

General Psychology

Notes - Social Psychology

These are general notes designed to assist students who are regularly attending class and reading assigned material: they are supplemental rather than exhaustive and reflect general concepts.

- I. Social Construction of the Self - affected by culture, environment, and people you associate with
 - A. **Self-Concept** - beliefs about who we are and what characterizes us
 - B. **Self-Esteem** - judgments we make about our value as human beings
 - C. **Social Comparison**
 1. Leon Festinger believes we evaluate ourselves by comparing ourselves to others
 2. **Reference Groups** - people you identify with and compare yourself to
 - * **downward social comparison** - compare self to those who are not as developed as you
 - * **relative deprivation** - compared to reference group you are deficient
 - D. **Social Identity** - set of characteristics that makes you unique
- II. Social Perception - interpret information, draw conclusions, and develop beliefs about others
 - A. **Schemas** - coherent sets of beliefs and expectations about the world (file system)
 1. Influence what you pay attention to and remember about others
 - B. First Impressions
 1. Form quickly, slow to change, & have lasting effects on how one reacts to others.
 2. When first meeting someone, assume that people have similar attitudes & values to you.
 3. Takes very little negative information to form a negative first impression.
 4. Negative carries more weight than positive.
 5. "**Cognitive Misers**" - prefer maintaining existing beliefs than go through the trouble of developing and thinking new ones.
 6. **Self-fulfilling prophecy** - what you believe about someone and subsequently your interactions with that individual elicit confirming behavior and fulfill your expectations.
 7. Tend to engage in **selective perception** - only take in information that supports our beliefs and disregard information that does not support what we believe.
- III. Attribution Theory
 - A. Attribution - process by which people explain the causes of behavior
 1. **Internal attributions** based on personality/dispositional factors (person is mean).
 2. **External attributions** based on environmental/situational factors (person is having a bad day).
 3. Explanations help people understand behavior, predict future occurrences, & control situations.
 - B. **Fundamental Attribution Error** - tendency to over estimate internal attributions and under estimate external attributions when explaining others behavior

C. **Self-serving Bias** - tendency to give yourself credit for something good (internal attributions) and blame problems or mistakes on something situational (external attributions)

IV. Attitudes - tendency to respond positively or negatively to a specific object or person

A. Structure of Attitudes

1. Cognitive component - beliefs
2. Emotional or affective component - is the judgment (like or dislike)
3. Behavioral component - way you act based on your beliefs and emotions
4. Seek consistency between what we believe, how we feel, and what we do.

B. Forming Attitudes

1. Social Learning (modeling) - adults show children what to think about things
2. Shaped by experience - mere-exposure effect

C. Changing Attitudes

1. Persuasive communication - attitude change depends
 - * characteristics of communicator/appearance of speaker (**peripheral route**)
 - * content of the message and validity of its claims (**central route**)
 - * nature of the audience - if motivated and able will take the central route
2. **Cognitive Dissonance Theory** - Leon Festinger
 - * Anxiety or discomfort one feels when they are holding two inconsistent beliefs, or when behavior is inconsistent with your belief.
 - * Because of discomfort you become motivated to change a belief.

D. Prejudice and Stereotypes

1. Stereotype - false assumption that all group members have the same features/ usually negative
2. Prejudice - attitude based on group membership (can be positive or negative)
3. Discrimination - differential treatment of people based on their membership to a group
4. Theories of Prejudice
 - * **authoritarian personality**
 - * **frustration theory** - take out frustration on a scapegoat
 - * **In-group - group** you feel loyal and devoted to - vs. -
 - * **Out-group** (feel antagonistic toward)
 - * Out-groups are seen as inferior and less acceptable.
 - * Enhance self-esteem by derogating out-group members.
 - * Inaccurate Stereotyping and Label
 - * Learning based on parents, other significant adults, and mass media.
5. Reduce Prejudice and Discrimination by increasing contact between groups and assigning people from different ethnic groups as a task that they must work on together (**jigsaw technique**)

V. Interpersonal Attraction

A. Keys to Attraction

1. Physical proximity

2. Similarity - interests and physical attractiveness (**matching hypothesis**)
3. Pleasant environment

B. Intimate Relationships

1. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love - 3 components of Love
 - * intimacy - sharing of self
 - * passion - physical and emotional intensity, unstable
 - * commitment - loyalty and responsibility to the relationship

VI. Social Influences

A. **Social Norms** - learned rules of a culture about what to do and what not to do

B. **Conformity** - behavior changes to match other group members due to unspoken group pressure and **Compliance** - changing behavior due to a direct request

1. Conformity and compliance are encouraged to be group norms.
 - * **Asch Experiment** - subjects had to judge the length of lines/70% of subjects gave the wrong answer (conformed) when confederate group members gave the wrong answer.
2. As ambiguity of the situation increases, conformity to group norms more likely.
3. Size of majority affects the pressure on people to conform.

C. **Obedience** - agreeing to an explicit demand from an authority figure

1. **Stanley Milgram** - 1950 Obedience Study
 - * Subjects were ordered to shock a person if they made a mistake on learning a task.
 - * Shocks were fake and the person receiving the pseudoshocks part of the experiment.
 - * Subjects believed they were shocking people.
 - * No subjects stopped before 300 volts and 65% went to the maximum 450 volts.
 - * Deciding to continue was stressful for all the subjects.
2. Factors Affecting Obedience
 - * prestige of experimenter
 - * presence of others who disobeyed was most powerful factor to reduce obedience
 - * obedience more likely in authoritarian personalities & external locus of control
3. Ethical questions raised because of the stress subjects were put under.

D. Group Processes

1. **Group Think** - pattern of thinking in which group members stop evaluating options and decisions realistically. Group becomes closed minded and any type of dissension is oppressed.
2. **Diffusion of Responsibility** - individuals do not take responsibility for behavior because they assume someone else in the group will.
3. **Group Polarization** - the decisions of the group are more extreme than any of its individuals.
4. **Deindividuation** - submerged into a group and lose a sense of self, becomes less inhibited.
5. **Bystander Effect** - less likely to help person in distress when others are around, assume others will do something.
6. **Social Loafing** - allow others in the group to do the work, put forth minimal effort.