# HPS204 – Human Social Behaviour

Week 1: Introduction to Social Psychology
Learning Objectives:
Define the term 'social psychology' and have a sense of how it is seminal and different from other disciplines:
- Social psychology: the scientific investigation of how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviour of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.
- Reductionism: A phenomenon in terms of the language and concepts of a lower level analysis, usually with a loss of explanatory power.
- Hypothesis: Empirically testable predictions about what goes with what, or what causes what.

State and describe the major research methods used in social psychology and identify strengths and weaknesses of each method:
- Experimental research methods: a hypothesis test to see cause and effect, involves intervention and manipulation of the IV, conditions identical except for the IV manipulation and avoid confounding.
  - Laboratory experiment: aims to test theories under artificial conditions, intentionally low on mundane realism/external validity but high on experimental realism/internal validity.
  - The field experiment: conduct experiment in more naturalistic setting than a laboratory, high external validity but less experimental control, random assignment can be difficult.
- Non-experimental research methods: does not involve the manipulation of the IV, usually correlational and cannot draw conclusions about cause.
  - Archival research: involves the assembly of data, or reports of data, collected by others, like using census data. It is useful for investigating large-scale phenomena.
  - Case studies: In-depth analysis of a single case or individual. Useful for study of rare behaviour and generating hypothesises, difficult to generalise and can have experimenter bias.
  - Discord analysis: A set of methods used to analyse text, in particular, naturally occurring language, in order to understand its meaning and significance.
  - Field studies: The gathering of data in a natural setting, naturalistic but lack of objectivity, poor generalisability, and experimenter presence can impact results.
  - Survey research: Method in which a large and representative sample of people answer direct questions about their attitudes or behaviour.
- Mundane realism/external validity: similarity between circumstances surrounding an experiment and circumstances encountered in everyday life.
- Experimental realism/internal validity: psychological impact of the manipulation in an experiment.
- Independent variable (IV): features of a situation that change of their own accord or can be manipulated by an experimenter to have effects on a DV.
- Dependant variable (DV): variables that change because of changes in the IV, the variable that is measured.

Explain how bias can enter the research process, and identify some major sources of bias in research:
- Confounding bias: where two or more independent variables covary in such a way that it's impossible to know which produced changes in the dependent variable.

- Experimenter effects: experimenter inadvertently gives cues about the hypothesis and thereby affects behaviour, it can be minimised with a double-blind procedure.
- Subject effects/participant bias:
    o Subject role: like 'good participant', 'negative participant', or 'apprehensive participant'.
    o Demand characteristics: features of an experiment that seem to 'demand' a particular response, for example make participants aware of what the experimenter expects to find or how participants are expected to behave.

Appreciate the ethical issues involved in social psychology research:
- Protect from harm
- Respect privacy
- Minimise deception
- Need for informed consent
- Need for debriefing


## Week 2: Social Cognition and Attribution

Understand what is meant by the term 'social cognition' and know the major assumptions of the major models of social cognition:
- Social cognition: Cognitive processes and structures that influence and are influenced by social behaviour.
- Cognitive consistency: A model of social cognition in which people try to reduce inconsistency among their cognitions, because they find inconsistency unpleasant.
- Naïve scientist: Model of social cognition that characterises people as using rational, scientific-like, cause-effect analyses to understand their world.
- Cognitive miser: A model of social cognition that characterises people as using the least complex and demanding cognitions that are able to produce generally adaptive behaviours.
- Motivated tactician: A model of social cognition that characterises people as having multiple cognitive strategies available, which they choose among based on personal goals, motives and needs.

Identify key factors that affect impression formation:
- Central traits: Traits that have a disproportionate influence on the configuration of final impressions, in Asch's configurational model of impression formation.
- Peripheral traits: Traits that have an insignificant influence on the configuration of final impressions, in Asch's configurational model of impression formation.
- Asch had several of his students read one of two lists of seven adjectives (traits) describing a hypothetical person. The students then evaluated the target person on several other dimensions. People that read the list containing warm formed a much more favourable impression of the person that the list containing cold, this difference was far less impressive when warm and cold were replaced with polite and blunt. Asch argued that warm/cold is a central trait, whereas polite/blunt is a peripheral trait.
- Criticism of the concept of central trait: Disagreement of what constitutes a central trait, Asch believed central traits are intrinsically highly correlated with other traits, Mark Zanna and David Hamilton (1972) argued it was influenced by context, George Kelly (1955) believed it was personal constructs, David Schneider (1973) suggested that people may have integrated implicit personality theories, or idiosyncratic ways or characterising other people, and Hazel Markus emphasised that implicit personality theories was shared between cultures.