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PSYCHOSOCIAL INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR

Course code: PSY 110
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Introduction to Social Psychology

❖ **What is Social Psychology**

- *Social psychology* – the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by other people
- Influence can be:
 - Important or Trivial
 - Obvious or subtle
 - Temporary or long-lasting

❖ **Textbook Definitions of Social Psychology**

- 1. The scientific study of social behavior
- 2. The attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Allport, 1935).
- 3. Focuses on the ways in which individuals are affected by the persons around them, and the basic cognitive processes that determine people's social behavior and feelings.
- 4. The scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behavior and thought in social situations.....seeks to understand how we think about and interact with others (Baron, Byrne, & Watson, 2000).

❖ **Key Features of Definitions**

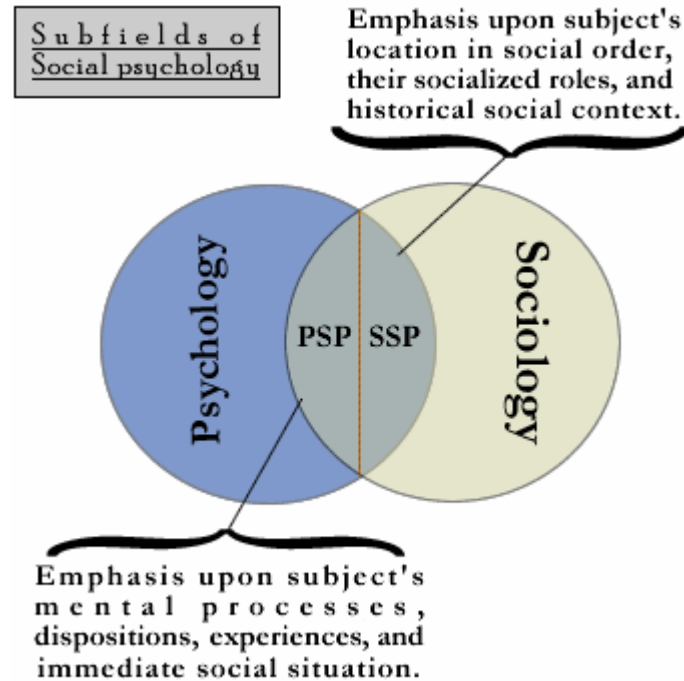
- 1. Social behavior and thought
- 2. Identifying causes
- 3. Role of cognitive processes
- 4. Scientific method

❖ **What Are Social Psychology's Big Lessons?**

- We construct our social reality
- Social influences shape our behavior
- Personal attitudes and dispositions also shape behavior

- Social psychology's principles are applicable to everyday life and other disciplines

❖ Relevant academic fields



- **Comparison with Sociology**
 - Social psychology focuses on a more micro level of analysis than sociology.
 - It is concerned with individuals rather than societies.
 - Social psychology tries to derive universal properties of human behavior.
- **Comparison with Personality Psychology**
 - Personality psychology focuses on individual differences.
 - However, social psychology focuses more on how the social situation affects people similarly.
 - Behavior can not be explained by personality alone, because this underestimates the power of social influence.

❖ Three Worlds of Social Psychology

- North America/Europe
 - Much attention on individual level explanation
 - Primary method is laboratory experiments
- Other industrialized nations
 - More attention to intergroup and societal levels of explanation
 - Method: laboratory experiments as well as natural observation and social discourse (social order)
- Developing countries
 - Concerned with poverty, conflict, and making use of limited resources.

❖ **Is social psychology simply common sense?**

- Many conclusions drawn from social psychological research seem obvious.
- Problem with common sense.
 - Tends to be activated after the fact.
 - Hindsight bias: “I knew it all along” phenomenon.
- Therefore, must be cautious about relying only on common sense, especially in understanding human behavior.