

## SOCIAL APPROACHES

### ASSUMPTIONS

Behaviour, cognitions and emotions are influenced by:

1. social contexts, social environments and groups.
2. the actual, implied or imagined presence of others.

### SOCIAL NORMS

Perry's study explores the concept of social norms, which are unwritten rules that individuals learn through observational learning and social conditioning. These norms dictate how we should behave in different social contexts, such as personal space. Different cultures have different social norms. Social psychologists use the term conformity to explain the changes in an individual's behaviour following exposure to other people's opinions and behaviours.

Understanding these social norms helps us navigate the complexities of everyday life and adapt our behaviours accordingly.

### WHY DO INDIVIDUALS CONFORM?

Perry et al.'s study explores the role of oxytocin [a hormone that promotes bonding, trust, and conformity] in social cohesion. They found that humans have a strong desire to belong, and natural selection has made behaviours that promote harmony within a group more common. Perry's research highlights the complexity of human behaviour in social psychology and highlights the importance of co-operation and harmony in survival.

### GROUPS

Groups are interdependent groups of individuals with common goals. They form when individuals feel connected and aware of each other. Group norms and roles, such as a leader, emerge, indicating how members should behave and their responsibilities within the group.

### ACTUAL, IMPLIED AND IMAGINED PRESENCE OF OTHERS

Research shows that even an image of a pair of eyes can increase prosocial behaviour. In an experiment where lone participants were asked to donate money in exchange for a drink, those who saw a pair of eyes donated three times more than a control group. This suggests that cueing people to think about others can change social behaviour.

### SITUATIONAL VERSUS DISPOSITIONAL EXPLANATIONS

Social psychologists emphasize the influence of social situations on people's behaviour, focusing on situational factors like authority figures. They contrast with dispositional psychologists who believe differences in behaviour are determined by individual characteristics like personality, age, gender, cultural background, and educational background. Milgram's study reveals that situational factors influence similar actions despite differing personalities. Perry et al.'s study found that dispositional factors like empathy affect preferred interpersonal distance, indicating that personality still plays a role in predicting social behaviour.

### ISSUES & DEBATES

#### APPLICATIONS TO EVERYDAY LIFE

Understanding the influence of authority figures is crucial in various sectors, military, and aviation, to ensure effective training protocols.

#### INDIVIDUAL AND SITUATIONAL EXPLANATIONS

Situational explanations focus on an individual's social hierarchy position, such as dominant or subordinate, and can be understood through dispositional factors, while individual explanations account for individual differences in responses in social experiments.

#### NATURE VERSUS NURTURE

Social psychologists believe we are naturally inclined to learn social behaviour due to our interest in others. This is linked to evolution and natural selection. They also study cultural differences in behaviours like conformity, obedience, and bystander behaviour. Research indicates that some cultures tolerate and reinforce independent behaviour more than others, indicating that nurture can also influence social behaviour.