

What is social psychology assignment

[Psychology](#)



The events that occurred on September 11 in general, and Rick Recall's actions in particular, raise many questions about why things happened the way they did. In the aftermath of 9/11, many questioned the motives of the hijackers (off socially and unfit socially). It puzzles us when we try to figure out why 19 young men would sacrifice themselves to murder 3,000 total strangers. What internal and social forces can possibly explain such behavior? We also marvel at the behavior of people like Rick Recall. Why did he run back into the burning south tower to save people in need?

It causes us to question whether we ourselves would have the courage to do such a thing. Most of us are content with coming up with so-called commonsense explanations for events such as 9/11. For example, we label the hijackers as "evil," or "disturbed," or just plain "nuts." We conclude that Rick Recall was a special person imbued with qualities that allowed him to do what he did in the face of death. However, as is often the case, such simple, commonsense explanations do not give us the final answers to our questions. Behavior is simply much too complex to be explained in overly simplistic terms.

This is why we turn to science to help us better understand and explain events such as 9/11. One science that can help us make sense out of the things that happen to us and around us is psychology, which is the study of behavior and the motives and cognitions that underlie that behavior. By studying "abnormal psychology," "personality psychology," and other areas of psychology, we can begin to piece together rational explanations for events such as 9/11. One branch of psychology can give us a unique

perspective on behavior and perhaps help us best understand events that occur to us and around us: social psychology.

Social psychology is the scientific study of how individuals think and feel about, interact with, and influence one another, individually and in groups. It is the branch of psychology that studies social behavior, the thinking and behavior of individuals as they relate to other human beings. Social psychology provides tools to help you understand things that happen in your personal life. It can help you make sense of your day-to-day interactions, your friendships, love relationships, interactions at work, and performance at school.

It can give you insight, for example, into why your most recent romantic relationship did not succeed, and why you find yourself attracted to one person in your afternoon math class but not to another. It can also help you understand why you may behave aggressively when someone cuts ahead of you in a cafeteria line, or why you get annoyed when someone talks. What can we learn from social psychological research? 11. What ethical standards do social psychologists follow when conducting research? The scientific study of how individuals think about, interact with, and influence each other.

Chapter 1 Understanding Social Behavior 3 sits right next to you in a theater when there are plenty of other empty seats. Social psychology can also help you understand why other people act the way they do. For example, social psychology can help us understand the forces that led to the attacks on 9/11 and Rick Warren's heroism. Your life also is touched by events beyond your

immediate, day-to-day affairs?? vents that occur in the community and the nation. Although these events are more distant, you may still feel strongly about them and find a link between them and your personal life.

If your friend's father were very sick, for example, you might want to share with him knowledge about a man whose determination kept him alive for six years. Perhaps the story would encourage him to keep on with his life. If a terrorist attack happened in your hometown, you would experience directly the consequences of young men driven to acts of murder by a radical ideology. You probably would hear many people decrying terrorism and talking about ways to deal with such acts. In one form or another, all the events of 9/11 represent recurring themes in human history.

Terrorism dates back hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. As soon as humans began to claim ownership of territory, they began to fight with each other. Humans have always been both aggressive and altruistic toward one another. Human beings have always had to find ways to live with each other. We have always functioned together in groups; had love relationships; tried to persuade others of our point of view; followed or rebelled against authority; and sought ways to resolve conflicts, whether through negotiation or through coercion. We help each other, and we hurt each other.

We display prejudice and discrimination; we even have tried to kill entire populations. History is a tapestry of the best and the worst that human beings can do. Social psychology can help us understand these human social events in their infinite variety. It's important to note, however, that social

psychologists do not simply wonder and speculate about social behavior. Instead, they use scientific ethos involving carefully designed and executed research studies to help explain complex, uncertain social issues. Social psychology is first and foremost a science.

Through theory, research, and thoughtful application of concepts and principles to real-life situations, social psychologists provide insights into everyday events, both past and present, as well as those monumental events that are the stuff of history. More than any other branch of psychology, social psychology offers a broad perspective on human behavior. Rather than focusing on the personal histories of individuals (as would a personality psychologist), or on how individuals respond to their environment (as would a strict behaviorism), it looks at how people interact with and relate to each other in social contexts.

It is within these social contexts that a wide range of behaviors and events fall. A Model for Understanding Social Behavior Social psychologists are interested in the forces that operate on individuals and cause them to engage in specific examples of social behavior. But social behavior is a difficult task. To simplify this task, we can assign the multiple causes of social behavior to one of two broad categories: the situation and the individual.

According to a formula first proposed by Kurt Lewin (1936), one of the important early figures in social psychology, social behavior is a function of the interaction of the situation and the individual's characteristics, or

$$\text{Behavior} = f(\text{social situation} \times \text{individual characteristics})$$

Linen's model of social behavior was inspired by his observation that the individual's perception of a situation is influenced by the tasks he or she has to accomplish. Lenin was a soldier in the German army during World War I. He noticed that as he came nearer to the battlefield, his view of the world changed.

Where he once might have seen beautiful fields and beckoning forests, he now saw boulders to hide behind and gullies from which he could ambush the enemy. Lenin came to believe that a person's perception of the world is influenced by what he or she has to do in that situation. He termed the combination of individual needs and situational factors the psychological field in which the individual lives (Lewin & Aaron's, 1992). According to this view, individuals with different needs and tasks would come to see the same event in dissimilar ways (Lewin & Aaron's, 1992).

Although Lenin looked at the individual's needs and tasks, he emphasized the importance of social context in producing the forces that control the individual's actions. Lenin was aware that we often fail to take situational factors into account when we try to explain why people behave as they do (Ross & Anisette, 1991). For example, there were undoubtedly other young men with similar backgrounds to the 19 hijackers. However, their differing needs and interpretations of the social situation did not manifest itself in an overt act of mass killing.

There were probably many bystanders on 9/11 who heard people in the burning towers calling for help. Yet, those cries did not resonate in them the same way they resonated in Rick Warren. Thus far we have seen that the

situation and individual characteristics are central to the understanding of social behavior in a general way. How do social psychologists defy environment situation and individual characteristics? Let's take a closer look. The Social Situation The social situation comprises all influences on behavior that are external to the individual.

A situational factor might be any aspect of the physical and/or social environment (the presence of other people, real or imagined) that influences behavior. Different individuals will react differently to the social situation. Sometimes the situation works on us in subtle ways. We may modify our behavior even if there is no pressure on us to do so. We may imagine or believe that we are expected to act a certain way in a certain situation, and those beliefs can be as powerful as the situation itself. For example, let's say that you are in a restaurant with a group of friends. You are trying to decide what to order.

You are leaning toward the saute?? De buffalo, but the stewed rabbit sounds good too. When the waiter comes to the table, you order last, intending to try the buffalo. However, each of your friends orders the rabbit. When your turn comes, you also order the rabbit. You modify De your behavior based on your friends' actions, because you didn't want to appear different. You felt and responded to social pressure of your own making! Sometimes the social environment leads to temporary changes in behavior, as was the case in the restaurant. Ordering the rabbit may be specific c to that one situation; oh may never order rabbit again.

In other cases, the social environment is a more pervasive influence and may lead to relatively permanent, enduring patterns of behaviors. The culture within which a person lives exerts a long-lasting influence over a wide range of behaviors. Culture influences the foods we like, how we relate to members of the other sex, the amount of personal space we require (the area immediately surrounding us that we claim and defend), what we plan and expect to accomplish in life, and a host of other behaviors. It may also influence one's decision making, leading to behaviors such as entering inhabited buildings.

Chapter 1 Understanding Social Behavior 5 Individual Characteristics

Individual characteristics include sex, age, race or ethnicity, personality characteristics, attitudes, self-concept, ways of thinking, and so on. In short, individual characteristics consist of anything internal to the person that might influence behavior. Physical traits are individual characteristics that are relatively enduring and for the most part known to others. Personality characteristics also tend to be enduring, but they are not necessarily obvious to others. Personality is an area of growing interest in social psychology today (Larsen & Stellar, 1991).

Other internal characteristics, such as attitudes, opinions, self-concept, and so on, can change over time. People often have some choice about how much of these areas of themselves they reveal to others. Let's consider Rick Recalls again. What of the other people on the scene who did not respond to others' cries for help? These individuals were subjected to the same situational pressures as was Rick Recalls. However, they did not act in an altruistic way. Did some combination of personal traits (e. . . , desire for self-

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preservation) and attitudes (e. G. , it is the Job of police and FL reef esters to save victims) mix with the situation (e. . , FL Ames roaring inside the building) to produce this different behavior? Since the situation was similar for others on 9/1 1, we look to individual characteristics such as personality traits to understand why some acted in violent ways and others did not. Another important individual characteristic that is somewhat different from personality characteristics is the particular way each individual perceives and thinks about his or her social world. Social cognition refers to a general process we use to make sense out of social events, which may or may not include other people.

For example, seeing the events on 9/1 1 on the news, you probably began to interpret those events, attempting to determine a reason for the hijackers' behavior. Eventually, you probably began to make inferences about the motives of the individuals involved and to form impressions of them. Social psychologists call this process social perception. For example, thinking about Rick Recalls, who gave his life to save others, may lead you to an inference that he was a giggly empathic, caring person and was not simply doing his Job as a Vice President for Security.

Once you infer these characteristics and form an impression that he was a caring, compassionate person, you then settle on these internal characteristics as the primary motivation for his behavior. Social cognition and social perception are central to our interpretation of situations. Interpret that situation. Social cognition gives direction to our interpretation. The decisions we make based on our perception and cognition will infill nuance our response. Every individual has a slightly different view of the world,
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because everyone has unique personal traits and a unique history of life experiences.

This is because each of us actively constructs our own view of our social world, based on interpretations of social information. Expanding Linen's Model Linen's model tells us that both the social situation (physical setting, the presence of other people, real or imagined) and individual characteristics (physical traits, personality traits, attitudes and habitual ways of thinking, perceptual and cognitive processes, needs and tasks) infill nuance social behavior.

Linen's model, however, does to specify how situational factors and individual characteristics FL t together into a broad, general model of social behavior. We need to expand on Linen's original model to gain a better understanding of the forces that shape social behavior. An expansion of Linen's original model is shown in Figure 1. 1 . Social cognition The general process we use to make sense out of social events, which may or may not include other people. Social perception The social processes by which we come to comprehend the behavior, the words and actions, of other people. 6 Social Psychology As