

Metadata of the chapter that will be visualized online

Chapter Title	Interpersonal Curiosity	
Copyright Year	2011	
Copyright Holder	Springer Science + Business Media, LLC	
Corresponding Author	Family Name	Litman
	Particle	
	Given Name	Jordan A.
	Suffix	
	Division	Psychology Department
	Organization	University of South Florida
	Address	140 7th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL, 33701-5016, USA
	Email	jlitman@mail.usf.edu
Author	Family Name	Pezzo
	Particle	
	Given Name	Mark V.
	Suffix	
	Division	Psychology Department
	Organization	University of South Florida
	Address	140 7th Avenue South, Saint Petersburg, FL, 33701-5016, USA
	Email	pezzo@mail.usf.edu

1

2 Interpersonal Curiosity

3 JORDAN A. LITMAN, MARK V. PEZZO
4 Psychology Department, University of South Florida,
5 Saint Petersburg, FL, USA

6 Synonyms

7 Curiosity about people; Social curiosity

8 Definition

9 Interpersonal curiosity is the desire for new information
10 about people, including details about others' life experi-
11 ences, their public and private activities, and also their
12 internalized thoughts, feelings, and motives. Interpersonal
13 curiosity can motivate both overt and covert information-
14 seeking behaviors, such as asking people questions directly
15 or surreptitiously eavesdropping on them, respectively.
16 Three dimensions of interpersonal curiosity have been
17 identified: Curiosity about Emotions (CE), reflected in
18 a desire to learn people's feelings; a willingness to engage
19 in Spying and Prying (SP) in order to learn about people's
20 interests and life experiences; and Snooping (Sn), which
21 involves investigating people's personal surroundings or
22 going through their belongings. Once activated, the degree
23 to which interpersonal curiosity is experienced and
24 expressed is theorized to vary due to individual differences
25 in interpersonal curiosity as a dispositional trait (Litman
26 and Pezzo 2007; Renner 2006; Singer and Antrobus 1963).

27 Interpersonal curiosity is positively correlated with
28 epistemic curiosity, particularly deprivation-type,
29 suggesting that most of the pleasure derived from learning
30 about others is due to uncertainty reduction rather than
31 the stimulation of interest (Litman and Pezzo 2007).
32 The relationship between interpersonal curiosity and
33 other forms of social interaction is complex; it is found
34 positively associated with tendencies to share gossip, but is
35 inconsistently related to extraversion (generally stronger
36 for overt forms, weaker for covert forms) and concerns

about social presentation (in general, weakly or negatively 37
related). Overt expressions of interpersonal curiosity tend 38
to be negatively associated with anxiety, while covert 39
expressions tend to be positively related, suggesting that 40
anxiety may inhibit aspects of interpersonal curiosity that 41
require social interaction but facilitate gathering informa- 42
tion about others surreptitiously (Litman and Pezzo 2007; 43
Renner 2006). 44

Theoretical Background 45

Early attempts to study interpersonal curiosity primarily 46
focused on dispositional tendencies to passively wonder 47
about people's day-to-day life experiences (Singer and 48
Antrobus 1963). However, little consideration was initially 49
given toward being curious about people's internalized life 50
experiences, such as their thoughts or feelings, although 51
these are significant sources of information about others 52
(Fiske 1995). Early work on interpersonal curiosity 53
(Singer and Antrobus 1963) also neglected to take into 54
account the role of relevant information-seeking behav- 55
iors such as asking questions or spying, which may 56
be influenced by social approval constraints or experiences 57
of anxiety. Recent research by Renner (2006) and by 58
Litman and Pezzo (2007) have endeavored to address 59
limitations of past research on interpersonal curiosity 60
by developing new measures of individuals differences in 61
tendencies to engage in various kinds of overt and covert 62
behaviors in order to learn about others. 63

Important Scientific Research and Open Questions 64

The new measures of interpersonal curiosity were only 65
recently developed, so much more research needs to be 66
conducted in order to determine whether individual dif- 67
ferences in each interpersonal curiosity dimension predict 68
relevant information-seeking behaviors, such as inquiring 69
about people's feelings (CE) or their daily activities (Sn), 70
or expending effort to pry into others' private affairs (SP). 71
It will also be important to investigate how dispositional 72
tendencies to experience and express interpersonal 73
74

75 curiosity interact with social skills and the ability to
76 understand the needs and feelings of others during social
77 interactions.

78 **Cross-References**

- 79 ▶ Adaptation and Learning
- 80 ▶ Curiosity
- 81 ▶ Divergent Thinking and Learning
- 82 ▶ Empathy and Learning
- 83 ▶ Epistemic Curiosity
- 84 ▶ Motivation and Learning
- 85 ▶ Play, Exploration and Learning
- 86 ▶ Social Interactions and Learning

References

- Fiske, S. T. (1995). Social cognition. In A. Tesser (Ed.), *Advanced social* 88
psychology. New York: McGraw Hill. 89
- Litman, J. A., & Pezzo, M. V. (2006). Individual differences in attitudes 90 ^[Au1]
towards gossip. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 38, 963–980. 91
- Litman, J. A., & Pezzo, M. V. (2007). Dimensionality of interpersonal 92
curiosity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 43, 1448–1459. 93
- Renner, B. (2006). Curiosity about people. *Journal of Personality* 94
Assessment, 87, 305–316. 95
- Singer, J. L., & Antrobus, J. S. (1963). A factor-analytical study of 96 ^[Au2]
daydreaming and the conceptually related cognitive and personality 97
variables. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, Monograph Supplement*, 3–17. 98

Galley Proof

Author Query Form

Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning
Chapter No: 1644

Query Refs.	Details Required	Author's response
AU1	Please provide citation in text for the reference "Litman J. A., & Pezzo M. V. (2006)".	
AU2	Please provide volume number for the reference "Singer, J. L. (1963)."	