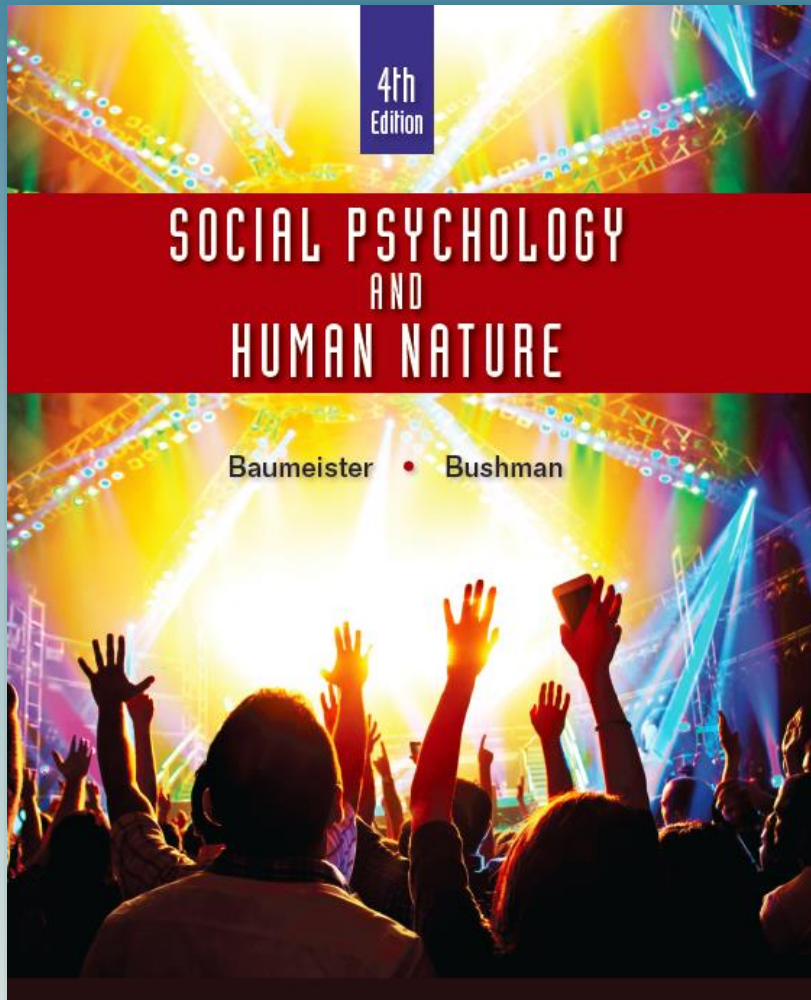




Social Psychology: Global Perspectives

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4 Culture and Nature

Learning Objectives

- Explain how and why the human brain evolved the way it did
- Understand how culture and nature work together to affect choices and behaviour and make culture a better way of being social
- Summarize how the two system of the duplex mind differ and work together
- Describe how inner processes serve interpersonal functions

Introduction

- Gender identity
 - Consider the case of Brenda: born a boy, but raised as a girl after a botched circumcision
 - Never fit in; wanted to play rough games like the boys; became rebellious
 - Additional cases revealed that others born as boys, but raised as girls, did not turn out to be typical adult women
 - Some parts of who you are come from biology

Nature and Social Behaviour

- Explaining the psyche
 - A broad term for mind, encompassing emotions, desires, perceptions, and all other psychological processes
- Nature and culture have shaped each other
 - Nature has prepared human beings specifically for culture

Nature and Social Behaviour (cont'd.)

- Nature defined: physical world around us, including its laws and processes
 - Can help explain human behaviour
 - Genes, hormones, brain structure, and other innate processes dictate one's choices and actions
- Evolution, and doing what's natural
 - Over the last two decades, many people have focused on how evolution influences social behaviour

Nature and Social Behaviour (cont'd.)

- Charles Darwin: theory of evolution
 - Focuses on how change occurs in nature
- Natural selection decides which traits will endure, and which will disappear
 - Survival: living long enough to reproduce
 - Mutation: new gene or combination of genes
 - Reproduction: producing babies that also reproduce
 - <http://evolution.berkeley.edu/>

Nature and Social Behaviour (cont'd.)

- Social animals: humans are social animals
 - Seek connections to others
- Being social offers evolutionary benefits
 - Find more food
 - Mate and reproduce easier
 - Alert each other to danger
 - Take care of sick and injured

Nature and Social Behaviour (cont'd.)

- The social brain
 - Social brain theory: animals with bigger brains live in larger, more complex social groups
 - Human brain evolved to enable human beings to have rich, complex social lives
 - Social animals (including humans) accomplish things by means of social interaction

Natural Selection

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Social Animal or Cultural Animal?

- Social animals
 - Animals that seek connections to others and prefer to live, work, and play with other members of their species
- Cultural animal theory
 - Evolution shaped the human psyche to enable humans to create and take part in culture
- Culture is the essence of what makes us human

Culture Defined

- Important features of culture
 - Shared ideas: brain puts special priority on information directly experienced as shared
 - Culture as a social system: network linking many different people
 - Culture as praxis: depends on shared ideas
 - Culture, information, and meaning: encoding and sharing meaningful information

Food for Thought

- Culture influences what we eat
 - Nature: humans are naturally inclined to eat meat
 - Culture: many religions dictate what food can be eaten
 - Vegetarians may state that it is wrong to eat animals

Nature and Culture Interacting

- Nature and culture interact to influence us
 - Professional athletes are likely to be born in January because as children, they are in competition with younger, smaller children
 - Younger children drop out more often
 - Older, larger, more coordinated children get more attention from coaches

Nature and Culture Interacting (cont'd.)

- Nature and culture shaping each other
 - Nature shapes culture, and culture shapes nature
- What makes cultural animals?
 - Being a cultural animal is different than being a social animal
 - Division of labour
 - Shared knowledge and communication
 - Ability to solve disagreements

Are People the Same Everywhere?

- Cultural norms vary
 - Sleeping habits: Americans generally do not sleep with their children in the same room
 - In Japan, it is customary for children to sleep with their mother
 - People do share some of the same experiences
 - Most people love their children, try to get enough to eat, and make distinctions between right and wrong

The Duplex Mind

- Two systems
 - Automatic system
 - Outside of consciousness
 - Simple operations
 - Always on, even in sleep
 - Deliberate system
 - Mostly operates in consciousness
 - Turns off during sleep

The Duplex Mind (cont'd.)

- What is the purpose of consciousness?
 - Increased focus on automatic system
 - Can learn, think, choose, and respond
 - Has ideas and emotions
 - Knows “self” and other people
 - Consciousness focuses on complex thought and logical reasoning
- Differences between the systems
 - See Table 2.1 (next slide)

The Deliberate and Automatic Systems

Deliberate	Automatic
Slow	Fast
Controllable	Outside of conscious control
Guided by intention	Unintentional
Flexible	Inflexible
Good at combining information	Poor at combining information
Precise, rule-based calculations	Estimates
Can perform complex operations	Can perform simple operations
Does one thing at a time	Can do many things at once
Reasoning	Intuition
Effortful	Effortless
Features full-blown emotions	Features quick feelings of like and dislike, good and bad
Depends on automatic system	Can be independent of conscious processing
"Figure it out"	"Go with your gut feeling"

The Duplex Mind (cont'd.)

- How they work together
 - Automatic system makes conscious thought possible
 - Serves the deliberate system
- Conscious override
 - Deliberate system can suppress automatic urges
 - Vital to life in culture

The Long Road to Social Acceptance

- One basic job of the human self: garner social acceptance
 - People learn to work within cultural bounds
 - In Victorian era, cursing and picking your nose was unacceptable
 - Today, cursing is often accepted, but picking your nose is not

Built to Relate

- Social acceptance: people have to do a great deal of work to get along with others
 - Must develop skills and capabilities
- Inner processes serve interpersonal functions
 - Enable humans to connect
- Automatic processes prepare us for interactions with other groups

Nature Says Go; Culture Says Stop

- Nature: impulses, wishes, and automatic responses
 - Culture: teaches self-control and restraint
- Exceptions
 - Nature's disgust reactions (stop)
 - Cultural timetable for meals (go)

Selfish Impulse Versus Social Conscience

- Nature has made us selfish
 - Natural selection: preservation of self
- Culture needs us to resist and overcome selfish impulses
 - Consideration of what is best for society
 - Morality works best for small groups
 - Laws take the place of morality for suppressing selfish urges with larger groups

Tradeoffs: When You Can't Have It All

- Tradeoffs: no choice that is clearly the best in every respect
 - Time dimension for athletes
 - Performance-enhancing drugs
 - Sacrifice present for future pay off
 - Animals don't do this (e.g., chimps fed once a day; they have not learned to store food away)

Putting People First

- How do human senses vary from other animals'?
 - Dogs hear many things humans cannot, but they do not hear as precisely as humans do
 - Most sense organs (even artificial such as cameras) have a tradeoff between detection (how much they can see) and resolution

Putting People First (cont'd.)

- People look to each other first
 - Solomon Asch: line-judging task
 - Participants were asked to look at which line fit best
 - Confederates in group gave wrong answer; many participants also gave the wrong answer
 - Participants felt it was more important to be accepted by the group than to be correct

Summary

- Human behaviour results from a mix of nature and culture
- Nature and culture interact with each other to influence human behavior
- Culture is a powerful force on people, even overcoming nature at times