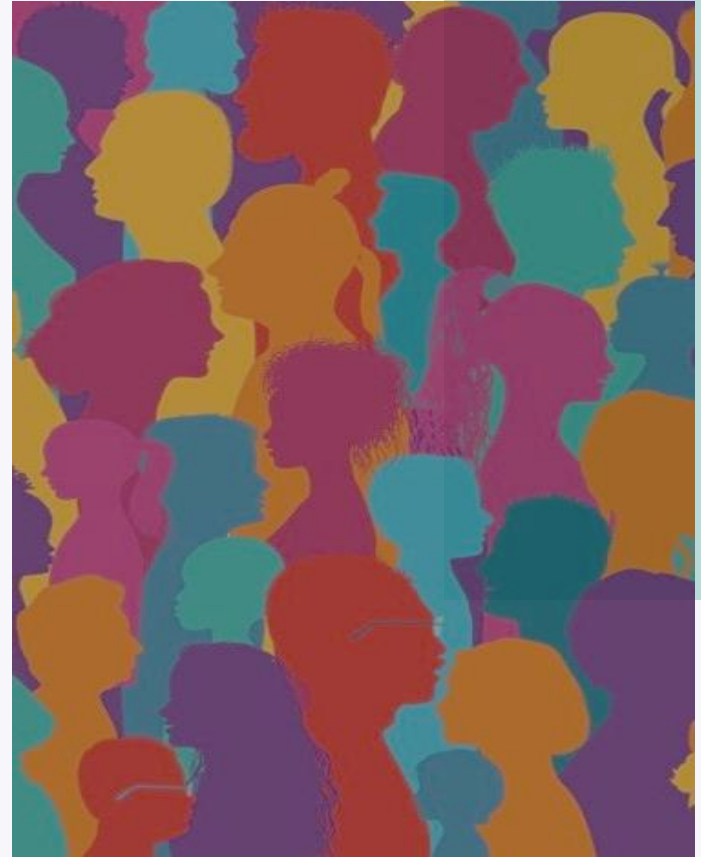


Social & Cultural Psychology

Exploring human behaviour within social and cultural contexts



Dr Katie Sullivan

Module Introduction

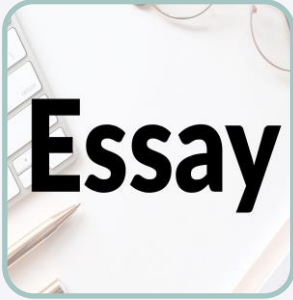
- 3 Hour Sessions
- Mix of Lectures and Interactive Tasks
 - Not just passive listening
- Readings from Core Text and Additional readings Weekly



Module Overview

Social Cognition and Attribution	Social thinking, attribution, bias
The Self and Identity in Context	Self-concept, identity, types of self
Attitudes and Attitude Change	Attitudes, persuasion, behaviour change
Social Influence	Conformity, obedience, social norms
Group Processes and Behaviour	Group dynamics, cohesion, decision-making
Intergroup Relations, Prejudice and Discrimination	Bias, stereotypes, intergroup conflict
Power, Inequality, and Community Psychology	Power, inequality, social change
Leadership, Political Psychology and Integration	Leadership, ideology, political behaviour

Assessments



Essay

Essay: 2,000 words (50%)



Research Report

Quantitative Report

- 2,000 words (50%)

What is Social Psychology?

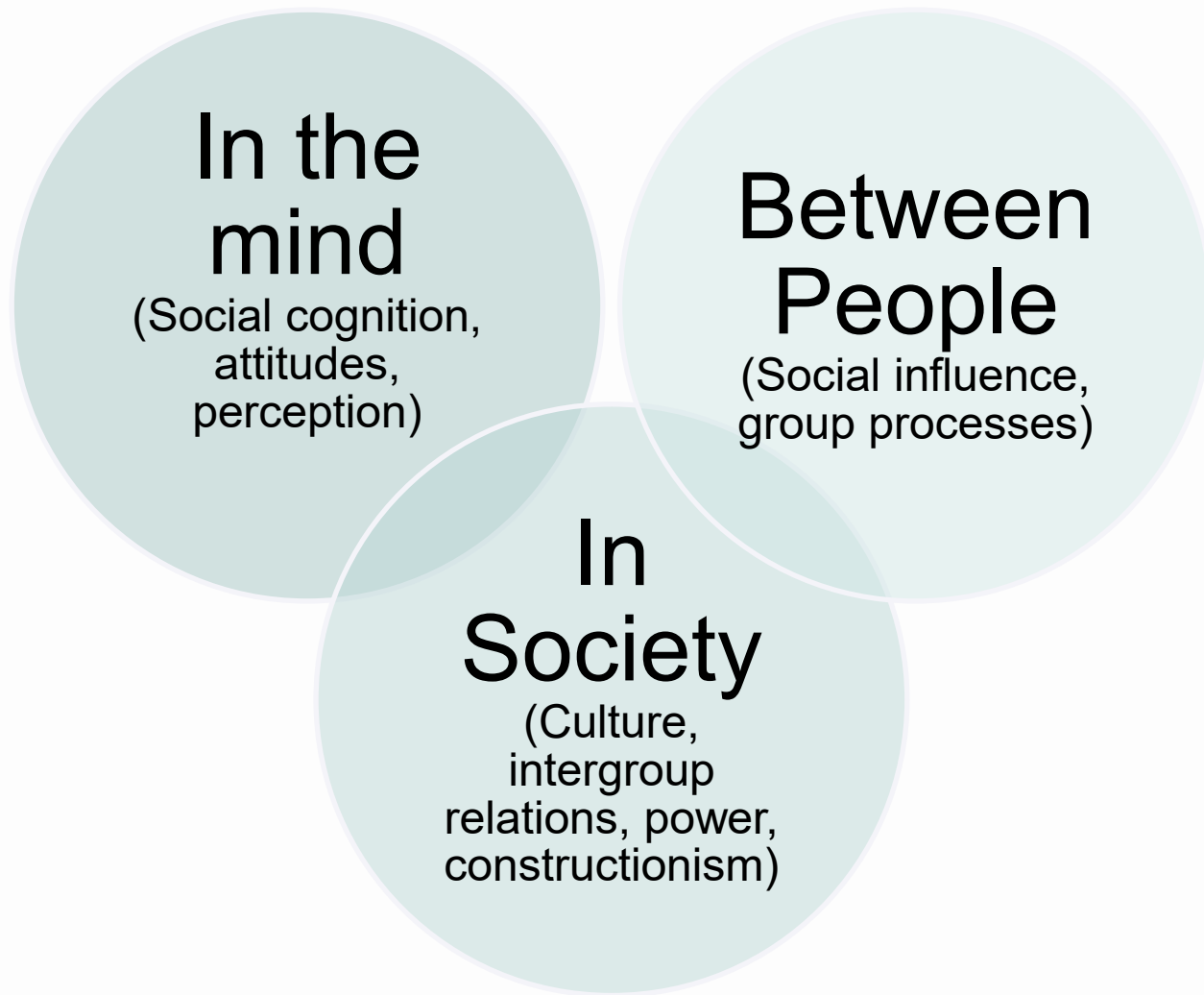
"The scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others"

(Allport, 1954)



Levels of Explanation





Why study Social Psychology?

Fundamentally social beings...

Practical relevance (informs public health, education, social justice...)



**To understand
people, we must
understand the social
worlds they inhabit.**



What is Cultural Psychology?

- Cultural psychology argues that many psychological processes are shaped by cultural contexts, and therefore assumptions of universality should be critically examined.
- Culture shapes cognition and behaviour
- Individualism vs collectivism

Individualist

- prioritize autonomy and personal achievement

Collectivist

- emphasize group harmony and social obligation

The Cultural Self Theory (Markus & Kitayama, 1991)

Independent Self

- Common in more individualistic cultures
- Emphasises uniqueness and autonomy
- "I am independent from others"
- Personal goals and achievements are important

Interdependent Self

- Common in more collectivist cultures
- Emphasises relationships and connectedness
- "I am part of a larger social group"
- Group harmony and obligations are important

Key Debate

Is behaviour driven by:

- Internal factors? (personality, cognition)
- External factors? (situations, culture)

Fundamental attribution error



Task: Psychological Detective Challenge

Can we explain a social issue using only one perspective?

Analyse a social issue using individual, social, and cultural explanations

In your group, pick a social issue:

- Mental Health Stigma
- Obesity
- Immigration Attitudes
- Criminal Behaviour
- Loneliness
- Educational Achievement

Your team has been hired as psychological detectives. Your job is to explain why this issue occurs.

Case File: _____

Individual Factors: What characteristics of individuals might contribute?

Examples:

- Beliefs
- Personality
- Motivation
- Knowledge
- Emotions

Social Factors: How might interactions with others contribute?

Examples:

- Family
- Peers
- Social norms
- Social influence
- Media

Cultural/Societal Factors: What wider societal influences might matter?

Examples:

- Culture
- Social class
- Power
- Inequality
- Policy

Competing Perspectives in Social Psychology

Experimental Approach:

Focuses on cause-and-effect relationships by manipulating variables in controlled settings to produce measurable findings.

Social Constructionist Perspective:

Argues social reality is created through language, interaction, and cultural practices, shaping concepts like gender and deviance.

Is There an Objective Social Reality?

Objective Social Reality View:

Argues social phenomena exist independently and can be scientifically measured and explained.

Social Constructionist Perspective:

Social reality is shaped by cultural norms, language, and power, varying across history and societies.

Reflexive Psychological Inquiry:

Encourages questioning whose perspectives are represented and understanding biases in psychological explanations

Task: Is There an Objective Social Reality?

Split into two groups and debate “Is Success Earned or Socially Produced?”

Group 1: Objective Reality Position

- Argue that success earned
- Mainly comes from hard work, talent, motivation, and personal responsibility.

Group 2: Social Constructionist Position

- Argue that success Socially produced
- Strongly influenced by social class, opportunities, culture, privilege, and access to resources.

“Is Success Earned or Socially Produced?”

Debate Structure:

1. Opening Argument (1 min): Take turns presenting their strongest argument
2. Open Debate (10 mins): Teams take turns responding. Consider:
 - What explains educational success?
 - Why do some people become wealthy?
 - Do talented people always succeed?
 - Does everyone have equal opportunities?
 - What role does family background play?
 - Can hard work overcome disadvantage?
3. Closing Statement (1 min): Take turns summarising their strongest argument and why their explanation is most convincing

“Is Success Earned or Socially Produced?”

Everyone leaves your debate position and discuss:

1. Which argument was most convincing and why?
2. Can success ever be explained by only one level?
3. Why do people often prefer individual explanations?
4. How might this debate look different in another culture?

Research Methods in Social Psychology

Experimental

Emphasize control and measurement to isolate variables and test causality in social psychology studies.

Qualitative

- Explore social meaning and interactions through interviews and discourse, offering rich contextual insights.

Cross-Cultural

- Compares psychological processes across societies to identify cultural specificity and universality.

W.E.I.R.D.

PSYCHOLOGY



Western

From Western countries (e.g., UK, US, Europe)

Educated

Typically, university-educated participants

Industrialised

From technologically advanced, industrial economies

Rich

Relatively high levels of wealth and resources

Democratic

From societies with democratic political systems

Task: Which Researcher Would You Trust?

UWTSD wants to understand why some students experience loneliness while at uni.

Three researchers are asked to investigate. Your job is to decide: **Who provides the most useful evidence?**

Researcher A

- Conducts a lab study:
- 120 students
- Manipulates feelings of social inclusion/exclusion
- Measures mood afterwards
- Produces statistical data
- **Claims "I can identify cause-and-effect relationships"**

Researcher B

- Conducts interviews:
- 15 students
- In-depth conversations
- Explores experiences and meanings
- Analyses themes in responses
- **Claims "I can understand what loneliness actually feels like"**

Researcher C

- Studies students from different countries:
- UK students
- Chinese students
- Nigerian students
- Compares patterns across cultures
- **Claims "I can show whether loneliness means the same thing across cultures"**

Task: Which Researcher Would You Trust?

1. Could a single method ever provide the complete answer?
2. Which method gives us:
 - The most control?
 - The richest understanding?
 - The broadest perspective?
3. If you were designing a study yourself, would you combine methods?
4. Why?

Key Takeaways

Behaviour is shaped by:

- Social context
- Culture
- Multiple perspectives are needed
- Methods influence knowledge



Next Week

- Week 2: Self & Identity
- Link: From society to internalised identity
- Reflect:
- "Is psychology culturally biased?"

