

Cheat Sheet: Social Psychology

Essential Concepts

Social Psychology and Self-presentation

- Social psychology studies how situations influence individual behavior, thoughts, and feelings.
- Causes of behavior can be internal (personality) or external (social influences). Behavior is often best explained with both internal and external
- The fundamental attribution error is over-relying on dispositional explanations and underestimating situational influences. Individualistic cultures are more likely to display this error than collectivistic cultures.
- Human behavior is guided by social roles, norms, and scripts. Social norms define appropriate behavior for each role.

Attitudes and Persuasion

- Attitudes are evaluations or feelings toward a person, idea, or object.
- Cognitive dissonance occurs when our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors conflict.
- External forces of persuasion include advertising; the features of advertising that influence our behaviors include the source, message, and audience.
- There are two main routes to persuasion: central (facts/information) and peripheral (associative cues).

Group Behavior

- Conformity to group norms is driven by two motivations, the desire to fit in and be liked and the desire to be accurate and gain information from the group.

- Authority figures also have influence over our behaviors, and many people become obedient and follow orders even if the orders are contrary to their personal values.
- Groupthink can hinder decision-making, and results from cohesive group members trying to maintain group harmony.
- The presence of others can also lead to social loafing when individual efforts cannot be evaluated.
- Aggression seeks to harm another; can be hostile (anger-driven) or instrumental (goal-driven).
- Bullying (and cyberbullying) involves repetitive harmful actions intended to cause physical, psychological, emotional, or social harm, and has severe mental health implications.
- The bystander effect explains why people may not assist someone in distress. Research has shown that people decide whether to help based on factors such as how they define emergencies, the presence of others (which can lead to diffusion of responsibility), and a cost-benefit analysis of helping.

Relationships

- Altruism is selfless helping; contrasted with egoistic motivations.
- Relationships are often formed based on proximity and similarities.
- Factors that influence the formation of relationships include reciprocity, self-disclosure, and physical attractiveness.
- There are many types of love that are determined by various combinations of intimacy, passion, and commitment; consummate love, which is the ideal form of love, contains all three components.
- When determining satisfaction and whether to maintain a relationship, individuals often use a social exchange approach and weigh the costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship.

Prejudice and Discrimination

- Prejudice involves negative feelings towards different social groups (out-groups). Discrimination is an action based on prejudice.
- Prejudice and discrimination against others can be based on gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, age, or a variety of other social identities.

- In-groups who feel threatened may blame the out-groups for their plight, thus using the out-group as a scapegoat for their frustration.
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Glossary

actor-observer bias

phenomenon of explaining other people's behaviors are due to internal factors and our own behaviors are due to situational forces

ageism

prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their age

aggression

seeking to cause harm or pain to another person

altruism

a motivation for helping that has the improvement of another's welfare as its ultimate goal, with no expectation of any benefits for the helper; humans' desire to help others even if the costs outweigh the benefits of helping

arousal: cost-reward model

an egoistic theory proposed by Piliavin et al. (1981) that claims that seeing a person in need leads to the arousal of unpleasant feelings, and observers are motivated to eliminate that aversive state, often by helping the victim.

Asch effect

group majority influences an individual's judgment, even when that judgment is inaccurate

attitude

evaluations of or feelings toward a person, idea, or object that are typically positive or negative

attribution

our explanation for the source of our own or others' behaviors and outcomes

bullying

a person, often an adolescent, being treated negatively repeatedly and over time

bystander effect

situation in which a witness or bystander does not volunteer to help a victim or person in distress

bystander intervention

the phenomenon whereby people intervene to help others in need even if the other is a complete stranger and the intervention puts the helper at risk

central route persuasion

logic-driven arguments using data and facts to convince people of an argument's worthiness

cognitive dissonance

psychological discomfort that arises from a conflict in a person's behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs that runs counter to one's positive self-perception

collectivist culture

culture that focuses on communal relationships with others such as family, friends, and community

companionate love

type of love consisting of intimacy and commitment, but not passion; associated with close friendships and family relationships

confederate

a person who works for a researcher and is aware of the experiment, but who acts as a participant; used to manipulate social situations as part of the research design

confirmation bias

seeking out information that supports our stereotypes while ignoring information that is inconsistent with our stereotypes

conformity

when individuals change their behavior to go along with the group even if they do not agree with the group

consummate love

type of love occurring when intimacy, passion, and commitment are all present

cost-benefit analysis

a decision-making process that compares the cost of an action or thing against the expected benefit to help determine the best course of action

cyberbullying

repeated behavior that is intended to cause psychological or emotional harm to another person and that takes place online

deindividuation

the idea that individuals may feel a sense of anonymity when part of a group and therefore a reduction in accountability when among others

diffusion of responsibility

tendency for no one in a group to help because the responsibility to help is spread throughout the group; when deciding whether to help a person in need, knowing that there are others who could also provide assistance relieves bystanders of some measure of personal responsibility, reducing the likelihood that bystanders will intervene

discrimination

negative actions toward individuals as a result of their membership in a particular group

dispositionism

describes a perspective common to personality psychologists, which asserts that our behavior is determined by internal factors, such as personality traits and temperament

egoism

a motivation for helping that has the improvement of the helper's own circumstances as its primary goal

empathic concern

according to Batson's empathy–altruism hypothesis, observers who empathize with a person in need (that is, put themselves in the shoes of the victim and imagine how that person feels) will experience empathic concern and have an altruistic motivation for helping

empathy

capacity to understand another person's perspective—to feel what they feel

empathy–altruism model

an altruistic theory proposed by Batson (2011) that claims that people who put themselves in the shoes of a victim and imagining how the victim feel will experience empathic concern that evokes an altruistic motivation for helping.

foot-in-the-door technique

persuasion of one person by another person, encouraging a person to agree to a small favor, or to buy a small item, only to later request a larger favor or purchase a larger item

fundamental attribution error

tendency to overemphasize internal factors as attributions for behavior and underestimate the power of the situation

group polarization

strengthening of the original group attitude after discussing views within the group

groupthink

group members modify their opinions to match what they believe is the group consensus

homophily

tendency for people to form social networks, including friendships, marriage, business relationships, and many other types of relationships, with others who are similar

homophobia

prejudice and discrimination against individuals based solely on their sexual orientation

hostile aggression

aggression motivated by feelings of anger with the intent to cause pain

individualistic culture

culture that focuses on individual achievement and autonomy

informational social influence

people conform because they believe the group is competent and has the correct information, particularly when the task or situation is ambiguous

in-group

group that we identify with or see ourselves as belonging to

in-group bias

preference for our own group over other groups

instrumental aggression

aggression motivated by achieving a goal and does not necessarily involve intent to cause pain

internal factor

internal attribute of a person, such as personality traits or temperament

interpersonal

pertaining to dyads and groups

intrapersonal

pertaining to the individual

justification of effort

we value goals and achievements that we put a lot of effort into; if something is difficult for us to achieve, we believe it is more worthwhile

just-world hypothesis

ideology common in the United States that people get the outcomes they deserve

mere-exposure effect

the more often we are exposed to a stimulus (e.g., sound, person) the more likely we are to view that stimulus positively

normative social influence

people conform to the group norm to fit in, feel good, and be accepted by the group

obedience

change of behavior to please an authority figure or to avoid aversive consequences

out-group

group that we don't belong to—one that we view as fundamentally different from us

peripheral route persuasion

one person persuades another person; an indirect route that relies on the association of peripheral cues (such as positive emotions and celebrity endorsement) to associate positivity with a message

persuasion

the process of changing our attitude toward something based on some form of communication

pluralistic ignorance

relying on others to define the situation and then erroneously concluding that no intervention is necessary when help is actually needed

prejudice

negative attitudes and feelings toward individuals based solely on their membership in a particular group

prosocial behavior

social behavior that benefits another person; voluntary behavior with the intent to help other people

racism

prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their race

reciprocal altruism

according to evolutionary psychology, a genetic predisposition for people to help those who have previously helped them

reciprocity

give and take in relationships

romantic love

type of love consisting of intimacy and passion, but no commitment

scapegoating

act of blaming an out-group when the in-group experiences frustration or is blocked from obtaining a goal

script

a person's knowledge about the sequence of events in a specific setting

self-disclosure

sharing personal information in relationships

self-fulfilling prophecy

treating stereotyped group members according to our biased expectations only to have this treatment influence the individual to act according to our stereotypic expectations, thus confirming our stereotypic beliefs

self-serving bias

tendency for individuals to take credit by making dispositional or internal attributions for positive outcomes and situational or external attributions for negative outcomes

sexism

prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based on their sex

situationism

describes a perspective that behavior and actions are determined by the immediate environment and surroundings; a view promoted by social psychologists

social exchange theory

humans act as naïve economists in keeping a tally of the ratio of costs and benefits of forming and maintain a relationship, with the goal to maximize benefits and minimize costs

social facilitation

improved performance when an audience is watching versus when the individual performs the behavior alone

social loafing

exertion of less effort by a person working in a group because individual performance cannot be evaluated separately from the group, thus causing performance decline on easy tasks

social norm

group's expectations regarding what is appropriate and acceptable for the thoughts and behavior of its members

social psychology

field of psychology that examines how people impact or affect each other, with particular focus on the power of the situation

social role

socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of a person in a given setting or group

Stanford prison experiment

Stanford University conducted an experiment in a mock prison that demonstrated the power of social roles, social norms, and scripts

stereotype

negative beliefs about individuals based solely on their membership in a group, regardless of their individual characteristics

triangular theory of love

model of love based on three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment; several types of love exist, depending on the presence or absence of each of these components