

Chapter 1 Lecture Notes: What is Social Psychology?

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Social Psychology: the scientific study of how individuals think, feel, and behave in a social context

- Methodology makes it scientific
- Thoughts (cognition) feelings (affect), actions (behavior)
- **Social Context:** real or imagine presence of other people; unique to social psychology → “What would my mom think of me?”

Tenants of Social Psychology

- The social construction of Reality: the way a person construes a person/situation dictates thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Dual determinants of behavior: person x situation = behavior
- Real power of the situation: situations (context) have a large yet under acknowledged influence on your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
 - o Over-emphasize individual self & personality

Comparison to Other Fields → Different, yet intersect

- Unlike sociology, social psychology looks at the individual rather than society
- Unlike clinical psychology, social psychology looks at normal behavior rather than abnormal
- Unlike cognitive psychology, social psychology looks at how one makes sense of people rather than objects
- Unlike personality psychology, social psychology looks at situations rather than traits (disposition)

Social Psychology Perspectives

- Cognition, emotion, motivation (affect)
- Evolution
- Culture
- Neuroscientific
- Tools used: questionnaires, brain imaging, virtual environments, internet

Applications of Social Psychology

- Education, health, law, business, etc.

Is social psych just common sense?

- Contradictory conclusions
 - o **Hindsight bias:** tendency to believe that one knew, or predicted, an outcome after the fact
- Limiting conditions: under what conditions is an outcome likely to occur?
- Explanations: why? What process led to a particular outcome?