

Chapter 1 Introduction to Sociological Social Psychology

Chapter Goal

This chapter is designed to give students an understanding of how sociologists study social psychology and its role in the larger field of sociology. Students will gain an understanding of the distinction between psychology and sociology and be able to explain the major sociological social psychology perspectives.

Chapter Outline

- I. Sociology, Psychology, and Social Psychology
 - A. Macrosociology and Microsociology
 - B. Sociological and Psychological Social Psychology
 - C. Historical Context of Sociological Social Psychology
 - D. Section Summary

- II. Perspectives in Sociological Social Psychology
 - A. Symbolic Interactionism
 - B. Social Structure and Personality
 - C. Group Processes
 - D. Section Summary

- III. Your Social Psychological Tool Kit
 - A. The Sociological Imagination
 - B. Other Tools in Your Kit
 - 1. Social Norms and Values
 - 2. Roles and Statuses
 - 3. Organizations and Institutions
 - 4. Culture
 - C. Section Summary

- IV. Bringing it All Together

- V. Summary

- VI. Key Terms and Concepts

- VII. Discussion Questions

Test Questions

Part I. Matching Items

Following is a list of terms and then a series of statements. Match the best term to each statement by filling in the letter before the term in the appropriate blank.

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Organizations | G. Values | M. Social norms |
| B. Social psychology | H. Symbolic interactionism | N. Status |
| C. Social structure | I. Social institution | O. Breaching experiments |
| D. Roles | J. Group processes | P. Psychology |
| E. Sociological imagination | K. Microsociology | Q. Macrosociology |
| F. Ethnomethodology | L. Social structure and personality | R. Sociology |
| | | S. Culture |

- ___ The study of the effects of society on social-psychological processes, also known as sociological social psychology. [Answer: K]
- ___ A society's set of unique patterns of behavior and beliefs. [Answer: S]
- ___ A method of studying society through observation of people's typical day-to-day interactions. [Answer: F]
- ___ Experiments that violate the established social order to assess how people construct social reality. [Answer: O]
- ___ A perspective within sociological social psychology that examines how basic social processes operate in group contexts. [Answer: J]
- ___ The study of societies as a whole. [Answer: Q]
- ___ Groups that share a common purpose and contain a formal set of rules and authority structure. [Answer: A]
- ___ The study of human thought processes and behaviors. [Answer: P]
- ___ A set of expectations about how to behave in a group. [Answer: D]
- ___ Patterns of interactions in which behavior within a large group is guided by a common set of norms and roles. [Answer: I]
- ___ Persisting patterns of behavior and interaction between people within identified social positions. [Answer: C]
- ___ A perspective within sociological social psychology that focuses on the connections between larger societal conditions and the individual. [Answer: L]
- ___ The systematic study of people's thoughts, feelings, and behavior in social contexts. [Answer: B]
- ___ Deeply held ideals and beliefs. [Answer: G]
- ___ The ability to see personal lives in the context of the larger society—its history, culture, and social structure. [Answer: E]
- ___ The rules that regulate our behavior in relationships. [Answer: M]
- ___ The systematic study of society. [Answer: R]
- ___ A perspective within sociological social psychology that emphasizes the study of how people negotiate the meaning of social life during their interactions with other people. [Answer: H]
- ___ A person's position in a group or society that is associated with varying levels of esteem and power. [Answer: N]

Part II. Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the response that best answers the following questions.

- 1) How can macrosociological perspectives be used to study individual-, micro-level interactions?
- A) Macrosociological conditions may cause some individual-level conditions to exist in the first place.
 - B) Differences in our macrosociological conditions may change the way we react to life events.
 - C) Life events that affect us the most are often caused by societal conditions.
 - D) All of the above

Answer: D Page Ref: 5-6

- 2) Janna wanted to study the effects of population size on individuals' decision to commit suicide. Which social psychological perspective is she most likely to use?
- A) psychology
 - B) sociology
 - C) sociological social psychology
 - D) psychological social psychology

Answer: C Page Ref: 3

- 3) A comparison of suicide rates across countries is more likely to be the study of _____.
- A) microsociology
 - B) macrosociology
 - C) psychology
 - D) social psychology

Answer: B Page Ref: 5

- 4) Which macrosociological perspective views society as social systems composed of parts that serve to keep the system working properly?
- A) conflict perspective
 - B) symbolic interactionism
 - C) behavioralism
 - D) structural functionalism

Answer: D Page Ref: 7, Box 1.2

- 5) Joe started noticing that kids from the upper classes tend to get accepted at better colleges than the kids from the middle and lower classes. His analysis probably comes from which macrosociological perspective?
- A) conflict perspective
 - B) symbolic interactionism
 - C) behavioralism
 - D) structural functionalism

Answer: A Page Ref: 7, Box 1.2

- 6) Structural functionalism is associated with _____ while the conflict perspective is associated with _____.
- A) Karl Marx; Emile Durkheim
 - B) C. Wright Mills; Emile Durkheim
 - C) Emile Durkheim; Auguste Comte
 - D) Emile Durkheim; Karl Marx

Answer: D Page Ref: 7, Box 1.2

- 7) Sociological social psychology is different from psychological social psychology because:
- A) it focuses on the effects of societal conditions on individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
 - B) it incorporates sociological perspectives and theories to explain individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
 - C) it is a subfield of sociology, not psychology.
 - D) all of the above.

Answer: D Page Ref: 3

- 8) Social psychology is the systematic study of individual thoughts, feelings, and behavior in a social context. Which of the following social contexts are more likely to be studied by sociologists than psychologists?
- A) small groups
 - B) family interactions
 - C) ethnic groups
 - D) friendship groups

Answer: C Page Ref: 3

- 9) The field of sociology was first defined by:
- A) Emile Durkheim
 - B) Herbert Blumer
 - C) C. Wright Mills
 - D) Auguste Comte

Answer: D Page Ref: 9

- 10) What year was the term sociology coined?
- A) 1776
 - B) 1895
 - C) 1838
 - D) 1901

Answer: C Page Ref: 9

- 11) Which early sociologists emphasized the role of society in the development of the self?
- A) George Herbert Mead
 - B) Karl Marx
 - C) Georg Simmer
 - D) Herbert Blumer

Answer: A Page Ref: 11-12

- 12) Which sociological social psychology perspective emphasizes the role of meaning and the social construction of meaning in the study of social psychology?
- A) symbolic interaction
 - B) social structure and personality
 - C) group processes
 - D) structural functionalism

Answer: A Page Ref: 13-14

- 13) Which sociological social psychology perspective is likely to emphasize the importance of roles and statuses in the study of social psychology?
- A) symbolic interaction
 - B) social structure and personality
 - C) group processes
 - D) structural functionalism

Answer: B Page Ref: 14

- 14) Which sociological social psychology perspective is likely to emphasize the importance of interactions within groups?
- A) symbolic interaction
 - B) social structure and personality
 - C) group processes
 - D) structural functionalism

Answer: C Page Ref: 14

- 15) The sociological imagination is associated with which social theorists?
- A) Emile Durkheim
 - B) Max Weber
 - C) C. Wright Mills
 - D) Auguste Comte

Answer: C Page Ref: 15-16

- 16) The expectation to look someone in the eye when talking with them refers to a _____.
A) norm
B) role
C) value
D) belief

Answer: A Page Ref: 16-17

- 17) Derek's job as a supervisor refers to his relative _____ in the company while the expectations for how to behave on the job refers to his _____.
A) role; status
B) job; role
C) status; role
D) status; job

Answer: C Page Ref: 18

- 18) Which institution regulates sexual relations and childrearing in society?
A) economy and work
B) politics
C) family
D) religion

Answer: C Page Ref: 19

- 19) Which institution refers to the rituals and beliefs regarding sacred things?
A) economy and work
B) politics
C) family
D) religion

Answer: D Page Ref: 19

- 20) A country's flag represents which element of culture?
A) language
B) norms
C) symbols
D) values and beliefs

Answer: C Page Ref: 21

Part III. Essay Questions

Answer the following questions in your own words.

1. Think about the concept of poverty. How would a macro-level sociologist study this concept differently than a micro-level sociologist?
2. How do sociologists study the impact of society on individual thoughts, feelings, and behavior? That is, what “tools” or concepts do they employ to explain how society impacts individuals and how individuals affect society?
3. You were given a number of “tools” or concepts to help you study human behavior including statuses, roles, groups, and organizations. Describe one of these concepts and explain how knowing about it can help you understand human thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

Part IV. Vignette Analysis

Read the following vignette and Answer the subsequent questions to the best of your ability.

Jean’s best friend Janet recently got promoted to a management position in the company where they both work. The new job is associated with more pay and prestige at the company. Jean notices that Janet is spending more of her time, on and off the job, with her friends in management. Over dinner, Janet confides that she is really perturbed by the poor behavior of her former colleagues, that they have a bad attitude on the job but she doesn’t know how to handle it now that she is their supervisor. Jean and Janet continue to be friends but they don’t interact as much at work any more.

- 1) What level of analysis does this vignette reflect?
 - A) psychology
 - B) macrosociology
 - C) anthropology
 - D) microsociology

Answer: D Page Ref: 7-8

- 2) Which social psychological perspective best explains Janet’s change in attitudes and behavior after getting promoted to a management position?
 - A) symbolic interaction
 - B) social structure and personality
 - C) group processes
 - D) structural functionalism

Answer: B Page Ref: 14

- 3) What elements of the sociological “tool box” can best help us understand Janet’s behavior in this story?
- A) institutions
 - B) statuses
 - C) organizations
 - D) institutions

Answer: B Page Ref: 19-20

- 4) In which social institution does this vignette occur?
- A) economy and work
 - B) politics
 - C) family
 - D) religion

Answer: A Page Ref: 19-20

5) Apply one of the three social-psychological perspectives (i.e., symbolic interaction, social structure and personality, or group processes) to explain the behavior of one or more of the individuals in this vignette. First, describe the perspective in your own words. Second, apply that perspective explain why one or more of the characters acted the way that she did.

Part V. Lecture Ideas

1. To illustrate the link between the individual and society, provide students with a few examples of institutions, i.e. work, school, church, that might organize and influence their day to day actions and decisions.
2. Lecture on individual decisions that have societal influences to illustrate the impact society has on the individual. You may choose to discuss relationship progression, career choices or education decisions for examples.
3. Choose a current social event that is a “hot topic” to illustrate the sociological imagination. Lecture on the most controversial aspects of the topic and then use the sociological imagination to illustrate how we must look at the cultural context, social structure and history to fully understand the issue at hand.
4. Lecture on what sociological social psychology is paying particular attention to how it differs from the other social sciences, especially psychology. You may want to highlight a particular issue and illustrate how each discipline would study the problem.

Part VI. Classroom Activities

1. Show a short film clip, documentary or full length film that illustrates the role of society in individual lives. After viewing the film have students break up into small groups to identify the various aspects of society present in the film and how they affected the individuals in the films lives.
2. Ask students to provide several social questions they hope to explore during the course and write the topics on the board. Then break students into groups of 2-3 and ask them to apply the 3 sociological social psychology perspectives to one of the questions.
3. Have students work in small groups listing the highlights and disadvantages of each of the 3 sociological social psychology perspectives.

Part VII. Outside Class Assignments

1. In the tradition of Harold Garfinkel, have your students engage in a breaching experiment. Make sure to have them write down which specific social norm or order they chose to disrupt and to note their reactions as well as the reactions of others to their disruption.
2. Have students write a one page reflection on the various positions of people who have power over their lives. Ask them to reflect on how they have control as individuals but also how that control is limited based on their societal position.
3. Ask the students to choose a social behavior that interests them and make a list of possible reasons for the behavior. Then have the students use the 3 sociological social psychology perspectives to explain the behavior.