**Psychology**

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behavior in a given context.

## Social Psychology

Social psychology is the scientific study of how individuals perceive, influence, and relate to others through social interactions. It has also been described as the scientific study of social interactions. The social psychologist Gordon Allport defines the field as an attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others. The field of social psychology has traditionally been described as a bridge between psychology and sociology. Social psychology focuses on the importance of individual or social influences on a person’s perception of the world around them.

**General Research Interests**

* Social psychologists research the factors that lead people to behave in a given way in the presence of others, and look at the conditions under which certain behaviors and feelings occur.
* This field is specifically concerned with the way feelings, thoughts, beliefs, intentions, and goals are constructed, and how such psychological factors, in turn, influence interactions with others.
* Social psychology attempts to understand the complex relationship between minds, groups, and behaviors in three general ways.
1. First, it aims to describe how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others. This includes areas like social perception, social interaction, and social influence (including trust, power, and persuasion ). There is a strong interest in how perceptions and thoughts, as well as social cues, affect individual behavior in this area.
2. Second, social psychology attempts to describe the influence that individual perceptions and behaviors have on the behavior of groups. This includes research on areas such as group productivity and decision making.
3. Third, social psychology explains the dynamics of groups as behavioral entities. Research in this area investigates the relationships that one group has with another group, and/or the influence one group has on another group.

**Comparison Chart Attitude vs Behavior**

| **BASIS FOR COMPARISON** | **ATTITUDE** | **BEHAVIOR** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Meaning | Attitude refers to a person's mental view, regarding the way he/she thinks or feels about someone or something. | Behavior implies the actions, moves, conduct or functions of an individual or group towards other persons. |
| Based on | Experience and observation | Situation |
| Trait | Human | Inborn |
| What is it? | A person's mindset. | Outward expression of attitude. |
| Reflects | What you think or feel? | What you do? |
| Defined by | Way we perceive things. | Social Norms |

## Defining Self-Concept

Self-concept is generally thought of as our individual perceptions of our behavior, abilities, and unique characteristics—a mental picture of who you are as a person.For example, beliefs such as "I am a good friend" or "I am a kind person" are part of an overall self-concept.

Self-concept tends to be more flexible when people are younger and still going through the process of self-discovery and [identity formation](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-an-identity-crisis-2795948). As people age, self-perceptions become much more detailed and organized as people form a better idea of who they are and what is important to them.

According to the book Essential Social Psychology by Richard Crisp and Rhiannon Turner:

* The **individual self** consists of attributes and [personality traits](https://www.verywellmind.com/the-big-five-personality-dimensions-2795422) that differentiate us from other individuals. Examples include introversion or extroversion.
* The **relational self** is defined by our relationships with significant others. Examples include siblings, friends, and spouses.
* The **collective self** reflects our membership in social groups. Examples include British, Republican, African-American, or gay.﻿

At its most basic, self-concept is a collection of beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others. It embodies the answer to the question "Who am I?"

## Theories of Self-Concept

Like many topics within psychology, a number of theorists have proposed different ways of thinking about self-concept. According to a theory known as **social identity theory**, self-concept is composed of two key parts: personal identity and social identity.

Personal identity includes the traits and other characteristics that make each person unique. Social identity refers to how we identify with a collective, such as a community, religion, or political movement.

Psychologist Dr. Bruce A. Bracken suggested in 1992 that there are six specific domains related to self-concept:

* Social: the ability to interact with others
* Competence: the ability to meet basic needs
* Affect: the awareness of emotional states
* Physical: feelings about looks, health, physical condition, and overall appearance
* Academic: success or failure in school
* Family: how well one functions within the family unit3﻿

Humanist psychologist, [Carl Rogers](https://www.verywellmind.com/carl-rogers-biography-1902-1987-2795542) believed that there were three different parts of self-concept:

* **Self-image**, or how you see yourself. Each individual's self-image is a mixture of different attributes including our physical characteristics, [personality traits](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-many-personality-traits-are-there-2795430), and social roles. Self-image doesn't necessarily coincide with reality. Some people might have an inflated self-image of themselves, while others may perceive or exaggerate the flaws and weaknesses that others don't see.
* **Self-esteem**, or how much you value yourself. A number of factors can impact self-esteem, including how we compare ourselves to others and how others respond to us. When people respond positively to our behavior, we are more likely to develop positive [self-esteem](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-self-esteem-2795868). When we compare ourselves to others and find ourselves lacking, it can have a negative impact on our self-esteem.
* **Ideal self,** or how you wish you could be. In many cases, the way we see ourselves and how we would like to see ourselves do not quite match up.

## Congruence and Incongruence

As mentioned earlier, our self-concepts are not always perfectly aligned with reality. Some students might believe that they are great at academics, but their school transcripts might tell a different story. According to Carl Rogers, the degree to which a person's self-concept matches up to reality is known as congruence and incongruence.﻿

* While we all tend to distort reality to a certain degree, congruence occurs when self-concept is fairly well aligned with reality. Incongruence happens when reality does not match up to our self-concept.
* Rogers believed that incongruence has its earliest roots in childhood. When parents place conditions on their affection for their children (only expressing love if children "earn it" through certain behaviors and living up to the parents' expectations), children begin to distort the memories of experiences that leave them feeling unworthy of their parents' love.
* Unconditional love, on the other hand, helps to foster congruence. Children who experience such love feel no need to continually distort their memories in order to believe that other people will love and accept them as they are.