

Social & Relational Careers

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll continue our discussion of the different specialized fields available when pursuing a career in psychology.

The particular areas of focus include:

1. Category of Social and Relational Psychology
2. Research-Based Fields
 - a. Social Psychology
 - b. Cultural Psychology
3. Action-Based Fields
 - a. Community Psychology
 - b. School Psychology
4. Other Related Fields
 - a. Comparative Psychology
 - b. Consumer Psychology
 - c. Forensic Psychology

1. Category of Social and Relational Psychology

Social and relational psychology generally looks at different groups of people, their behaviors, and the causes for those different behaviors. In this way, it's very much a sociocultural approach to psychology.

A lot of social and relational psychology comes from observation-based research because psychologists in this field can't necessarily experiment on groups of people and the way they work within social contexts.

Instead, the experimental aspect tends to involve watching people--generally large groups of people--and trying to generate theories on what is occurring within those groups.

While it does incorporate a lot of other different theories, social and relational psychology is a very humanistic theory of psychology, as another of its main focuses is bettering people's situations.

2. Research-Based Fields

Social psychology and cultural psychology, the first two areas of study in the social and relational field of psychology, will likely be familiar since they've been discussed in previous lessons on the different approaches to psychology.

Both social and cultural psychology are research-based areas of psychology, meaning that their goal is to understand better what's going on around us. In other words, people studying these fields are trying to gather information through research.

2a. Social Psychology

Social psychology studies social behaviors, and how individuals are influenced by the groups of people around them.

One way this influence occurs is through social loafing, which is a social psychology phenomenon stating that depending on the size of a group, a person is less likely to perform an action quite as well when there are more people around.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** Suppose you need first aid, or you need assistance with something. According to this theory, you're not supposed to ask a group of people for help. Rather, you should single out one individual person. This is because if you ask the entire group, everybody in the group will be less likely to help you since there are other people around.



TERM TO KNOW

Social Psychology

Studies issues of human behavior in relationship with others; issues like conformity, attitudes toward time, personal space, persuasion, friendship, etc.

2b. Cultural Psychology

The second research-based field is **cultural psychology**, which is similar to social psychology in that it studies how a person's culture, or cultural context, can affect the way that person thinks or behaves.

IN CONTEXT

An application of cultural psychology is the cultural relativity expressed through idioms. In America, there is the saying, "The squeaky wheel gets the oil," which means that a person who speaks up is a person who gets noticed and receives something. However, this isn't necessarily true in other cultural contexts.

In Japan, there is the saying, "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down," meaning that a person who stands out from the group is somebody that needs to be put back in his or her place. You can see how these two sayings conflict with each other because America and Japan have different ideas (based on cultural context) about how a person should behave in a group.



TERM TO KNOW

3. Action-Based Fields

Community psychology and school psychology, the next two social and relational fields, are action-based. This means that they attempt to influence, or affect change in, the areas that they're studying.

3a. Community Psychology

Community psychology not only studies the psychology of particular groups within an area, but also seeks to improve them through programs and education within those areas.

In this way, community psychology is committed to social justice. These types of psychologists are trying to improve the situations of people that might be marginalized, or might have less within a certain community or situation.

A lot of community psychologists focus on particular groups that might be having trouble within a city or a larger social context.



TERM TO KNOW

Community Psychology

An area of psychology that helps groups of people to have wider access to mental health care and educates them on psychological issues

3b. School Psychology

Another action-based field, **school psychology**, involves a variety of different tasks that seek to improve the situations of the students within schools.

These tasks are methods like psychological testing to determine whether a person should be placed within a program or should receive special assistance, referrals for people to go to different programs, emotional support and counseling, as well vocational support.

The desired result of all of these methods is that people get assistance in order to understand what to do next in their education, or their fields.

In school psychology, the goal is to detect and treat different kinds of problems within the school context, so as to improve the overall classroom learning of the students within that environment.



TERM TO KNOW

School Psychology

An area that performs a variety of tasks aimed at improving the situations of students, like emotional and social support, vocational counseling, and detecting and treating learning disabilities

4. Other Related Fields

There are also some other career areas related to social and relational psychology that you can consider.

4a. Comparative Psychology

Comparative psychology, as its name suggests, compares the behaviors of different species of animals to human beings.

Comparative psychology is especially concerned with animals that are very similar to humans, so that something can be learned about human behavior through the study of the animals.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Chimpanzees and their language are often studied in order to understand the language of humans better, as these two species are known to be very similar.

However, comparative psychology can also involve the study of animals that have completely different types of behaviors from humans.

➞ **EXAMPLE** The social structure of ants, which is very different from that of people, can help us to better understand our own social structure through an analysis of those contrasting differences.



TERM TO KNOW

Comparative Psychology

Studies and compares the behavior of different species to humans

4b. Consumer Psychology

Another area is **consumer psychology**, which is the study of how people are influenced by the products and advertising around them.

This type of psychology also involves trying to determine different trends in the buying of products by consumers.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Super Bowl commercials have a consumer psychologist or **media psychologist** studying them to determine whether a person is more or less likely to buy those products after watching. The idea is that the commercials are supposed to appeal to people on a variety of different psychological levels, using a lot of different psychological techniques.



TERMS TO KNOW

Consumer Psychology

The study of advertising and how to better reach consumers

Media Psychology

An area of psychology that examines the relationship between different forms of media, like television, and individuals in contact with them

4c. Forensic Psychology

Forensic psychology is something that you might be familiar with from different crime shows on television.

However, forensic psychology is not just the profiling of criminals, although that's definitely a part of it. More broadly, this type of psychology tries to understand the underlying causes of criminal behavior.

Forensic psychology is related to social or community psychology in that it is aiming to understand,

specifically in regards to crime, how different things are occurring within a group of people.

This field also studies programs involved in crime prevention, such as police, police hiring practices, and the justice system in general.

In the interest of facilitating change, forensic psychologists study courtrooms and prison practices. By studying the people within courtrooms and prisons, particularly inmates, the psychologists may learn things that can lead to the establishment of a better situation or rehabilitation program for those people.



TERM TO KNOW

Forensic Psychology

The psychological study of the law and criminal investigation



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about some of the possible career paths within the **category of social and relational psychology**. While **social psychology** and **cultural psychology** are **research-based fields**, meaning they focus on gathering information through research, **community psychology** and **school psychology** are **action-based fields**, meaning they attempt to influence or change the areas they're studying.

You now understand that there are several other related fields as well. **Comparative psychology**, **consumer psychology**, and **forensic psychology** all fall under the larger umbrella of social and relational psychology.

Good luck!

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Erick Taggart.



TERMS TO KNOW

Community Psychology

An area of psychology that helps groups of people to have wider access to mental health care and educates them on psychological issues.

Comparative Psychology

Studies and compares the behavior of different species to humans.

Consumer Psychology

The study of advertising and how to better reach consumers.

Cultural Psychology

The study of the effect of culture and ethnicity on individuals.

Forensic Psychology

The psychological study of the law and criminal investigation.

Media Psychology

An area of psychology that examines the relationship between different forms of media, like television, and individuals in contact with them.

School Psychology

An area that performs a variety of tasks aimed at improving the situations of students, like emotional and social support, vocational counseling, and detecting and treating learning disabilities.

Social Psychology

Study issues of human behavior in relationship with others; issues like conformity, attitudes toward time, personal space, persuasion, friendship, etc.