# Table of Contents

- **Social Belief and Our Judgements** ................................................................. 4
- **Perceiving Our Social Worlds** ........................................................................ 4
  - Priming .................................................................................................................. 4
  - Perceiving and Interpreting Events ..................................................................... 4
  - Belief Perseverance .............................................................................................. 5
  - Misinformation Effect .......................................................................................... 5
- **Judging Our Social Worlds** ................................................................................ 5
  - Intuitive Judgments .............................................................................................. 5
  - Overconfidence ..................................................................................................... 6
    - Remedies for Overconfidence .............................................................................. 6
  - Heuristics: Mental Shortcuts .................................................................................. 6
    - Representative Heuristics .................................................................................... 6
    - The Availability Heuristic .................................................................................... 6
  - Counterfactual Thinking .......................................................................................... 7
  - Moods and Judgments ............................................................................................ 7
- **Explaining Our Social Worlds** ............................................................................ 7
  - Attributing Causality ............................................................................................. 7
    - Harold Kelley's Theory of Attributions ............................................................... 8
    - The Fundamental Attribution Error ..................................................................... 8
- **Expectations of Our Social Worlds** .................................................................... 9
- **Behaviours and Attribute** ................................................................................... 10
  - How Well Do Our Attitudes Predict Our Behaviour? ........................................ 10
    - Attitudes Predicting Behaviour ......................................................................... 11
    - Behaviour Turning into Attitude ....................................................................... 11
      - Role Playing ...................................................................................................... 11
      - Saying Becomes Believing .................................................................................. 11
      - The Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon .................................................................... 11
      - Low-Ball Technique ............................................................................................ 12
      - Evil and Moral Acts ............................................................................................. 12
      - Social Movements .............................................................................................. 12
  - Why Does Our Behaviour Affect Our Attitudes? ............................................... 12
    - Self-Presentation ................................................................................................. 12
    - Self-Justification ................................................................................................ 12
Insufficient Justification ----------------------------------------------- 13
Dissonance after Decisions--------------------------------------------- 13
Self-Perception ------------------------------------------------------ 13
Over justification and Intrinsic Motivations---------------------------- 13
Social Belief and Our Judgements

The mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses is cognition and the process of using information to understand others and the social world is called social cognition, which is composed of the cognitive process by which we attempt to understand others and the social world. One issue addressed by social cognition is how self-esteem predicts self-judgment. Thinking of alternative scenarios during unpleasant events is a feature of social cognition. A primary reason that people spend time thinking about other people is because they have to make judgments about other people. In making judgments we construct social perceptions and beliefs as we:

- Perceive and recall events through the filters of our own assumptions;
- Judge events, informed by our intuition, by implicit rules that guide our snap judgments, and by our moods;
- Explain events by sometimes attributing them to the situation, sometimes to the person; and
- Expect certain events, which sometimes help bring them about.

Perceiving Our Social Worlds

Research reveals the extent to which our assumptions and prejudgments guide our perceptions, interpretations, and recall. Our preconceptions guide how we perceive and interpret information. We construe the world through belief-tinted glasses. “Sure, preconceptions matter,” people will agree; yet they fail to realize how great the effect is. We respond not to reality as it is but to reality as we construe it.

Priming

Activating particular associations in memory is called priming. Our memory system is a web of associations, and priming is the awakening or activating of certain associations. Experiments show that priming one thought, even without awareness, can influence another thought, or even an actions. During experiments the use of certain words has been related to people’s actions.

Perceiving and Interpreting Events

Despite some startling and oft-confirmed biases and logical flaws in how we perceive and understand one another, we’re mostly accurate. Our first impressions of one another are more often right than wrong. Moreover, the better we know people, the more accurately we can read their minds and feelings. We view our social worlds
through the spectacles of our beliefs, attitudes, and values. That is one reason our beliefs are so important; they shape our interpretation of everything else.

**Belief Perseverance**

Persistence of one's initial conceptions, as when the basis for one's belief is discredited but an explanation of why the belief might be true survives. This phenomenon, called belief perseverance, shows that beliefs can grow their own legs and survive the discrediting of the evidence that inspired them.

Our beliefs and expectations powerfully affect how we mentally construct events. Usually, we benefit from our preconceptions, just as scientists benefit from creating theories that guide them in noticing and interpreting events. But the benefits sometimes entail a cost: We become prisoners of our own thought patterns.

“Two thirds of what we see is behind our eyes.”

Chinese proverb

**Misinformation Effect**

Incorporating “misinformation” into one's memory of the event, after witnessing an event and receiving misleading information about it is known as misinformation effect. Our memories are not exact copies of experiences that remain on deposit in a memory bank. Rather, we construct memories at the time of withdrawal.

During experiments people recalled fictous events about which they were told as the really happened and believed so. The extent to which such events may go, are very much beyond this small pint.

**Judging Our Social Worlds**

As we have already noted, our cognitive mechanisms are efficient and adaptive, yet occasionally error-prone. Usually they serve us well. But sometimes clinicians misjudge patients, employers misjudge employees, people of one race misjudge people of another, and spouses misjudge their mates. The results can be misdiagnoses, labour strife, prejudices, and divorces. So, how and how well do we make intuitive social judgments?

**Intuitive Judgments**

What are our powers of intuition of immediately knowing something without reasoning or analysis? Are the intuitionists right that important information is immediately available apart from our conscious analysis? Or are the sceptics correct in saying that intuition is “our knowing we are right, whether we are or not”? Priming research suggests that the unconscious indeed controls much of our behaviour.
Most of a person's everyday life is determined not by their conscious intentions and deliberate choices but by mental processes that are put into motion by features of the environment and that operate outside of conscious awareness and guidance.” When the light turns red, we react and hit the brake before consciously deciding to do so.

**Overconfidence**

The tendency to be more confident than correct to overestimate the accuracy of one's beliefs is widely known as overconfidence phenomenon. People with such traits show more confidence while they may be wrong most of the time. And another effect that is conformation bias, i.e. the tendency of finding logics and information that confirms preconcepts can be found.

**Remedies for Overconfidence**

The following three techniques are thought by the professionals of this field to reduce the intensity of overconfidence.

- Feedback, many of us get feedbacks almost on a daily basis. Listening to them may be helpful.
- To reduce “planning fallacy” overconfidence, people can be asked to unpack a task, to break it down into its subcomponents.
- When people think about why an idea might be true, it begins to seem true. Thus, a third way to reduce overconfidence is to get people to think of one good reason why their judgments might be wrong; that is, force them to consider disconfirming information.

**Heuristics: Mental Shortcuts**

Heuristics is a thinking strategy that enables quick, efficient judgments. With precious little time to process so much information, our cognitive system is fast and frugal. It specializes in mental shortcuts. With remarkable ease, we form impressions, make judgments, and invent explanations. We do so by using heuristics simple, efficient thinking strategies.

**Representative Heuristics**

To judge something by intuitively comparing it to our mental representation of a category is to use the representativeness heuristic. Representativeness (typicalness) usually is a reasonable guide to reality.

**The Availability Heuristic**

A cognitive rule that judges the likelihood of things in terms of their availability in memory. If instances of something come readily to mind, we presume it to be commonplace.

Consider the following: Do more people live in Iraq or in Tanzania? You probably answered according to how readily Iraqis and Tanzanians come to mind. If examples are
readily available in our memory as Iraqis tend to be then we presume that other such examples are commonplace. Usually this is true, so we are often well served by this cognitive rule.

“Most people reason dramatically, not quantitatively.”
JURIST OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, JR.

Counterfactual Thinking

Easily imagined (cognitively available) events also influence our experiences of guilt, regret, frustration, and relief. If our team loses (or wins) a big game by one point, we can easily imagine how the game might have gone the other way, and thus we feel regret (or relief). Imagining worse alternatives helps us feel better. Imagining better alternatives, and pondering what we might do differently next time, helps us prepare to do better in the future. Imagining alternative scenarios and outcomes that might have happened, but didn’t is termed as counterfactual thinking.

Moods and Judgments

Social judgment involves efficient, though fallible, information processing. It also involves our feelings: Our moods infuse our judgments. We are not cool computing machines; we are emotional creatures.

A depressed mood motivates intense thinking a search for information that makes one’s environment more understandable and controllable. Happy people, by contrast, are more trusting, more loving, more responsive.

Explaining Our Social Worlds

Our judgments of people depend on how we explain their behaviour. Depending on our explanation, we may judge killing as murder, manslaughter, self-defence, or heroism. Depending on our explanation, we may view a homeless person as lacking initiative or as victimized by job and welfare cutbacks. Depending on our explanation, we may interpret someone’s friendly behaviour as genuine warmth or as ingratiation.

Attributing Causality

We endlessly analyze and discuss why things happen as they do, especially when we experience something negative or unexpected. If worker productivity declines, do we assume the workers are getting lazier? Or has their workplace become less efficient?
Attribution theory; The theory of how people explain others’ behaviour for example, by attributing it either to internal dispositions (enduring traits, motives, and attitudes) or to external situations. Some examples are:

- Misattribution; mistakenly attributing, a behaviour to the wrong source, can also play vital roles.
- Dispositional Attribution; attributing behaviour to the person's disposition and traits.
- Situational Attribution; attributing behaviour to the environment.

Harold Kelley’s Theory of Attributions
Three factors; consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus influence whether we attribute someone’s behaviour to internal or external causes.

The Fundamental Attribution Error
Social psychology's most important lesson concerns the influence of our social environment. At any moment, our internal state, and therefore what we say and do, depends on the situation as well as on what we bring to the situation. In experiments, a slight difference between two situations sometimes greatly affects how people respond.
Explaining these terms, the fundamental attribution error; the tendency for observers to underestimate situational influences and overestimate dispositional influences upon others' behaviour (Also called correspondence bias, because we so often see behaviour as corresponding to a disposition).

Causation

The cause of these errors includes

- Perspective and situational awareness
- Cultural differences
- Self-awareness

Now why do we study attribution and attribution errors? TO IMPROVE THINKING! by helping us realize that although attributions are generally adaptive, we are unaware of our attribution errors and they make us less humane toward others.

“And in imagination he began to recall the best moments of his pleasant life. . . . But the child who had experienced that happiness existed no longer; it was like a reminiscence of somebody else.”

LEO TOLSTOY, THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYICH

Expectations of Our Social Worlds

Our social beliefs and judgments do matter. They influence how we feel and act, and by so doing may help generate their own reality. When our ideas lead us to act in ways that produce their apparent confirmation, they have become what sociologists termed self-fulfilling prophecies — beliefs that lead to their own fulfilment.

For example when a teacher terms someone as gifted, that student will prove himself to be so and vice versa.

Now are positive illusions of the other's virtues self-fulfilling? Or are they more often self-defeating, by creating high expectations that can't be met? I think to an extent! Yes.

Several experiments conducted by psychologists show how, once formed, erroneous beliefs about the social world can induce others to confirm those beliefs, a phenomenon called behavioural confirmation. For example when English soccer fans came to France for the 1998 World Cup, they were expected to live up to their reputation as aggressive “hooligans.” Local French youth and police, expecting hooligan behaviour, reportedly displayed hostility toward the English, who retaliated, thus confirming the expectation.

“The purposes in the human mind are like deep water, but the intelligent will draw them out.”
Behaviours and Attribute

What is the relationship between what we are (on the inside) and what we do (on the outside)? Philosophers, theologians, and educators have long speculated about the connections between attitude and action, character and conduct, private word and public deed. Underlying most teaching, counselling, and child rearing is an assumption: Our private beliefs and feelings determine our public behaviour, so if we wish to change behaviour we must first change hearts and minds.

When we talk about attitude we refer to beliefs and feelings related to a person or an event and the resulting behaviour tendency. Taken together, favourable or unfavourable evaluative reactions toward something—often rooted in beliefs and exhibited in feelings and inclinations to act—define a person’s attitude.

On the contrary behaviour is the reaction shown towards a certain action. Thus one may have an attitude towards doing something but may not do it because of any reason. For example a student may not like to sit in the class but he is doing so, say, because of fear of failing the course.

“The ancestor of every action is a thought.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

How Well Do Our Attitudes Predict Our Behaviour?

To what extent, and under what conditions, do the attitudes of the heart drive our outward actions? Why were social psychologists at first surprised by a seemingly small connection between attitudes and actions? Well there are two schools of thoughts. To understand better, the ABCs of Attitudes.
Attitudes Predicting Behaviour
The reasons why our attitudes may differ from behaviours is that they subject to several other influences. Our attitudes do predict our behaviour when these other influences on what we say and do are minimal, when the attitude is specific to the behaviour, and when the attitude is potent.

For example under social pressure one may differ from his attitude. The attitude may not be potent enough or the fear of contradicting self may also differ, the behaviour. Planning a behaviour according to the developed attitude may help in achieving a specific goal.

Behaviour Turning into Attitude
If social psychology has taught us anything during the last 25 years, it is that we are likely not only to think ourselves into a way of acting but also to act ourselves into a way of thinking. What evidence supports that assertion?

Role Playing
Role is A set of norms that defines how people in a given social position ought to behave. Given enough amount of time one is bound to feel and think like the role that he is playing socially in his normal life.

In one study, college men volunteered to spend time in a simulated prison constructed in Stanford’s psychology department by Philip Zimbardo. Zimbardo randomly chose students to perform as guards and prisoners and soon a change in their attitudes was noticed. They started to think like their roles.

Saying Becomes Believing
People often adapt what they say to please their listeners. They are quicker to tell people good news than bad, and they adjust their message toward their listener’s position. When induced to give spoken or written support to something they doubt, people will often feel bad about their deceit. Nevertheless, they begin to believe what they are saying, provided they weren’t bribed or coerced into doing so. When there is no compelling external explanation for one’s words, saying becomes believing.

The Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon
Most of us can recall times when, after agreeing to help out with a project or an organization, we ended up more involved than we ever intended, vowing that in the future we would say no to such requests. How does this happen? In keeping with the “attitude follows behaviour” principle, experiments suggest that if you want people to do a big favour for you, an effective strategy is to get them to do a small favour first. This is known the foot-in-the-door phenomenon.

“You will easily find folk to do favours if you cultivate those who have done them.”

PUBLILIIUS SYRUS, 42 B.C.
Low-Ball Technique
A tactic for getting people to agree to something. People who agree to an initial request will often still comply when the requester ups the ante. People who receive only the costly request are less likely to comply with it.

Evil and Moral Acts
The attitudes-follow-behaviour principle works with immoral acts as well. Evil sometimes results from gradually escalating commitments. A trifling evil act can whittle down one’s moral sensitivity, making it easier to perform a worse act. Same wise, moral deeds become easy if you start with small favours.

“Our self-definitions are not constructed in our heads; they are forged by our deeds.”

ROBERT MCAFEE BROWN

Social Movements
Doing something that is done widely by the whole society also tends to inculcate in the attitude section of ourselves. Our political rituals—the daily flag salute by schoolchildren, singing the national anthem—use public conformity to build private allegiance.

Why Does Our Behaviour Affect Our Attitudes?
What theories help explain the attitudes-follow-behaviour phenomenon? How does the contest between these competing theories illustrate the process of scientific explanation?

Self-Presentation
Who among us does not care what people think? We spend countless dollars on clothes, diets, cosmetics, and now plastic surgery—all because of our fretting over what others think. We see making a good impression as a way to gain social and material rewards, to feel better about ourselves, even to become more secure in our social identities.

No one wants to look foolishly inconsistent. To avoid seeming so, we express attitudes that match our actions. To appear consistent, we may pretend those attitudes. Even if that means displaying a little insincerity or hypocrisy, it can pay off in managing the impression we are making. Or so self-presentation theory suggests.

Self-Justification
One theory is that our attitudes change because we are motivated to maintain consistency among our cognitions. That is the famous cognitive dissonance theory. The theory is simple, but its range of application is enormous, making “cognitive
“If we wish to conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in ourselves we must . . . cold-bloodedly go through the outward motions of those contrary dispositions we prefer to cultivate.”

WILLIAM JAMES,