



Introduction to Social Psychology

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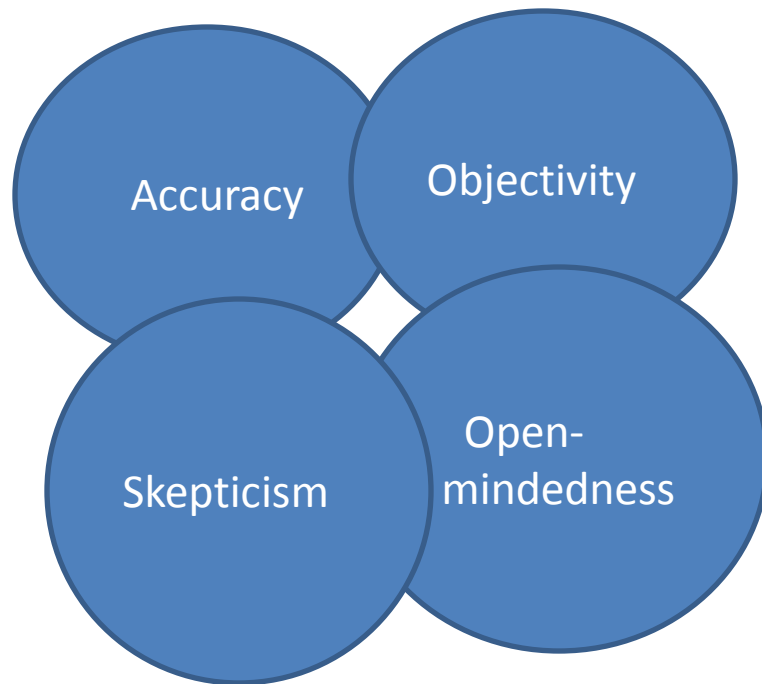
What is Social Psychology

- Definition: The *scientific field* that seeks to understand the *nature and causes of individual behavior, feelings, and thought in social situations*.
- Social psychology investigates the ways in which our thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by the social environments in which we live.

Nature Of Social Psychology

A) Social Psychology is Scientific in Nature

- Difficult to believe? (Physics, Chemistry vs studying aggression, interpersonal attraction)
- Scientific because it adheres to 4 core values



- Social Psychology applies these values while understanding nature of social behaviour and social thought (contrast it with fields like astrology-intuition, faith etc used to arrive at conclusion)

B) Social Psychology *focuses on the behaviour of individuals*

- Social behavior occurs in group settings and these can exert powerful effects on us.
- But the field's major interest lies in understanding the *factors* that *shape the actions and thoughts of individuals* in social settings.

C) Social Psychology Seeks to Understand the Causes of Social Behavior and Thought:

- Understand which are the factors that shape individual actions, feelings, beliefs, memories and inferences concerning other people.
- 4 variables play a role in this regard

- 1) The action and characteristics of others
 - Actions of other people influence our behaviour
 - Appearance of other people

2) Cognitive Processes

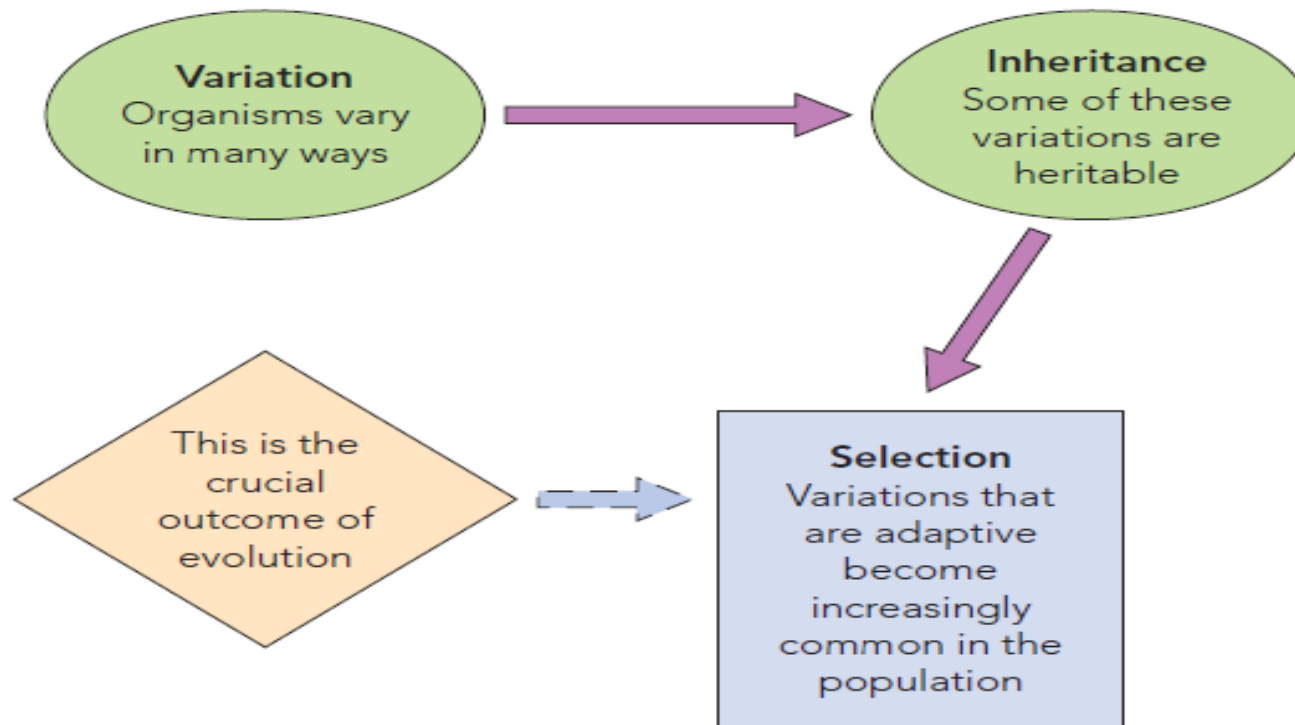
3) Environmental Variables: Impact of the physical environment

4) Biological Factors: Social behaviour is influenced by interaction of genetic factors as well as social experiences.

Evolutionary Psychology explains role of biological factors in social behaviour.

Evolutionary psychology :A new branch of psychology that seeks to investigate the potential role of genetic factors in various aspects of human behavior.

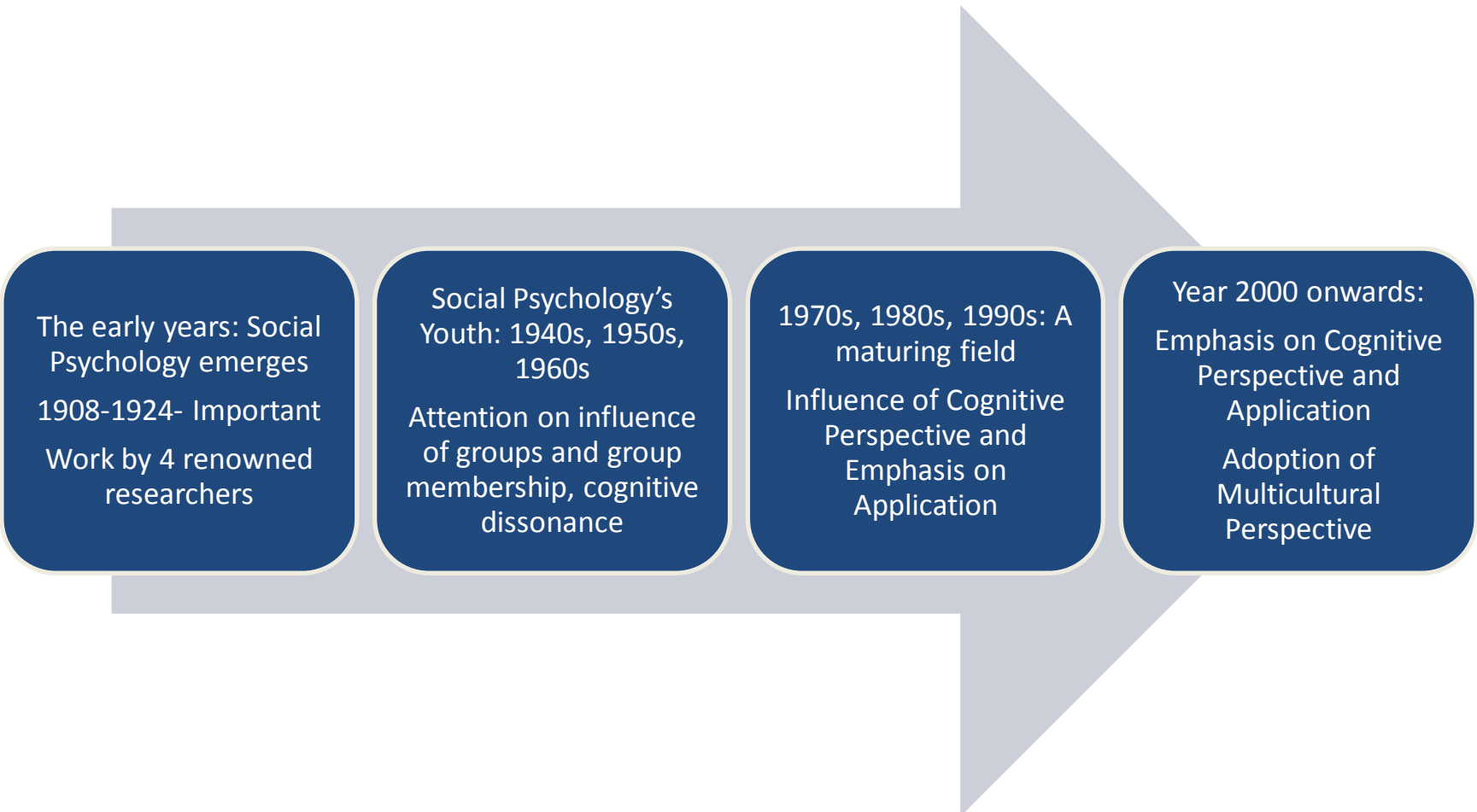
- The process of biological evolution involves three basic components:



- Note: We inherit tendencies or predispositions that may be apparent in our overt actions, depending on the environments in which we live.

Conclusion: Social psychology seeks to establish basic principles of social life that are accurate across huge cultural differences and despite rapid and major changes in social life.

History of Social Psychology



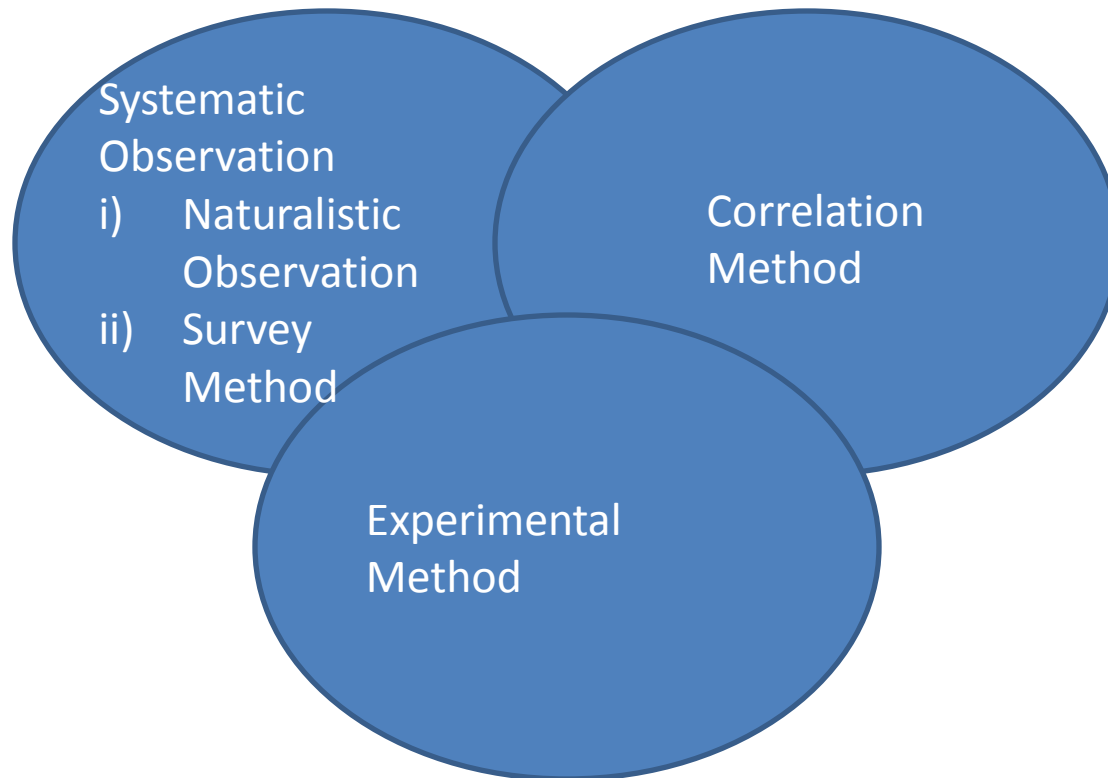
The early years: Social Psychology emerges
1908-1924- Important Work by 4 renowned researchers

Social Psychology's Youth: 1940s, 1950s, 1960s
Attention on influence of groups and group membership, cognitive dissonance

1970s, 1980s, 1990s: A maturing field
Influence of Cognitive Perspective and Emphasis on Application

Year 2000 onwards:
Emphasis on Cognitive Perspective and Application
Adoption of Multicultural Perspective

Research Methods in Social Psychology



Systematic observation: A method of research in which behavior is systematically observed and recorded.

A) Naturalistic Observation: Observation of people's behavior in natural settings.

Researcher would simply record what is happening in each context; he/she would make no attempt to change the behavior of the people being observed.

B) Survey Method: A method of research in which a large number of people answer questions about their attitudes or behaviour.

Method used to assess attitudes towards a variety of social issues- example- feeling of security, crime rate in the city etc.

Advantages?

Limitations?

- Correlational Method: A method of research in which a scientist systematically observes two or more variables to determine whether changes in one are accompanied by changes in the other.
- Examples?
- When a correlation exists, it is possible to predict one variable from information about one or more other variables.
- The stronger the correlation between the variables, the more accurate the prediction.
- Correlations range from 0 to ± 1 .
- Positive and negative correlations
- Advantages?
- Limitations?

- Experimental Method: A method of research in which one or more factors (the independent variables) are systematically changed to determine whether such variations affect one or more other factors (dependent variables)
- Thus, experimentation involves two key steps:
 - Independent variable: Variable that is systematically changed in an experiment
 - Dependent Variable: Variable that is measured in an experiment.

Examples?

Two Key Requirements:

- Random assignment of participants to experimental conditions i.e. each participant must have an equal chance of being exposed to each level of the IV.
- As far as possible, all factors other than the IV that might also affect participants' behavior must be held constant.

For eg, in a study to understand effect of coffee on alertness, identify IV, DV and think of possible confounding factors.

Limitations:

External Validity?

Ethical constraints in conducting some experiments?