

Chapter 1: Introducing Social Psychology:

TABLE 1 Social Psychology Compared to Related Disciplines		
Sociology	Social Psychology	Personality Psychology
The study of groups, organizations, and societies, rather than individuals.	The study of the psychological processes people have in common that make them susceptible to social influence.	The study of the characteristics that make individuals unique and different from one another.

- Task of psychologist: understand & predict human behavior
- Social psychology: scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings and behavior are influenced by real/imagined presence of other people
- Social influence: effect of words, actions, presence of other people have on our thoughts, feelings, attitudes or behavior
- Persuasion: one person deliberately tries to change another person's behavior (kind of example that readily comes to mind when thinking of social influence)
- Social influence forms a major part of social psychology
- Social influence to a social psychologist: includes thoughts, feelings, persuasion, and overt acts.
- Governed by imaginary approval/disapproval of others
- Influences conflict with one another: thoughts, feelings & behaviors influenced by immediate surroundings, culture & family background.
- Philosophy major source of insight about human nature
- Psychologists looked at philosophers for nature of consciousness & how people form beliefs about social world
- Psychologists attempt same questions as philosophers but look at them scientifically
- Benedict Spinoza: insight on love, if we love someone we used to hate, the love will be stronger
- Why people behave the way they do?
 - Ask them but problem is that people not always aware of origins of their own responses/feelings
 - Speculations almost always wrong/oversimplified because people underestimate power of the situation
- Problem with relying on journalists, social critics etc.: disagree with one another, no easy way to determine which is correct
- Folk wisdom: birds of a feather etc.
- Social psychologists use scientific methods to test assumptions both empirically & systematically
- Experiments in social psychology have challenges: predict behavior of organisms in a variety of complex situations

- Social psychology goal as scientists: find objective answers to a wide array of important questions, first task is the hypothesis to answer questions, and then design experiments.
- Scientific method: enriches understanding & allows ability to make accurate predictions
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<http://visual.pearsoncmg.com/mypsychlabsocial/index.php?episode=episode1&clip=3&tab=intro>

- Personality psychologists: asking & answering questions about people in terms of traits. Focus on individual differences
- Social psychologists believe that explaining behavior primarily through personality factors ignores the role of social influence
- Social psychology is related to other disciplines (sociology, economics & political science – social sciences). Level of analysis sets social psychology apart from others.
- Level of analysis for social psychologists: the individual in the context of a social situation
- Sociology (looks at society at large): concerned with social class, social structure & social institutions. Level of analysis- group/institution
- Goal of social psychology: identify universal properties of human nature that make everyone susceptible to social influence, regardless of social class or culture
- Social psychology is a young science, findings haven't been tested in many cultures
- Social psychology is located between sociology & personality psychology
- Social psychology & sociology: share interest in situation & larger society influence behavior. But social psychologists focus on psychological makeup of individuals
- Social psychology & personality psychology: both emphasize psychology of the individual but social psychology emphasizes psychological processes shared by most people around the world.

❖ **The power of the situation:**

- People explain other people in terms of personality & don't take the whole situation into account – impact on how people relate to one another
- Fundamental attribution error: explain own & other people's behavior in terms of personality traits & underestimate social influence, gives feeling of false security
- Example- Lee Ross two-person game study of cooperation or competitiveness. ½ students told was Wall St game & other ½ told Community game

❖ **Power of social interpretation:**

- Defining the social situation:
 - Specify object properties & then document behaviors that follow from the objective properties- behaviorism (Skinner)
 - Social psychology: relationship between social environment & individual two-way street. Situation influences behavior & people's behavior depends on their interpretation (construal)
 - Construal: way in which people perceive, comprehend & interpret social world. Roots in Gestalt psychology