

# Approaches to the Study of Social Psychology

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## Opinion

Social psychology is the scientific study of how the actual, imagined, and implied presences of others impact people's ideas, feelings, and behaviours, with 'imagined' and 'implied presences' referring to internalised social standards that humans are influenced by even when they are alone. Social psychologists often explain human behaviour as the outcome of a link between one's mental state and one's social setting, researching the conditions under which ideas, feelings, and behaviours occur and how these variables influence social interactions. To some extent, social psychology has bridged the gap between psychology and sociology, although there is still a gap between the two areas. Social psychology emerged from the greater subject of psychology in the nineteenth century. Many psychologists at the time were interested with establishing solid explanations for various aspects of human nature. They sought concrete cause-and-effect links that could explain social interactions. They did so by applying the scientific method to human behaviour. During the 1930s, several Gestalt psychologists, most notably Kurt Lewin, fled Nazi Germany to the United States. They were essential in distinguishing the field from the main behavioural and psychoanalytic schools of the period. Attitudes and small group phenomena were the most widely investigated topics during this time period. Attitude is described in social psychology as learnt, global judgments (e.g., of individuals or situations) that influence cognition and action. Attitudes are fundamental manifestations of approval and disapproval, or, as Bem (1970) puts it, likes and dislikes (e.g. enjoying chocolate ice cream, or endorsing the values of a particular political party). General attitudes are not necessarily reliable predictors of individual action since people are impacted by various factors in any given situation. For example, a person may care about the environment but may not recycle a plastic bottle on a given day.

Attitude research has looked at the contrast between standard, self-reported attitudes and implicit, unconscious views. Experiments utilising the implicit association test, for example, have discovered that people frequently exhibit unconscious bias against other races, even when they are not aware of it. Social cognition is the study of how humans receive, consider, and retain information about others. Much study is based on the assumption that people think differently about other people than they do about non-social targets. The social-cognitive difficulties displayed by patients with Williams syndrome and autism provide credence to this assertion. The study of how people generate impressions of others is known as person perception. Interpersonal perception

is the study of how people create opinions about each other while interacting. Attribution is a key research issue in social cognition. Attributions are how we explain people's behaviour, whether our own or that of others. One aspect of attribution attributes the origin of behaviour to both internal and external sources. The word "social influence" refers to the persuading effects that people have on one another. In social psychology, it is seen as a fundamental value. Its study overlaps significantly with studies into attitudes and persuasion.

Conformity, compliance, and obedience are the three major areas of social influence. Social influence is very strongly tied to the study of group dynamics, because most influence effects are strongest when they occur in social groups. Conformity is the first important domain of social influence. Conformity is described as the proclivity to act or think in the same way as other members of a group. Compliance is the second major topic of social influence research, and it refers to any change in behaviour that occurs as a result of a request or suggestion from another person. The foot-in-the-door technique is a compliance tactic in which the persuader asks for a minor favour and then asks for a greater favour. Obedience is the third major type of social influence; it is a change in conduct that occurs as a result of a direct order or demand from another person. To some extent, social psychology has bridged the gap between psychology and sociology, although there is still a gap between the two areas. Nonetheless, sociological approaches to psychology continue to be a vital complement to traditional psychological research.

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