

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
- E. The Take-Away Message

II. Perspectives in Sociological Social Psychology

- A. Symbolic Interactionism
- B. Social Structure and Personality
- C. Group Processes
- D. Section Summary
- E. The Take-Away Message

III. Your Social Psychological Toolkit

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

IV. Bringing It All Together

V. Summary

VI. Key Terms and Concepts

VII. Discussion Question

Test Questions

Part I. Matching Items

Match the term to its definition by filling in the letter before the term in the appropriate blank.

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

- _____ 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 large-scale social processes. [*Answer: Q*]
- _____ Groups that share a common purpose and contain a formal set of rules and an authority structure. [*Answer: A*]
- _____ The study of human thought processes and behaviors. [*Answer: P*]
- _____ A set of expectations about how to behave, think, or feel. [*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 respect. [*Answer:* N]

Part II. Multiple-Choice Questions

Circle the response that best answers the question.

1. How can macrosociological perspectives be used to study individual-level, or micro-level, interactions?
- A) Macrosociological conditions may cause some individual-level conditions to exist in the first place.
 - B) Differences in our macrosociological conditions are irrelevant to the way we react to life events.
 - C) Life events that affect us the most are never caused by societal conditions.
 - D) Macrosociological perspectives cannot be used to study individual-level interactions.

Answer: A *Page Ref:* 6-7

2. Janna wanted to study the effects of a larger social condition—population size—on an individual's 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 poverty rates across countries is common to the study of _____.
- A) microsociology
 - B) macrosociology
 - C) psychology
 - D) social psychology

Answer: B Page Ref: 5

4. Which macrosociological perspective views society as a biological organism in which each part of the body has a function that promotes the survival of the whole?

- A) conflict perspective
- B) symbolic interactionism
- C) behavioralism
- D) structural functionalism

Answer: D Page Ref: 6, Box 1.2

5. Joe started noticing that kids from higher social classes tend to get accepted to better colleges than kids from middle and lower social classes. His analysis is probably rooted in which macrosociological perspective?

- A) conflict perspective
- B) symbolic interactionism
- C) behavioralism
- D) structural functionalism

Answer: A Page Ref: 6, Box 1.2

6. Structural functionalism is associated with _____, whereas 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: 6, Box 1.2

7. Sociological social psychology is different from psychological social psychology in that _____.

- A) it focuses on the effects of biology on individual behavior
- B) it is always more scientific
- C) it is a subfield of psychology
- D) it is more likely to take into account the effects of structural forces and statuses

Answer: D Page Ref: 8-9

8. Social psychology is the systematic study of individual thoughts, feelings, and behavior in a social context. Which of the following social contexts is more likely to be studied by sociologists than psychologists?

- A) a small group
- B) a family group
- C) an ethnic group
- D) a friendship group

Answer: C Page Ref: 3

9. The term “sociology” was first defined by _____.
A) Emile Durkheim
B) Herbert Blumer
C) C. Wright Mills
D) Auguste Comte

Answer: D Page Ref: 9

10. In what year was the term “sociology” coined?
A) 1776
B) 1895
C) 1838
D) 1901

Answer: C Page Ref: 9

11. Which early sociologist 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 how people negotiate meaning?
A) symbolic interactionism
B) social structure and personality
C) group processes
D) structural functionalism

Answer: A Page Ref: 13-14

13. Which sociological social-psychology perspective emphasizes the importance of relationships and positions?
A) symbolic interactionism
B) social structure and personality
C) group processes
D) structural functionalism

Answer: B Page Ref: 14

14. Which sociological social-psychology perspective emphasizes the importance of interactions within groups?

- A) symbolic interactionism
- B) social structure and personality
- C) group processes
- D) structural functionalism

Answer: C Page Ref: 14

15. The term “sociological imagination” is associated with which social theorist?

- A) Emile Durkheim
- B) Max Weber
- C) C. Wright Mills
- D) Auguste Comte

Answer: C Page Ref: 16-17

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: 18-19

17. Derek’s job as a supervisor refers to his relative _____ in the company, whereas 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: 19

18. Which institution regulates sexual relations and childrearing in society?

- A) economy and work
- B) politics
- C) family
- D) religion

Answer: C Page Ref: 20

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: 20

20. Country flags represent which elements of culture?

- A) languages
- B) norms
- C) symbols
- D) values and beliefs

Answer: C Page Ref: 21

Part III. Essay Questions

Answer the 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 and concepts do they employ to explain how society affects individuals and how individuals affect society?
3. You were given a number of tools and 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 vignette and answer the questions that follow.

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. Jean notices that Janet is spending more of her time, on and off the job, with her friends in management. Over dinner, Janet confides in Jean that she is really perturbed by the poor behavior of her former coworkers, that they have bad attitudes on the job, and that she doesn't know how to handle them 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) psychological level of analysis
 - B) macrosociological level of analysis
 - C) anthropological level of analysis
 - D) microsociological level of analysis

Answer: D Page Ref: 6-7

2. Which social-psychological perspective best explains Janet's change in attitude and behavior after getting promoted to a management position?
 - A) symbolic interactionism
 - B) social structure and personality

- C) group processes
- D) structural functionalism

Answer: B Page Ref: 13-14

3. Which 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 interactionism, social structure and personality, or group processes) to explain the behavior of one or more of the individuals in the vignette. First, describe the perspective in your own words. Second, apply that perspective to explain why one or more of the individuals acted the way that she did.

Lecture Ideas

1. To illustrate the link between the individual and society, provide students with a few examples of institutions (e.g., work, school, or 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 as 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 explain how we can look at cultural context, social structure, and history to understand more fully the issue at hand.
4. Lecture on the research interests of sociological social psychologists and on how they differ from the research interests of other social scientists, especially psychologists. You may want to highlight a particular issue and illustrate how adherents of each discipline would study the problem.

Classroom Activities

1. Show a short film clip, a documentary or a 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 lives of the individuals in the film.
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 two or three and ask them to apply the three 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 three sociological social- psychology perspectives.

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 the 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 three sociological social-psychology perspectives to explain the behavior.