive and willing to push through the crowd, conscientious about getting to her job on time, etc.), (b) who she encounters (how many people, density, etc.), (c) how important her friends are; and (d) what her goals are (going to work or the art museum).

During the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, social psychology was strongly influenced by the atrocities of World War II and other historical events and, especially in the United States, developed an increasingly experimental focus as it examined their psychological underpinning (Moscovici & Markova, 2006). For instance, the unimaginable horror of the Holocaust led Stanley Milgram (1963) to investigate why people obey authority, even when ordered to harm innocent victims. In Chapter 6 we will examine Stanley Milgram's research on obedience, along with other forms of social influence.

One major theoretical advance that occurred during these years was prompted by Leon Festinger's desire to understand why people sometimes say one thing but do the opposite and/or simultaneously hold two attitudes that conflict with one another. Festinger (1957)

FIGURE 1.2 Lewin's Field Theory

created the *theory of cognitive dissonance* to help explain these inconsistencies, arguing that the existence of these inconsistencies sometimes produces discomfort or dissonance in people. Festinger postulated that, in general, people will strive to overcome this dissonance by changing an attitude, belief, or behavior accordingly and thereby removing the inconsistency. Festinger's theory was enormously influential and will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 7 on persuasion.

Further Developments: The Multiple Causes of Social Behavior

Although the basic groundwork for social psychological science was laid out by these earlier thinkers, social psychology matured throughout the remainder of the 20th century. During those years—and continuing into the 21st century—social psychologists have expanded our theory and research to incorporate additional influences on social behavior. When you think about why people do what they do, what kinds of explanations come to mind? Consider the reasons we are romantically attracted to particular others of the same or opposite sex. Is romantic attraction based in our genes? Personality? Family background? Cultural and media influences? If you were asked to choose one of these explanations, which would it be?

I suspect that you found it hard to select just one. Social psychologists are with you, and one of social psychology's most appealing and important features is that it considers multiple explanations for any given behavior. Social phenomena are not so simple that they can be fully explained by any single factor, and consequently, social psychology has incorporated a number of approaches to understanding them.

In fact, several of the most important developments in social psychology since the middle of last century reflect these different approaches to explaining social behavior.

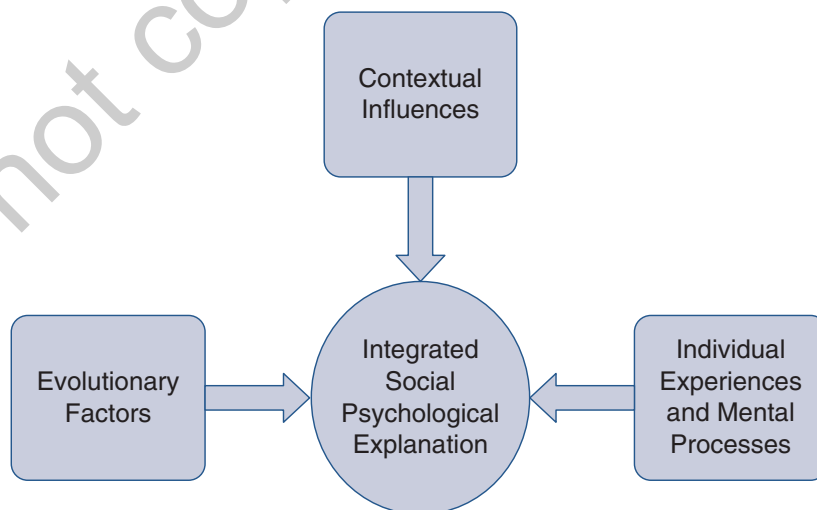
These different perspectives or levels of analysis complement each other, allowing us to develop a more holistic understanding of social phenomena (Bruner, 1990; De Houwer & Moors, 2015). These three levels of explanation vary in scope and method and are the (see Figure 1.3)

- evolutionary level, which emphasizes the genetic history of the human race;
- contextual level, which looks at group pressures, societal influences, and cultural background;
- individual level, which asks about a person's own learning history, experiences, and cognitive processes.

Evolutionary Factors

The early American social psychologist McDougall, influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, placed natural instincts at the forefront of his explanations for social behavior. McDougall's instinct-based approach quickly fell out of favor as a primary cause of human behavior and was replaced with a more externally focused, behaviorist perspective (Jackson, 1988). As a result, for several decades little attention was devoted to evolutionary or biological influences on social behavior. However, since the 1990s social psychologists have come a long way toward remedying this oversight, and today the study of biological influences on social psychological processes has been integrated into the mainstream of our science (Duntley & Buss, 2008; Kenrick & Cohen, 2012).

FIGURE 1.3 Different Levels of Explanation for Social Behavior



Natural Selection:

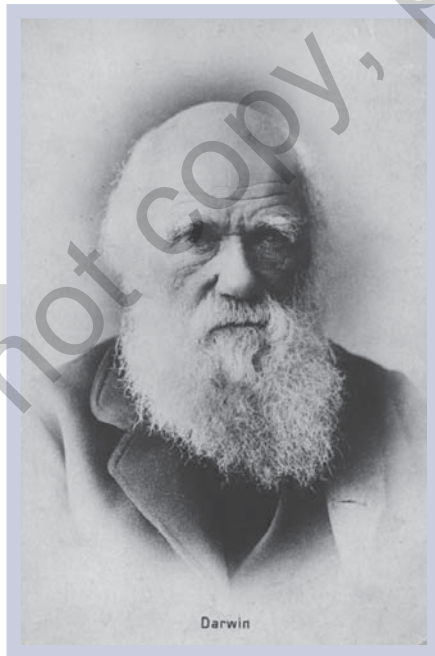
Genes that tend to increase the chances of survival of their carrier are more likely to be passed on to a new generation

Social psychologists have recognized how traits handed down to us by our ancestors continue to influence social functioning. This evolutionary perspective derives from Darwin's theory of **natural selection**, which, in a nutshell, states that genes that tend to increase the chances of survival of their carrier are more likely to be passed on to a new generation (Darwin, 1859/1994). In other words, these genes—what are called adaptive genes—endow their animal or plant carrier with advantages that make them more likely to survive and reproduce in comparison to those that do not have them. Darwin recognized that there is natural variation in the genes of the members of a species, and that as a result, some members are better adapted to their environments than are others (see photo). The fortunate members have a higher probability of producing healthy offspring and, over time, their adaptive genes and corresponding traits become more common in the population. Eventually, virtually all members of the species carry the adaptive traits. For example, all humans (and all primates) have opposable thumbs, a feature that we now take for granted but that evolved over the course of millions of years.

One of the implications of natural selection is that characteristics—whether physiological or psychological—that are universally shared in a species are very likely the result of evolution. If similar psychological tendencies are found in humans regardless of culture, then there is a high probability that evolutionary pressures are responsible. For instance, individuals in all cultures share a taboo against incest. Whenever I talk to my students about incest, they shake their heads and show expressions of disgust. Yes, it is disgusting to think about—but why? Once we get past the mere disgust factor, students

correctly point out that inbreeding increases the chances that offspring will have characteristics—genetic defects—that decrease the probability of survival. Evolutionary pressures have led to universal incest avoidance, and the disgust that we feel about incest is a psychological adaptation that has minimized its likelihood (HBO's fantasy series *Game of Thrones* notwithstanding!). Biology clearly has a profound effect on social behavior. Returning to our opening example, how might our biology affect our sexual orientation?

A recent study nicely illustrates how the evolutionary perspective can be applied to understanding romantic attraction. Consider that the scent of a woman during ovulation can impact how a man rates the attractiveness of potential female partners (S. L. Miller & Maner, 2011). Miller and Maner (2011) had individual males work on a puzzle involving



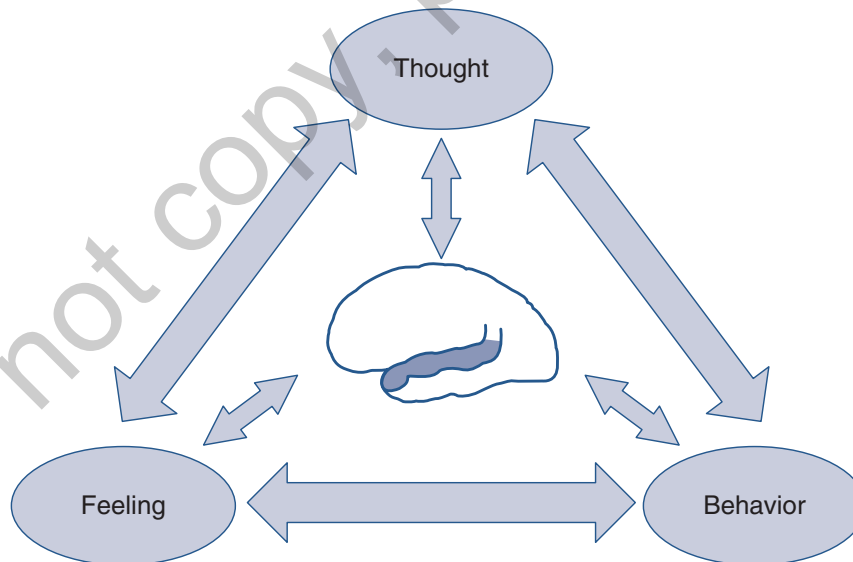
Charles Darwin

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building blocks with a young female who was secretly working with the experimenter and was trained to refrain from flirtatious behavior. After the task the men were asked to rate her attractiveness, and how highly they rated her depended on two factors: whether or not they were in a romantic relationship and, believe it or not, whether or not she was ovulating. Single males rated her as more attractive when she was fertile versus when she was not, but men with partners showed the opposite tendency. Committed men downgraded her attractiveness, as if they were trying to avoid the temptation of an attractive woman! This is just one recent example of how biological factors can influence social behavior.

Moreover, advances in technology have ushered in the new subfield of social neuroscience that studies the relationships between social psychology and the brain (see Figure 1.4) (Todorov, Fiske, & Prentice, 2011). Social neuroscience applies sophisticated technology to investigating the complex interrelationships between social psychological phenomena—thoughts, feelings, and behavior—and the human nervous system (Ochsner, 2007). Chapter 2 provides a detailed explication of the logic and methods of social neuroscience, and we will discuss it throughout the text to show how it can complement existing approaches to a wide variety of topics.

FIGURE 1.4 Social Neuroscience: Connecting Brain and Social Behavior



Social neuroscience—sometimes called social cognitive neuroscience—uses advanced technology to examine the interrelationships among the brain and social experiences, including thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Sometimes called social cognitive neuroscience—social neuroscience uses advanced technology to examine the interrelationships among the brain and social experiences, including thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Contextual Influences

This second level of analysis focuses on group-level explanations for social behavior and compliments insights gleaned from the evolutionary approach. Here we focus on broad influences such as culture, social class, race, and religion. For example, Leon Mann (1981) adopted this approach when he investigated how crowd size impacts the likelihood that onlookers encourage—or bait—a would-be suicide jumper into actually leaping from a bridge or building. Interestingly, he found that baiting was more prevalent in larger groups! We discuss additional ways in which group size affects social behavior in the chapters on social influence, persuasion, and group processes (Chapters 6, 7, and 12, respectively).

For much of the 20th century, psychologists mostly studied wealthy white North American male college students and assumed that the findings were universal and therefore as valid in Cairo or Rio de Janeiro as in Boston (Heine, 2010a). In other words, culture's effects on social behavior were not widely recognized by psychologists. However, in recent years there has been an increasing recognition of the profound effects of culture on our social behavior, including phenomena as varied as self-concept, self-esteem, perceptions of time, attitudes toward marriage, and beliefs about mental illness (Gelfand, Chiu, & Hong, 2011; Valsiner, 2012; Vaclair et al., 2015). **Culture** can be defined as a system of enduring meanings, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and practices shared by a large group of people. It is important to note that, although nations may be dominated by a particular culture, cultures are not necessarily nations. For instance, scholars have described cross-cultural differences that extend across nations, such as those between Western and Eastern cultures (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Triandis, 1993), as well as within-culture differences, like those distinguishing the American South from the North (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

The most widely studied cross-cultural variable is individualism-collectivism (IC), which was initially conceptualized as broadly distinguishing the Western cultures of North America and parts of Europe from Eastern ones in South and East Asia, including China and Japan (Hofstede, 1986; Triandis, 1993; van Hoorn, 2015). However, more recently researchers have discovered that the IC dimension is more complex, varying within cultures and extending to cultures on other continents, including South America. Succinctly put, individualists are self-focused: They define themselves as containing stable, internal traits not tied to particular groups, value individual choice, and place their personal preferences and goals above those of the group.

In contrast, collectivists tend to be other-focused: Their self-concept is intimately tied to and defined by their group memberships, individual choice is not highly valued, and personal preferences and goals are subordinated to those of the group (Triandis, 1993). It is important to note that, although we often talk about individualist and collectivistic cultures as if they were completely different, there is in fact considerable overlap: People in one type of culture

Culture: System of enduring meanings, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and practices shared by a large group of people

can and do exhibit characteristics common in people from the other type (Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, & Gornik-Durose, 1999; Hofstede, de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure, & Vinken, 2010; Triandis & Gelfand, 2012; Triandis & Singelis, 1998). We will return again and again to culture's prominent role in explaining elements of social behavior throughout this text.

Individual Factors

The third level of analysis seeks to explain social behavior by examining a particular person's experiences, learning history, and mental processes. What have you learned and how does that affect your social experiences? Psychologists speak of three learning processes (that you undoubtedly were exposed to in your introductory psychology course): classical, instrumental, and social. **Classical conditioning** was accidentally discovered by the Russian physiologist Pavlov (1906) during his famous dog salivation research. As you may recall, Pavlov observed that dogs associated a neutral stimulus—the sound of a tone—with meat powder and began salivating in anticipation of receiving it. The dogs learned that the tone signalled the impending release of the meat powder. Thereafter, a sound that had nothing to do with food became a proxy for food and created the salivation response. Okay, so that is all fine and good when it comes to dogs, but how does that apply to people? Well, let's say that McDonald's is your favorite fast food restaurant. You are driving down Main Street and spot a McDonald's. You may begin feeling hungry, and perhaps *you* will salivate a little. Why? Because McDonald's golden arches act like the tone for the dogs and signals to you that food may be on the way (it is unlikely that you were born with this association already in mind!).

Instrumental conditioning was pioneered by John Watson and B. F. Skinner and occurs when a person becomes more likely to engage in a behavior after being rewarded for doing it (reinforcement) or less likely after being penalized for it (punishment) (Watson, 1925/1998; Weiss, 2014). Instrumental conditioning helps to explain why people bring coupons to the grocery store (reward: saving money) and students try to get their papers in on time (punishment for failing to do so: F). A final type of learning that gained prominence in the latter half of the 20th century, **social learning**, takes place when a person observes or hears that someone else was reinforced or punished for engaging in a particular behavior (like robbing a bank) and then behaves accordingly either to gain a reward (free money) or avoid a penalty (going to prison) (Bandura, 2012; Bandura & Walters, 1963). The contemporary debate about whether exposure to violence on TV and in films leads to real-world aggression centers around whether these media exhibit a social learning effect on viewers (Anderson et al., 2004).

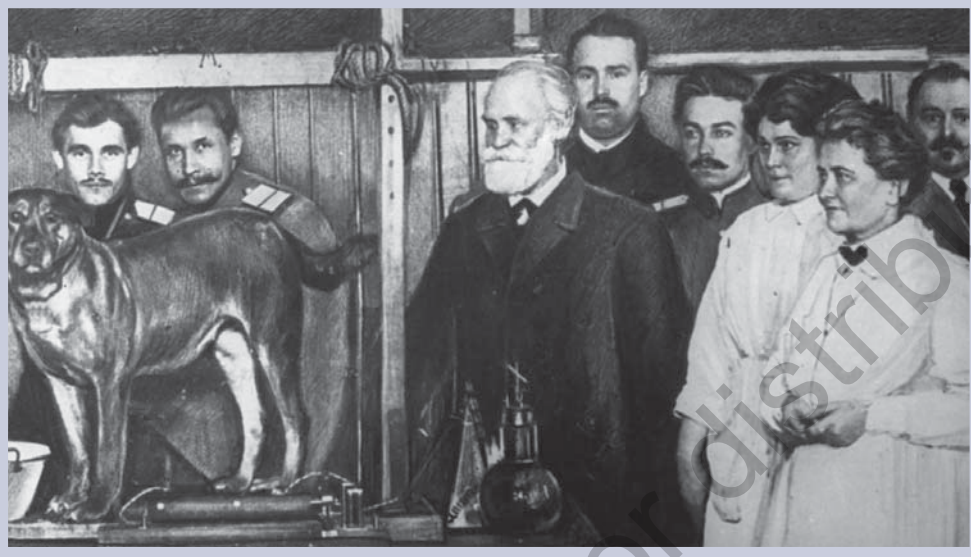
One major type of individual-level explanation focuses on the social cognitive processes occurring in the individual just prior to or during the phenomenon under study. In the 1970s, social psychology experienced a “cognitive revolution” (North & Fiske, 2012). Psychologists rejected simplistic behavioral and psychoanalytic explanations and discovered the role of conscious mental processes, such as a person's stated attitudes and beliefs, in generating social behavior. Social psychologists acknowledged how individual interpretations—called *construals*—of social situations affect social behavior (Kruglanski, 1989; L. Ross, 1977). For

Classical Conditioning: Form of learning in which a previously neutral stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus after being paired with an unconditioned stimulus

Instrumental Conditioning: Form of learning in which reinforcement is given or punishment is administered in order to increase or decrease a specific behavior

Social Learning: Learning by observing or hearing that someone else was reinforced or punished for engaging in a particular behavior

Pavlov discovered the power of classical conditioning during research on the salivary responses in dogs.



Sovfoto Universal Images Group/Newscom.

instance, whether failing your first exam in social psychology leads you to work harder or simply give up on the class can depend upon how you interpret that failure. If, on the one hand, you believe that your poor grade was a result of not studying and that if you study for the next one you will do better, then you are more likely to increase your effort. If, on the other hand, you think that the professor is unfair, her tests are too difficult, and that no amount of studying will pay off, then you may withdraw from the class.

Social cognition can be defined as the “mental processes involved in perceiving, attending to, remembering, thinking about, and making sense of” oneself and others (Moskowitz, 2005, p. 3). As you read these words, your mind is switching among the multiple mental processes required to focus on and comprehend them, interpret their meaning, glance at the time, remember you have a lunch date, make a quick decision about whether to answer the text message you just received, and choose between continuing to read or getting your third cup of coffee.

Although each of these activities is conscious, social cognitive processes often take place beneath the surface, nonconsciously (Carlston, 2013). Recall the research mentioned earlier that involved unscrambling sentences: Participants exposed to elderly related words walked more slowly (Bargh et al., 1996). Were they aware of this? Certainly not. Even when specifically asked if they thought that the task affected their behavior in any way, they denied it. It is not that the students were lying about the influence of the elderly related words. Rather, they were simply unaware of that influence.

Let’s say your lunch date is with your new boss who you have only seen in passing. One of your coworkers told you that the boss is usually late, wears shabby clothes, has terrible body odor, and talks with her mouth full. What kind of expectations would you hold of your boss? Imagine, instead, that the boss has a reputation for being timely, generous,

Social Cognition:
Mental processes involved in perceiving, attending to, remembering, thinking about, and making sense of oneself and others

well groomed, and polite. Would your expectations change? Regardless of which expectations you held, your behavior during lunch is likely to be affected by them. In the one case, you might not worry about being a few minutes late, you may dress casually, decide not to eat at all (so you don't get grossed out), and wear extra cologne to mask undesirable smells. In the other, you'd be on time, dress well, plan to eat, and wear the usual amount of cologne (or none at all). This simple example demonstrates how expectations—another component of social cognition—can affect behavior. Chapter 3 is devoted in its entirety to explaining the centrality of social cognitive processes to virtually everything that we do. What we have learned and how we think about ourselves and others have repercussions for the kinds of romantic relationships that we seek, as we will see in Chapter 11.

Social Psychology in Europe

As mentioned above, the bulk of the empirical research in social psychology has focused on North American, white, educated males, and was conducted by North American scholars (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Nevertheless, social psychologists from Europe and elsewhere have had and continue to have a very important impact on the theory and research. From a historical perspective, two of social psychology's founding "fathers"—Sherif and Lewin—in addition to many other, lesser-known scholars, were immigrants to the United States. Moreover, European social psychologists have made significant contributions to our understanding of social identity, intergroup relations, minority influence in groups, and many other topics discussed later in this text (Jahoda, 2007; Moscovici & Markova, 2006).

Emerging Trends

Social psychology is a dynamic and exciting field that continues to move in new directions. The final chapter of this book highlights three of these emerging topics and offers insights into where the field may be heading in the next 10 to 20 years. First we'll describe the rise of positive psychology and incorporation of "happiness studies" into social psychology. Second, we'll explore the renewed interest in the study of religion and will explain how we can scientifically investigate religious phenomena. Finally, we'll discuss the emergence of the social psychological study of environmental sustainability—how social psychological insights can help us create a greener, cleaner, future.

Integrating Explanations

As you can see, there are many approaches to understanding the causes of social behavior. Which one is correct? The answer is that, on its own, none is: Social behavior cannot be reduced to a single cause. Not only is every social phenomenon a product of both personal and situational factors—which right away suggests more than a single cause—but virtually any behavior can be examined from each of these three levels of analysis. A complete understanding of a particular behavior will involve utilizing multiple explanations (see Figure 1.3). Let's take obedience to authority as an illustration. From an evolutionary perspective, we could ask whether it was adaptive for our ancestors to have been, at least some

of the time, obedient to the authority in their group, family network, tribe, or community. The answer would be yes, because too much disobedience would likely have led to expulsion from the group, and that would have placed the rebel at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to mating, finding food, and protection from dangerous animals and humans.

Yet group-level influences are also evident when we consider how obedience can differ across cultures. Obedience and respect for authority are much more important in collectivistic than individualistic cultures (Blass, 2012; Bond & Smith, 1996b). Individual experiences and learning history play a role in that from a very early age we are rewarded for doing what our parents or other authorities tell us to do and punished when we disobey. Moreover, social cognitive processes are also crucial to obedience: We must attend to the authority, interpret what she says as a command that applies to us, and so on. As you can see, these approaches are complementary and together provide a more complete understanding of social phenomena.

One quick qualification is necessary: Often one of these three perspectives provides more insight or explanatory power for a specific social behavior than the others, and for the purposes of this text, we may focus only on that primary explanation. For instance, certain characteristics that men prefer in potential female mates are considered to be universal and therefore apply to all cultures. In this case, we'll emphasize the evolutionary perspective. In contrast, if we focus instead on ways that marital arrangements vary across cultures, then we'll emphasize culture-based explanations. Let's take a look at the guiding principles that guide social psychology's investigation of human behavior.

Think Again!

1. *What are the two elements of Lewin's field theory, and why are they important?*
2. *Can you briefly describe the three levels of understanding and apply them to explain one of your behaviors?*

PRINCIPLE MATTERS: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We stated above that one impetus for social psychological theory and research stems from life's enduring questions. As important and fascinating as these questions are, they reveal more about the possibilities and complexities of human nature than they do about how humans actually behave. What we need is a general framework for understanding the actual causes of social behavior. Fortunately, social psychology has such a framework. From the vast array of research findings, we can derive a set of four guiding principles about the causes of human social behavior that together reflect the collective wisdom of generations of social psychologists. The principles are useful because they serve as general guides to our thinking and as starting points for our empirical investigations into the causes of social behavior. Together these four principles form the core lessons gleaned from over 100 years of research in social psychology.

TABLE 1.3 Four Guiding Principles of Social Psychology

Social Behavior is			
Purposive	Caused by dispositional and situational influences	Influenced by how people construe or interpret situations	Cultural

The four fundamental principles of social psychology are that social behavior is (1) purposive; (2) stems from both dispositional and situational influences; (3) is affected by how people construe the social world; and (4) is cultural (see Table 1.3) (Kenrick, Neuberg, & Cialdini, 2006). Each of these is described more fully below and is further developed over the course of this text. We will demonstrate their validity again and again as we venture through the exciting terrain of social psychology.

Principle 1: Social Behavior Is Purposive

Social psychologists assume that social behavior is purposive, which is to say that it is intended to achieve specific goals (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). We don't initiate a romantic relationship or insult a competitor or protect our young child from a vicious dog just for the heck of it. Rather, each of these behaviors is goal oriented (Elliot & Fryer, 2008). The potential romantic partner may have qualities that suggest he'll be a good provider. Derogating a member of the opposing team may make us feel better about ourselves, especially when our team is losing badly. Rescuing our child helps to ensure that our gene pool will persist a little longer. As you can see, none of these behaviors is accidental or random. The assumption that social behavior is purposive is what drives social psychologists to find causes. What would be the point of investigating completely random behavior?

Principle 2: Social Behavior Stems From Both Dispositional and Situational Influences

Why did Adam Lanza kill 26 children and staff at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012? Was it because he was a mean nasty young adult with an inborn propensity for violence? Did he have a serious mental disorder? Neglectful parents? Was he bullied by other kids while growing up? Or was it because he had easy access to weapons? What we are asking here is whether Lanza was entirely to blame for his actions or were outside factors the cause of his behavior? Stated differently, was his violent behavior a product of just his internal characteristics—such as his personality—or was it the result of external, situational features—such as violence in the media (Aronson, 2001)? More generally, is social behavior a result of *only* internal characteristics or *only* external conditions? The answers are “no” and “no.”

As Lewin argued many years ago, explaining behavior as because of only one or the other is overly simplistic. Social psychologists believe in interactionism—that all social behavior is a result of *both* the person and the situation (L. Ross & Nisbett, 1991). In the

Scene from the site of the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting, Newtown, Connecticut. A memorial site has been made to remember the victims of the school shooting.



Gordon M. Grant / Splash News/Newscom.

case of the Sandy Hook shooting, if personality were the sole explanation, why didn't Lanza act violently in other contexts? If situational pressures were the only cause, why don't we see more mass killings? Clearly, both characteristics of the person—what we call the person's disposition—and features of the situation *together* produce social behavior. In other words, social behavior is a product of both dispositional and situational influences. Apply this to one of your behaviors—say going to college—and try to identify the internal and external factors that led you to do so.

Principle 3: Social Behavior Is Influenced by How People Construe Situations

It almost goes without saying that people differ in how they construe or interpret situations. One student may construe an upcoming oral presentation as terribly threatening, whereas another could view it as a chance to show off her oratorical skills. Our construal of situations affects many aspects of our social experiences, including how we judge others and explain their behavior (Fujita & Carnevale, 2012; L. Ross & Nisbett, 1991; Trope & Liberman, 2012). A study of how football fans perceived the events in a contentious 1951 football game between Princeton University and Dartmouth College nicely illustrates this (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954). Hastorf and Cantril queried both Princeton and Dartmouth fans about their perceptions of how fairly and cleanly the game was played. Not surprisingly, the way the fans interpreted the behavior of the players on the two teams depended

on which team they favored. For instance, the Princeton fans claimed that the Dartmouth players committed more than twice as many rule violations as the Dartmouth fans thought they did (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954). According to Hastorf and Cantril, the motivations of the Princeton and Dartmouth fans—with each preferring to see their team as fairer than the opponents—led to divergent interpretations of the game. In fact, these researchers argued that the fans essentially watched *different* football games! Throughout this text we will examine the myriad ways in which our thoughts, feelings, and behavior are often profoundly influenced by our construal of social situations. Have you and one of your friends ever construed the same situation in very different ways?

Principle 4: Social Behavior Is Cultural

The notion that social behavior is affected by culture may strike you as exceedingly obvious. Yet, for much of the 20th century, as mentioned earlier, psychologists of all stripes believed that human psychology was essentially the same everywhere on the planet. It is now widely recognized that humans are, in fact, a cultural species, and that human behavior cannot be adequately understood without consideration of its sociocultural context (Baumeister, 2005; Heine, 2010a; Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999). Earlier we touched on how self-concepts can differ between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. There are countless other ways that culture can affect social behavior. For instance, Robert Levine and his colleagues studied perceptions of time in Brazil and the United States (Levine, 2015; Levine, West, & Reis, 1980). They found that Brazilians tend to view time as continuous and unlimited, whereas Americans see it as separable into discrete units and treat it as if it were quickly running out! One of the consequences of these different time perspectives is that, in Brazil, being “on time” for appointments and completing tasks “on time” are not nearly as important as they are in the United States. What elements of your culture have had major impacts on how you see yourself and the world?

These four fundamental principles—that social behavior is purposive, caused by both dispositional and situational factors, affected by construals, and cultural—provide the grounding from which we launch our social psychological project. They are assumptions upon which we can build our explanatory models, theories, and concepts, and help guide our investigation of social psychological phenomena. These principles will serve as unifying themes in the chapters that follow as we look for the causes of social behavior.

Think Again!

1. *What are the four principles of social psychology?*
2. *Think about the night you graduated from high school. How would each of the principles apply to your feelings and behavior that night?*

SCIENCE MATTERS: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IS A SCIENCE

Each of us has theories about why people (including ourselves) do what they do. As meaning-seeking creatures, we have a propensity for generating explanations for thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Malle, 2011; Weiner, 1995). Typically we conceive these explanations based on observation of only limited aspects of a person's life—perhaps we only see her at work or in class—or on what someone else reports about what he has seen (probably also based on scant evidence). These explanations for behavior are called **lay theories**, because they are created by ordinary people without advanced training in psychology and without using scientific methods (Beruchashvili, Moio, & Heisley, 2014; Kruglanski, 1989; L. Ross, 1977). Lay theories seem like common sense, such as when we say “opposites attract.” But don't “birds of a feather flock together?” Are “two heads better than one,” or do “too many cooks spoil the broth?” Lay theories like these are often contradictory and overly simplistic. Perhaps more importantly, the validity of lay theories is frequently undermined by the scientific evidence. As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, social psychology is a science that carefully applies scientific methods in order to develop a thorough understanding of social phenomena. Social psychology provides evidence-based explanations that may contradict commonsense psychology.

Lay Theory:

Explanation for social behavior that is possessed by an ordinary (lay) person without advanced training in psychology and without using scientific methods

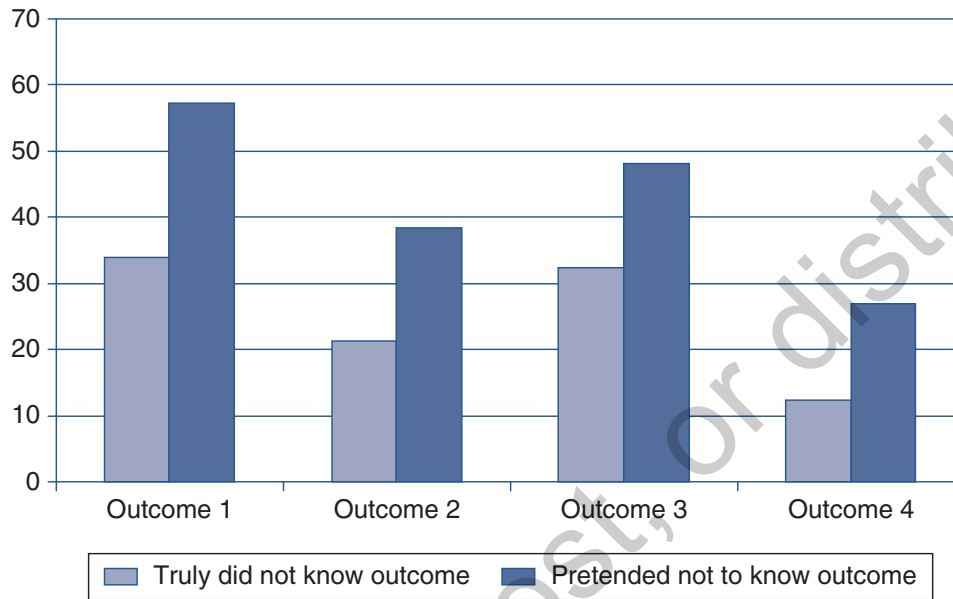
Hindsight Bias

One common mistake that you need to be aware of—and avoid—is that, if a social psychological explanation seems obvious, you may be tempted to think “I knew it all along.” This “knew it all along” tendency is called the **hindsight bias**, and it is demonstrated when people believe, after they have already learned the outcome of a particular event, that they would have correctly predicted it had they been given the chance (Arkes, 2013; Fischhoff, 1975; Roesch & Vohs, 2012; Slovic & Fischhoff, 1977). Let's say that social psychologists found that people who have very low self-esteem are more aggressive than people who have very high self-esteem. Does this seem obvious? Well, if you said yes, then you would be incorrect. Very high, not very low, self-esteem is associated with more aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman et al., 2009). As you will see, social psychology usually isn't obvious, but when it seems to be don't assume that you already knew it.

It is worth noting that this hindsight bias is *not* one of these “obvious” findings. Let me explain. Fischhoff (1975) provided randomly assigned experimental participants with one of several possible outcomes of an historical event, such as who won a military battle. He asked them to estimate the likelihood that the outcome that they read had occurred. Participants were informed that the event and the outcome they read about had in fact happened. Other participants who were not told the outcome read the same passage but were presented with four possible outcomes and predicted how likely each outcome was. Participants who knew the actual outcome rated the likelihood of that outcome as much greater than did participants who did not know the outcome (see Figure 1.5). In other words, participants believed that they were more likely to have predicted the correct outcome than they actually were. They thought they knew it all along (Adapted from Fischhoff, B., 1975).

Hindsight Bias:

Incorrect belief that, after a person has already learned the outcome of a particular event, he or she would have accurately predicted the outcome before it occurred

FIGURE 1.5 Hindsight Bias: Did You Really “Know It All Along”?

Experimental participants were provided with one of several possible outcomes of an actual military battle. They were asked to estimate the likelihood that the outcome that they were given had in fact occurred but to do so imagining that they did not already know that outcome. Participants who knew the actual outcome rated the likelihood of that outcome as much greater than did participants who did not know the outcome. They exhibited the hindsight bias: They thought they knew it all along.

Source: Adapted from Fischhoff, B. (1975). Hindsight is not equal to foresight: The effect of outcome knowledge on judgment under uncertainty. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 1(3), 288–299.

The general idea is that people often believe that they could have accurately predicted the occurrence of an actual event if they had been asked to predict it before it occurred: The outcome is seen as obvious or inevitable (Hoffrage, Hertwig, & Gigerenzer, 2011). Similarly, students often (erroneously) believe that they *already knew* the results of a given social psychological study and could have correctly predicted it. However, they fail to realize that their knowledge of the actual outcome has biased their belief that they would have known the outcome before being told. In short, once we know the answer, it suddenly seems obvious! The hindsight bias may lead you to study less than you should because you “knew it all” ahead of time: Don’t wait until your first disappointing test to find out that you didn’t. Many a student has come to me after receiving a low grade on an exam with a distraught look muttering something like “I thought I understood everything—it all seemed so straightforward.” So watch out and study well!

Think Again!

1. Can you think of a time when you may have fallen victim to the hindsight bias?
2. How might you or others avoid this bias?

Science Is Not What You Think

In my high school science classes I was taught that science was comprised of universal truths uncovered by people with advanced degrees. For instance, I had the impression that my chemistry book was filled with unassailable scientific facts about the composition and properties of matter and that if I successfully committed them to memory, then I would understand the science of chemistry. However, the idea that science is just a collection of unchanging facts constitutes a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of science.

One of the most important lessons that I want you to take away from this text is that science is not a *collection of facts*; rather, it is a *process of discovery*. It is true that the body of social psychological knowledge that we call “facts” constitutes the overwhelming bulk of the information in this book and, no doubt, much of what your professor will test you on. However, it is critical that you also understand the nature of science and especially of good psychological science. Science is a process of asking questions, developing hypotheses, and designing research in order to answer these questions (Hull, 1988). Briefly, four key characteristics of science as a process are

- Creative: Researchers need to be inventive and flexible when developing ways to explore social phenomena and test ideas;
- Dynamic: It is progressive and forward looking, continually asking new questions while building upon what has been learned;
- Honest: Scientists share what we know and how we know it, allowing others to understand the methods and techniques used to make our discoveries; and
- Self-correcting: Scientists sometimes make mistakes and, through rigorous investigation, research replication, and with a fervent desire to find the truth, we and/or other scientists will uncover and correct those mistakes.

In the pages of this text, you will encounter many rich and varied examples of scientists at work. Not only will you learn about the results of their research, but you’ll also get to witness how they discovered them as well as some of the mistakes made along the way. So rid yourself of the notion that science is always correct or that “facts” never change. Having said that, virtually all of the findings that will be presented in this text are based on rigorous, peer-reviewed research in which we can have confidence. Results that are controversial or tenuous or theories that are highly speculative will be identified as such.

Social psychological science—like any science—has three goals: *description*, *explanation*, and *prediction*. First we describe social behavior. Social psychologists are natural born people watchers, sometimes obsessively so. We record what we see, whether it be in a coffee shop, a parking lot, a classroom, or a laboratory. But observing *what* they did is simply a starting point for tackling the more interesting question of *why*. Social psychologists conduct research to understand *why* people thought, felt, or behaved as they did, including what characteristics of the person and the situation produced what we have observed. Good explanations are the crux of good science. Finally, social psychologists try to predict what will happen in the future, both in subsequent studies and, perhaps more importantly, in the real world. This chapter's *Doing Research* section introduces you to how social psychologists perform these.

DOING RESEARCH: AN INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS

Research Matters: Beyond Lay Theories

As noted in the main text, all individuals create what may be called lay theories about why people do what they do. Like scientists, laypersons often informally “test” their theories while acting on and in the world (Kelly, 1963). For instance, a college male may believe that pointing out how beautiful his potential boss's legs are beneath her short skirt is a good strategy for securing an offer during a job interview and may act on this. Once he recognizes the indignant facial expression and her finger pointing toward the door, he will likely reconsider his strategy and revise his lay theory of interpersonal influence. Scientists too test our theories about human behavior, but we do so in a much more systematic fashion (and with more tact!). We don't rely on one or even a handful of cases but instead gather large amounts of data from many people in carefully selected circumstances before drawing conclusions (Sansone, Morf, & Panter, 2004).

Okay, social psychologists like to observe, explain, and predict human social behavior, and we do so by moving past lay theories and into the realm of rigorous research. How do we do it? What methods do we use? Throughout this text I will describe the most commonly used research methods, from the tried-and-true paper-and-pencil laboratory experiments to cutting edge, high tech procedures like functional magnetic resonance imagery (fMRI; see Chapter 2). Rather than trying to cover the huge range of research terms, methods, and challenges in one chapter (which may seem a bit arduous or tedious), I will instead spread them across chapters, introducing these in the context of actual social psychological research. For now, let us look at the importance of well-crafted questions, the need for testable hypotheses, and the role of theory in science.

Questions Matter: Good Questions and Good Hypotheses

What makes for a good social psychological question? The primary criterion is the extent to which the question is answerable using social psychological methods. In other words,

a good question is an empirical question—one that can be tackled by systematically collecting and analyzing data. Take a question commonly asked in philosophy classes: “Are humans inherently evil or good?” While a profound and intriguing question, it is not one that can be answered by studying people and gathering data about their thoughts, feelings, or behavior. However, by narrowing it down we can transform it into a question worthy of social psychology. First, pick a behavior that you would say that, when people enact it, they are doing “good” (go ahead and choose one). Perhaps you consider recycling to be a good behavior and want to know why more people don’t recycle. Next you need to identify something about the recycling process that may be a factor in whether or not people recycle. For instance, you could ask what kinds of message appeals are effective in increasing recycling.

The next step is to turn your question into a scientific **hypothesis** or a prediction about the nature of social phenomena. Oftentimes hypotheses take the form of propositions about how two factors are related to one another. In this case, you might hypothesize that messages that tell people what they should do (which is to recycle) will work better than messages that tell people what they shouldn’t do (which is to stop throwing recyclable materials into trash cans). Once a testable hypothesis has been formed, the study can be designed and conducted. In the next section, we move to the important role of theories in social psychology.

Hypothesis:

Prediction about the nature of social phenomena, oftentimes in the form of a proposition about how two factors are related to one another

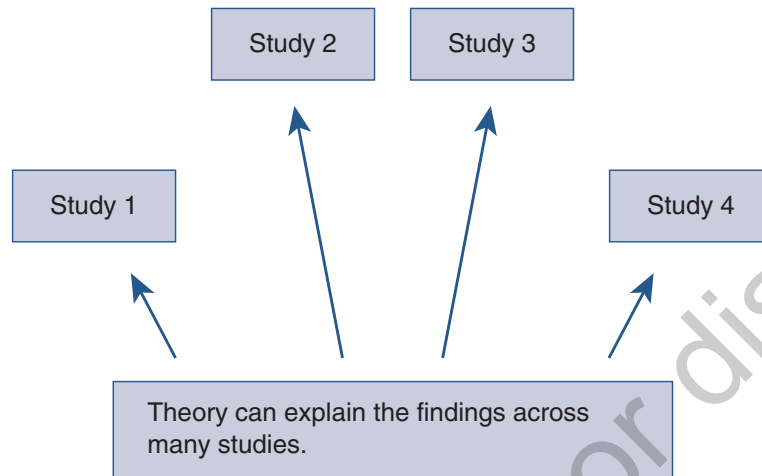
Theory Matters: What Are Theories For?

Specific, testable, hypotheses are crucial to the collection of meaningful data. However, their very applicability to a small set of related experiments limits our ability to understand patterns of data that extend to other experiments and observations. Social psychologists seek broader explanations that allow us to connect and make sense of a number of isolated experiments and observations. A **theory** is a set of interrelated statements that explains and predicts patterns of observable events (Crano & Brewer, 1973) (see Figure 1.6). For instance, evolutionary theory does not explain why a particular woman is attracted to a particular man but rather why women in general tend to prefer certain characteristics in male partners. In our recycling example, a hypothesis would be used to predict the outcome of an experiment using a specific set of messages, but a theory would link this experiment with other experiments that used different yet related sets of messages, thereby facilitating a more general understanding of the kinds of messages that are likely to be effective. By providing a general framework for understanding and integrating known facts, a theory helps guide future research.

Social psychologists utilize many different research methods to test our hypotheses (yet another advantage to working in our field!). Which one we choose depends on the phenomena we want to study and what hypotheses we wish to test. For instance, Bargh et al. (1996) hypothesized that exposure to certain words would lead people to walk slowly. Another example is a researcher who hypothesized that the amount of time teens

Theory: Set of interrelated statements that explain and predict patterns of observable events

FIGURE 1.6 The Role of Theory in Social Psychology

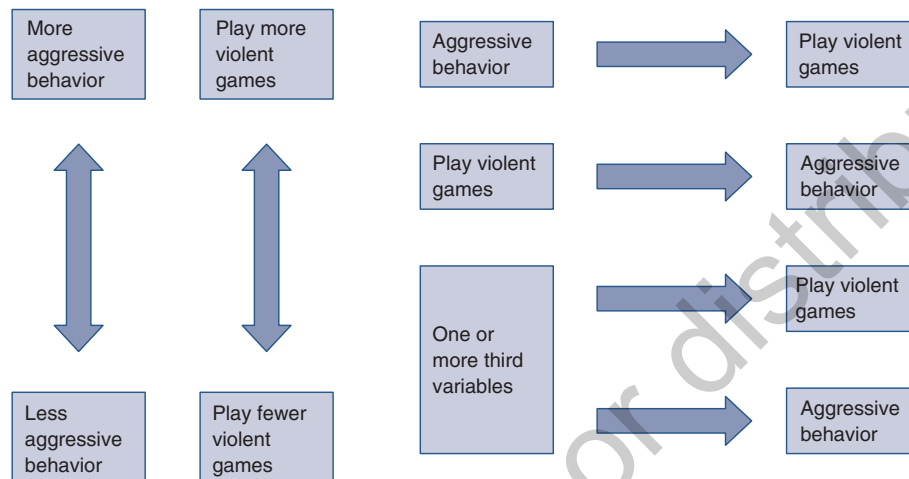


spend playing violent video games is associated with aggressive behavior (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Anderson et al., 2010). These two variables—game playing and aggression—are postulated to be related to each other in some way.

Two kinds of relationships between variables are possible. The first type of relationship exists when the variables change at the same time but may not cause each other to change. For instance, as the average temperature decreases in North America during fall, it increases in South America. This relationship is called a **correlation**. Two variables are correlated when a change in one variable is associated with a change in the other variable. Simply because two variables change at the same time does *not* mean that they are causally related. Without further evidence, we cannot assume that one *causes* the other. Since there is no meteorological theory that would predict that seasonal changes in one hemisphere cause the seasonal changes in the other, the most we can say is that the two are correlated.

Similarly, if all that we know is that teens who play more violent video games also tend to be more aggressive (but we can't say which causes the other), then we call the relationship correlational. It is possible that excessive playing of violent video games causes teens to become aggressive, or it may be that aggressive teens are more likely to play violent video games. As with the weather example, merely knowing that they covary—or change together—does not tell us whether one causes the other. All we can say is that the relationship is correlational. This is an illustration of a scientific mantra that you will often hear as you learn more about psychological science: *correlation does not mean causation*. Simply because two variables are correlated does not imply that one causes the other (see Figure 1.7).

Correlation:
Two variables are correlated when a change in one variable is associated with a change in the other variable

FIGURE 1.7 Aggression and Violent Video Games: Correlation Is Not Causation**Causal****Relationship:**

Relationship that exists when a change in one variable can be shown to produce a change in another one

Experiment: Study in which one or more variables are systematically varied in order to examine the effects on one or more other variables

Independent Variable:

Manipulated variable that is expected to change the dependent variable

Dependent

Variable: Measured variable that is expected to be affected by manipulation of the independent variable

The second type of relationship between two variables is called a **causal relationship**, and it exists when a change in one of the variables can be shown to produce a change in the other one. The study design used by Bargh et al. (1996) allowed them to infer that a causal connection existed between priming and walking. Another example is research that demonstrated that thinking about death caused people to express more support for then-President George W. Bush than they otherwise would have (Landau et al., 2004).

The best strategy for discerning whether there is a causal relationship between two variables is to carefully control the context in which we examine them by utilizing the experimental method. An **experiment** can be defined as research in which one or more variables are systematically varied in order to examine the effects on one or more other variables. The experimenter manipulates or changes the **independent variable** (IV) to determine whether or not it causes a change in a different one, the **dependent variable** (DV). The IV is the purported cause, and the DV the predicted effect.

To learn about the effects of playing violent video games on aggression, we can easily perform an experiment in which we manipulate game playing and then measure resulting aggression. We manipulate the independent variable—type of game played—by giving participants different levels or versions of it; some play a violent game and others play a nonviolent one. The IV is the potential cause, and the DV the expected effect. We could recruit teens from a local high school and randomly assign half to play *Wulfenstein* (a shoot'em up game) and half to play *Tetris* (a nonviolent game). After they played their respective games, we could have all the participants play a second game in which they have the opportunity to be aggressive toward an opponent. This is just what Anderson et al. (2004) did,

and they found that the *Wulfenstein* players acted more aggressively in the second game than did the *Tetris* players. At least within the context of this experiment, playing a violent game (IV) caused participants to be more aggressive (DV). Similarly, the content of the unscrambled sentences differentially affected walking speed.

One of the key features of experiments is that they have two or more conditions that participants can be assigned to. The manipulation of the IV produces at least two levels of that variable, each representing a different condition. The aggression experiment had two groups or conditions corresponding to the two games. One group is called the **treatment group**, because the participants assigned to it receive the treatment (in this case they played *Wulfenstein*). The treatment is the variable being tested and thus is the primary interest of the experimenter. The other group is called the control group, because its participants did not receive the treatment (they played a nonviolent game). A **control group** serves as a comparison group against which we may measure the effects of the treatment. In the video game study, if we find that there is no difference in aggression between the groups in the second game, then the treatment had no effect. In the priming study, the elderly-related word condition was the treatment condition, and the unrelated word condition was the control. Similarly, in cancer research, for instance, the treatment group receives the drug being tested, whereas the control group is given a placebo. If the cancer treatment and the control groups recover at the same rate, then there was no treatment effect.

A second key feature of experiments is control: The experimenter needs to be certain that the only variable that could cause the DV to change is the IV. The potential influence of outside variables, called extraneous variables, must be eliminated. Researchers do this by preventing variables other than the IV from changing during the experiment. Let's say that in the aggression study the experimenters allowed *participants* to pick which game to play, and the more aggressive ones played *Wulfenstein* and less aggressive ones chose *Tetris*. If a difference were found in aggressive behavior between the two groups in the second game, can we say what caused it? Think about it. The answer is no: With this design, we would not know if prior aggressive tendencies or playing the violent game caused the *Wulfenstein* group to act more aggressively. By allowing the participants to choose their condition, we have introduced a confound or confusion variable. **Confound** variables are factors that change along with the independent variable and can complicate a clear assessment of the effects of the IV on the DV. Confound variables are extraneous and undesirable. If we can eliminate them, then we can have more confidence in our results. There are many possible sources of confounds, including some based on participant characteristics and others on features of the situation.

How do we rule out the participant-based confounds? We do this by ensuring, as much as possible, that the participants in the groups are similar in all relevant ways. In the aggression study, we would want the participants at the beginning of the experiment in the treatment group to be no more or less aggressive than those in the control group. In the priming study, the experimenter has to maximize the likelihood that

Treatment Group:
Group of participants assigned to receive the treatment

Control Group:
Group of participants that did not receive the treatment and serves as a comparison to assess the effects of the treatment

Confound: In an experiment, a factor that changes along with the independent variable and can prevent a clear assessment of the effects of the IV on the DV

Random

Assignment: Each participant in a study has an equal chance of being assigned to any condition

there were as many “slow” walkers as “fast” walkers in each group. To ensure parity between the groups, the experimenter assigns participants to the groups in a random fashion. **Random assignment** means that each participant has an equal chance of being assigned to any condition. Random assignment can be done by flipping a coin, pulling numbers out of a hat, or in countless other ways. By randomly placing participants in the two game conditions, the number of previously aggressive participants should be about the same in each. Furthermore, the two groups should have about the same proportion of extroverts, artists, fast walkers, and chemistry majors. With random assignment, we can be reasonably confident that differences on the dependent variable between the groups could only have been caused by the independent variable. In all relevant ways, the groups are otherwise essentially the same.

Although random assignment can minimize the likelihood of participant-based undesirable effects, it may not prevent situational factors from inadvertently influencing experimental outcomes and confounding the research. What if, say, all participants who played *Wulfenstein* did so in a very hot, humid room, whereas those playing *Tetris* sat in a cool, dry room? Since research has shown that heat can increase aggression (Anderson, 2001), we would be unable to determine whether increased aggression in the *Wulfenstein* condition was because of the game or room temperature. Therefore, we must carefully design our experiments to prevent the unwanted influence of such situational variables.

In summary, all of us create informal or lay theories about the causes of social behavior that are usually based on casual observations and/or anecdotes. Although occasionally accurate, these lay theories must be scientifically tested. Correlational studies can show that two variables are related to one another, but controlled, randomized experiments are necessary to demonstrate cause and effect. Researchers design experiments that manipulate at least one variable, called the IV, and measure its potential influence on at least one other variable, called the DV. In order to help prevent confounds, experimenters randomly assign participants to condition. In addition, researchers control situational features so that all participants are tested in nearly identical circumstances, with the only differences being the level of the IV as determined by the experimenter.

Think Again!

1. *What are the two key features of an experiment?*
2. *What is the difference between an independent variable and a dependent one?*
3. *What is a confound, and how do researchers minimize the likelihood of confounds?*

FINAL THOUGHTS: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN NATURE REVISITED

After reading this opening chapter, you should have a pretty good feel for social psychology as the scientific study of the social experiences and behaviors of individuals. I hope you share my fascination for learning what people do and understanding why they do it, and for how social psychology is particularly suited for investigating these topics. Note that social psychology is more than simply a sum of its individual research findings; rather, it is a theoretically driven, empirically based process for pursuing answers to fundamental questions of human nature. The six questions that we'll return to again and again are:

Do we have free will? Are we independent or conformist? Are we rational beings? What is the self? Do we need other people and, if so, why? Are we inherently altruistic or selfish? Returning to our opening story, consider how the various perspectives incorporated into social psychology help us explore such topics as same and opposite sex romantic attraction, how we think about ourselves and other people, the roles of biology and culture in shaping human thought and behavior, attitudes and attitude change, the formation and maintenance of prejudice, stereotypes, and altruism, among many others.

CORE CONCEPTS

- Social psychology is the scientific study of the social experiences and behaviors of individuals. Social psychology is different from other disciplines because it examines the relationships between individuals and groups, considers multiple levels of explanation, and focuses primarily on laboratory research.
- Social psychology is driven by the desire to examine the fundamental questions of human nature having to do with free will, independence, rationality, the self, sociality, and morality.
- During the early 20th century, social psychology grew from a nonexperimental to an experimental science. Two early textbooks helped to define social psychology and differentiate it from other social scientific approaches.
- Kurt Lewin's field theory articulated how social behavior is a product of the interactions between dispositional and situational influences on social behavior.
- Social psychologists acknowledge that social behavior has many causes and integrate them to develop more complete understandings of social behavior. These three levels of explanation are (1) evolutionary forces, (2) contextual influences, and (3) individual experiences.

- The four principles of social psychology are that social behavior is purposive; stems from both dispositional and situational influences; is affected by how people construe the social world; is cultural.
- The hindsight bias is demonstrated when people believe that they could have accurately predicted the occurrence of an actual event if they had been asked to predict it before it occurred. Students of social psychology need to be aware of this so that they don't mistakenly think that some research findings are "obvious" and, consequently, not fully appreciate them.
- Social psychological science is a process of discovery that is creative, dynamic, honest, and self-correcting, and is not merely a body of facts. Social psychology seeks to describe, explain, and predict social behavior.
- Social psychologists generate hypotheses—or predictions about the nature of social phenomena—to direct their research and develop theories—sets of interrelated statements that explain and predict patterns of observable events—derived from their research. These theories help guide future research.
- Correlations exist when two variables change (either up or down) at the same time. However, they do not demonstrate that the variables have a causal relationship (where changes in one variable cause changes in the other).
- An experiment is research in which one or more variables are systematically varied in order to examine the effects on one or more other variables. The experimenter manipulates or changes the independent variable (IV) to determine whether or not it causes a change in a different one, the dependent variable (DV). The IV is the purported cause, and the DV the predicted effect.
- Treatment groups receive the treatment or variable being tested, whereas control groups do not receive the treatment and serve as comparison groups against which we may measure the effects of the treatment. Confound variables are factors that change along with the independent variable and can complicate a clear assessment of the effects of the IV on the DV.
- Random assignment occurs when each participant has an equal chance of being assigned to any condition in an experiment and helps to prevent confounds and ensure parity between the groups.
- Controlled, randomized experiments are important, because they can demonstrate cause and effect. Experiments manipulate the IV and measure its potential influence on the DV. In addition, researchers control situational features so that all participants are tested in nearly identical circumstances, with the only differences being the level of the IV as determined by the experimenter.

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KEY TERMS

Anthropology, 7	Dependent Variable, 36	Natural Selection, 20
Biological/Physiological Psychology, 8	Experiment, 36	Personality Psychology, 8
Causal Relationship, 36	Hindsight Bias, 30	Random Assignment, 38
Classical, Conditioning, 23	Hypothesis, 34	Social Cognition, 24
Clinical Psychology, 8	Independent Variable, 36	Social Learning, 23
Cognitive Psychology, 8	Individualistic Culture, 12	Social Psychology, 5
Collectivistic Culture, 12	Instrumental Conditioning, 23	Sociology, 7
Control Group, 37	Lay Theory, 29	Theory, 34
Confound, 37		Treatment Group, 37
Correlation, 35		
Culture, 22		

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THINK FURTHER!

- What is particularly *social* about social psychology?
- How can social psychology help us understand human nature?
- Take a social behavior that interests you and think through how the three levels of explanation might help explain it.
- Which of the guiding principles of social psychology do you think is the most important, and why?
- How might you see if your friends fall victim to the hindsight bias regarding an upcoming election or sporting event?
- What separates social psychology from lay thinking about social behavior (in other words, how is science different from ordinary experience)?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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