

Theories of social psychology and their research methods



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Explain how variables such as social interactions, cognitive processes, environmental variables, cultural context, and biological factors shape social psychology and how it is practiced.

Social psychology is a sector of psychology in which individuals are studied in a social medium, meaning it is the study of emotion and actions one takes depending on the situation they are in. In turn, the individual is the primary focus, rather than other group factors. This science relies heavily on four core values which include accuracy, objectivity, skepticism, and open-mindedness. Social psychology applies these values in order to understand social thoughts and behaviors. Social psychologists are primarily interested in understanding an individual's beliefs, memories, actions, and feelings; thus the psychologist will use science to factor in the different variables within social interactions, cognitive processes, environmental variables, cultural context, and biological factors.

In regards to social interactions, they play an extensive role within the everyday lives of people; the things that others do or say will have a great impact on our reciprocation. We as people tend to reciprocate to the body language, appearance, and occupations of others, as well as further factors on a daily basis. These interactions take place numerous times in any given day. Additionally, these very same interactions and reactions tend to have a compelling impact on one's overall behavior. According to our text, "Research findings indicate that we cannot ignore others' appearance even

when we consciously try to do so and, as you probably already guess, it plays an important role in dating and romantic relationships” (p. 9).

Furthermore, cognitive processes play a major part in social thought and social behavior. As humans, we strive to understand our social world, and try to make sense out of it; this pushes us to ponder deeply about other individuals and why they commit the things they do, as well as how they may very well react to our own behaviors. Social cognition is declared to be one of the most important out of all areas of research in the psychology field.

In addition, environmental variables are also indicative of influencing our behaviors, our thoughts, and our feelings. As our text gives other examples, modern social psychology has indicated that we as individuals are prone to having better behavior and likely to be in a better mood when they are in a comfortable environment, and contrarily that the opposite is also true. For example, if someone was uncomfortable because it is ninety degrees outside and they are stuck in traffic with no air conditioning, they are more likely than not, to be irritable, whereas if there it were ninety degrees outside, with no traffic, and air conditioning on full blast, they would likely be more comfortable, resulting in a calm and tempered behavior.

Lastly, biological processes, as well as genetic factors, play an important role in social behavior. These behaviors include our attitudes, emotions, behaviors, and even our preferences. Together, social experiences and biological inheritance are able to produce a compelling effect in which leads to a complex arrangement in our social endeavors. Evolutionary psychologists assess that biological factors ultimately do have a role in our

social behavior. They go as far as to suggest that we as humans are subjected to the process of biological evolution and evolved psychological structures that assist us in our means of survival.

Evidently, social psychology is factored by social interactions, cognitive processes, environmental variables, and biological factors. Thus, when a social psychologist is assessing the interactions and behavior of any individual in social settings, they must counter in the fact that every one of these factors produce variables, and must be taken into consideration to gain a better understanding. Each and every one of these influences are correlated to the social psychology science, affecting the way it is practiced.

Analyze why the experimental method of research often provides evidence about social behavior and thought that is more informative than systematic observation or the correlational approach.

There are copious amounts of approaches to study groundwork in social behaviors, such as the experimental method, systematic observation, and the correlational approach. Each approach provides an aspect of social behaviors; however, the experimental method tends to present more testimony and confirmation.

First and for most, the experimental method is a devised system in which one or more components are systematically transposed in order to determine if a variation is going to affect one factor or more. When scientists put a strategy into play, and a systematic change in one of the variables produces alterations in another, then it is safe to assume that there is a relationship between both variables. In order to be considered a success, <https://assignbuster.com/theories-of-social-psychology-and-their-research-methods/>

each and every contributor must possess the equality of being exposed to each and every level of the independent variable. In addition, all elements besides the independent variable that has possibility to affect the participants must remain constant throughout.

Experimentation, another name for the experimental method, is thought to be one of the strongest methods. In addition, it is the method that is practiced the most amongst scientists in bounteous fields. More specifically, this method implements a dependable and systematic means of acquiring information on the nature of social behavior in social psychology. In fact, this method contributes what the others don't, which is unassailable documentation, along with an explanation of such. Conversely, the systematic observation monitors interactions between individuals or evaluates responses from surveys, while the correlation method are directly observed and ascertained. With the experimental method changing variables, the results tend to be more conclusive.

In more detail, with the systematic observation, behavior is systematically observed and noted. This observation then allows psychologists to conscientiously measure the behavior exuberated by people. One of the most common techniques of the systematic observation is the survey method, in which a large group of people are to answer questions about their behaviors. This allows the researcher to obtain a large amount of information easily; however, each survey must stand to meet particular requirements. For example, the participants must represent a larger portion of the population.

On the contrary, the correlation method is a system in which scientists overlook a minimum of two variables to declare if changes in one are associated with changes in the other. It is possible to foresee one variable based on the information about one or more of the additional variables when a correlation is present. Thus, many psychologists and scientists strive to achieve the predictability, but more relevantly, social psychologists use this method to conclude the extent of which dissimilar variables are related.

Since experimentation implies more adding and removing of variables, and the results remain more conclusive than the other methods, this would be why it often provides evidence that is more informative and detail oriented.

Explain and discuss the theories of attribution discussed in your text.

The process in which we pursue information to comprehend an individual's behaviors and actions is the process proclaimed attribution. Attribution supports the efforts in understanding the elements behind behaviors and could perhaps foresee any future actions. The Jones and Davis theory of correspondent inference utilizes the information we acquire about an individual's behavior as a basis for inferring their traits. It is mostly concerned with how one makes decisions on the basis of another's actions, and if they possess traits that remain stable over a particular period of time. People tend to react in ways because of external factors rather than doing so reflects their preferences. Circumstances where a person molds their behavior from those around them as an aide to their permanent traits can be deceiving. When these discrepancies occur, the Jones and Davis theory recommends placing attention to the behaviors that demonstrate

informative results. We are to consider the actions which show to have been candidly pegged and ignore those contrived by the individual. Attention should also be placed on behaviors accepted as non-common effects, which are referred to as effects composed by a specific cause that would not be able to be composed by any other probable cause. The Jones and Davis theory also advocates placing more attention to behaviors by others that show to be low in social desirability.

Alternatively, Kelley's theory of attribution inquires the reason why our behaviors take place as our knowledge of comprehending any motive behind behaviors allow us as individuals make sense of our social surroundings. Kelley suggests that in our attempts to answer the why question about others' behavior, we focus on three major types of information. The first is to consider the consensus; the extent to which others react to stimuli or event in the same manner as the person being considered, concluding that the higher the amount of individuals react the same, the higher the consensus will be. The second type of information to consider is consistency, in which is the extent that an individual in question reacts to stimuli or event in the same manner on alternate occasions over time. Lastly, the third type of information to consider is distinctiveness which is the extent to which the individual reacts the same to different stimuli or events. Kelley's theory pieces one's behaviors and actions to internal causes where distinctiveness and the consensus are low, while consistency is high.

Explain and discuss potential sources of error in the area of attribution

Attribution is not clear of any errors, although the errors do vary based on the theory in which attribution is being described. When studying the area of attribution, several effects and biases may occur. Every source of potential error can alter the results of any study so the psychologist must be aware of these possibilities whilst reviewing the concluded results. The first to be discussed will be correspondence bias (fundamental attribution error) which is the tendency to explain others' actions as stemming from dispositions even in the presence of clear situational causes. In fact, individuals tend to believe one's actions is actually the way they are, without taking into account that external factors could very well influence the behavior. This error is common in circumstances where distinctiveness and consensus are both low, as well as when attempts of prediction of whether others behaviors in the distant future instead of the 'now' happen because individuals usually think in terms which can make their observation bias. Another difference that may lead to error in attribution is the simple fact of gender. Whether we as a society like to believe it or not, we still react differently when it comes to men than woman when exhibiting similar behaviors. Our text brings up the example of emotions, but I think sexual orientation is another great example of how society reacts differently. A lot of people are opposed to homosexual men and criticize them accordingly, while all over television and in song lyrics, female homosexuals are glorified and actually urged to be this way by the same people who think it is wrong when men are gay. Many straight men fantasize about having a threesome with two women, yet will judge another man who fantasizes about a threesome with other men. Additionally, the actor-observer effect, which is the tendency to attribute our own behavior mainly to situational causes but the behavior of others mainly to internal

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causes, occurs mostly in part because individuals are less aware when paying attention to another, rather than being aware of the external factors affecting them. The self-serving bias is the attribution negative endings to external causes and positive endings to internal causes. The primary factors in this bias are motivational and cognitive.

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