



Social Psychology

Chapter 18

PSY 12000.003
Spring, 2009

Focuses in Social Psychology

“We cannot live for ourselves alone.”

Herman Melville

Social psychology scientifically studies how we *think about, influence, and relate to* one another.

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Social Thinking

1. Does his absenteeism signify illness, laziness, or a stressful work atmosphere?
2. Was the horror of 9/11 the work of crazed evil people or ordinary people corrupted by life events?

Social thinking involves thinking about others, especially when they engage in doing things that are unexpected.

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Attributing Behavior to Persons or to Situations

Attribution Theory: Fritz Heider (1958) suggested that we have a tendency to give causal explanations for someone's behavior, often by crediting either the situation or the person's disposition.



Fritz Heider

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Attributing Behavior to Persons or to Situations

A teacher may wonder whether a child's hostility reflects an aggressive personality (*dispositional attribution*) or is a reaction to stress or abuse (*a situational attribution*).

Dispositions are enduring personality traits. So, if Joe is a quiet, shy, and introverted child, he is likely to be like that in a number of situations.



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Fundamental Attribution Error

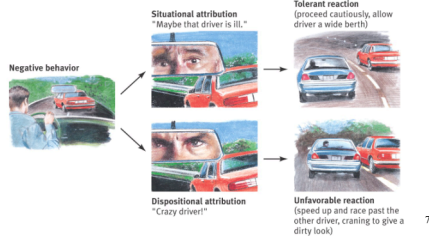
The tendency to overestimate the impact of personal disposition and underestimate the impact of the situations in analyzing the behaviors of others leads to the **fundamental attribution error**.

We see Joe as quiet, shy, and introverted most of the time, but with friends he is very talkative, loud, and extroverted.

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Effects of Attribution

How we explain someone's behavior affects how we react to it.



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Attitude

A belief and feeling that predisposes a person to respond in a particular way to objects, other people, and events.

If we *believe* a person is mean, we may *feel* dislike for the person and *act* in an unfriendly manner.

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Attitudes Can Affect Action

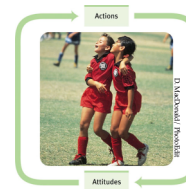
Our attitudes predict our behaviors imperfectly because other factors, including the external situation, also influence behavior.

Democratic leaders supported Bush's attack on Iraq under public pressure. However, they had their private reservations.

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Attitudes Can Affect Action

Not only do people stand for what they believe in (attitude), they start believing in what they stand for.



Cooperative actions can lead to mutual liking (beliefs). 10

Small Request – Large Request

In the Korean War, Chinese communists solicited cooperation from US army prisoners by asking them to carry out small errands. By complying to small errands they were likely to comply to larger ones.

Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon: The tendency for people who have first agreed to a small request to comply later with a larger request.

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Role Playing Affects Attitudes

Zimbardo (1972) assigned the roles of guards and prisoners to random students and found that guards and prisoners developed role-appropriate attitudes.



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Actions Can Affect Attitudes

Why do actions affect attitudes? One explanation is that when our attitudes and actions are opposed, we experience tension. This is called **cognitive dissonance**.

To relieve ourselves of this tension we bring our attitudes closer to our actions (Festinger, 1957).

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Cognitive Dissonance

- We don't like to hold inconsistent thoughts, or have a thought that is inconsistent with our behavior.
- When faced with an inconsistency (for something relatively important), we experience "cognitive dissonance."
- We are motivated to reduce this dissonance.
- We change the belief/attitude to come in line with the behavior.
 - 15/\$20 Study by Festinger & Carlsmith
 - Severity of initiation by Aronson & Mills

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Social Influence

The greatest contribution of social psychology is its study of attitudes, beliefs, decisions, and actions and the way they are molded by **social influence**.



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Conformity & Obedience

Behavior is contagious, modeled by one followed by another. We follow behavior of others to conform.

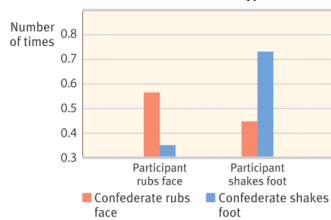
Other behaviors may be an expression of compliance (obedience) toward authority.

Conformity Obedience

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The Chameleon Effect or Nonconscious Mimicry

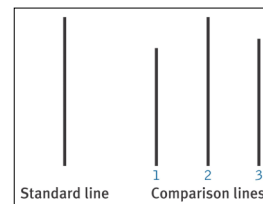
Conformity: Adjusting one's behavior or thinking to coincide with a group standard (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999).



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Group Pressure & Conformity

Suggestibility is a subtle type of conformity, adjusting our behavior or thinking toward some group standard.



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Group Pressure & Conformity

An influence resulting from one's willingness to accept others' opinions about reality.



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Conditions that Strengthen Conformity

- One is made to feel incompetent or insecure.
- The group has at least three people.
- The group is unanimous.
- One admires the group's status and attractiveness.
- One has no prior commitment or response.
- The group observes one's behavior.
- One's culture strongly encourages respect for a social standard.

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Reasons for Conformity

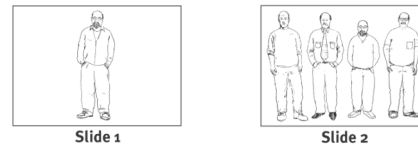
Normative Social Influence: Influence resulting from a person's desire to gain approval or avoid rejection. A person may respect normative behavior because there may be a severe price to pay if not respected.

Informative Social Influence: The group may provide valuable information, but stubborn people will never listen to others.

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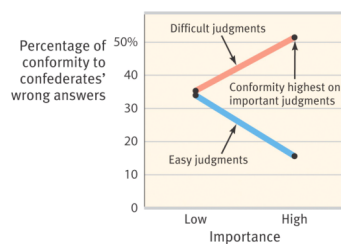
Informative Social Influence

Baron and colleagues (1996) made students do an eyewitness identification task. If the task was easy (lineup exposure 5 sec.), conformity was low in comparison to a difficult (1/2 sec. exposure) task.



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Informative Social Influence



Baron et al., (1996)

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Obedience

People comply to social pressures. How would they respond to outright command?

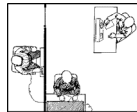
Stanley Milgram designed a study that investigates the effects of authority on obedience.



Stanley Milgram
(1933-1984)

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Milgram's Study

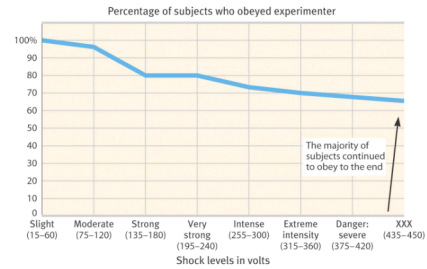


Slight (15-60) Moderate (75-120) Strong (135-180) Very strong (195-240) Intense (255-300) Extreme intensity (315-360) Danger: severe (375-420) XXX (435-450)

Shock levels in volts

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Milgram's Study: Results



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Individual Resistance

A third of the individuals in Milgram's study resisted social coercion.



An unarmed individual single-handedly challenged a line of tanks at Tiananmen Square.

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Lessons from the Conformity and Obedience Studies

In both Ash's and Milgram's studies, participants were pressured against following their standards and be responsive to others.

In Milgram's study, participants were torn between hearing the victims pleas, their own values, and the experimenter's orders.

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Group Influence

How do groups affect our behavior? Social psychologists study various groups:

- One person affecting another
- Families
- Teams
- Committees

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Individual Behavior in the Presence of Others

Social facilitation: Refers to improved performance on tasks in the presence of others. Triplett (1898) noticed cyclists' race times were faster when they competed against others than when they just raced against the clock.



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Social Loafing

The tendency of an individual in a group to exert less effort toward attaining a common goal than when tested individually (Latané, Williams, & Harkins, 1981).

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Deindividuation

The loss of self-awareness and self-restraint in group situations that foster arousal and anonymity.

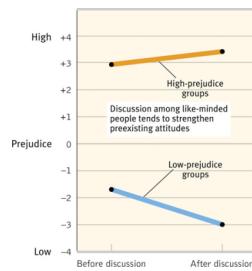


Mob behavior

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Effects of Group Interaction

Group Polarization enhances a group's prevailing attitudes through a discussion. If a group is like-minded, discussion strengthens its prevailing opinions and attitudes.



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Groupthink

A mode of thinking that occurs when the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides the realistic appraisal of alternatives.

- Attack on Pearl Harbor
- Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis
- Watergate Cover-up
- Chernobyl Reactor Accident

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Power of Individuals

The power of social influence is enormous, but so is the power of the individual.

Non-violent fasts and appeals by Gandhi led to the independence of India from the British.



Gandhi

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Social Relations

Social psychology teaches us how we relate to one another through prejudice, aggression, and conflict to attraction, and altruism and peacemaking.

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Prejudice

Simply called “prejudgment,” a prejudice is an unjustifiable (usually negative) attitude toward a group and its members. Prejudice is often directed towards different cultural, ethnic, or gender groups.

Components of Prejudice

1. Beliefs (stereotypes)
2. Emotions (hostility, envy, fear)
3. Predisposition to *act* (to discriminate)

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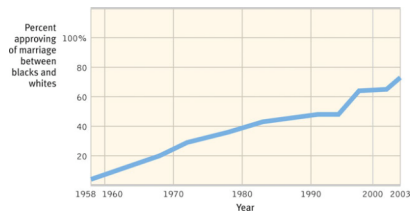
Reign of Prejudice

Prejudice works at the conscious and [more at] the unconscious level. Therefore, prejudice is more like a knee-jerk response than a conscious decision.

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How Prejudiced are People?

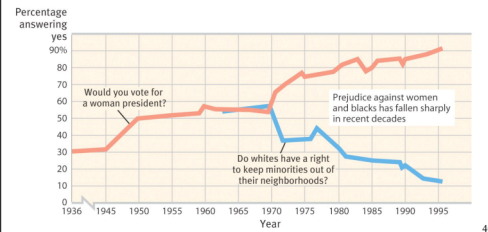
Over the duration of time many prejudices against interracial marriage, gender, homosexuality, and minorities have decreased.



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Racial & Gender Prejudice

Americans today express much less racial and gender prejudice, but prejudices still exist.



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Race

Nine out of ten white respondents were slow when responding to words like “peace” or “paradise” when they saw a black individual’s photo compared to a white individual’s photo (Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003).

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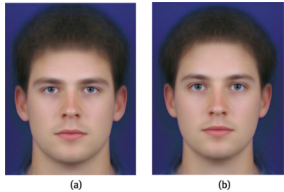
Gender

Most women still live in more poverty than men. About 100,000,000 women are missing in the world. There is a preference for male children in China and India, even with sex-selected abortion outlawed.

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Gender

Although prejudice prevails against women, more people feel positively toward women than men. Women rated picture b [feminized] higher (665) for a matrimonial ad (Perrett, 1998).



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Social Roots of Prejudice

Why does prejudice arise?

- Social Inequalities
- Social Divisions
- Emotional Scapegoating

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Social Inequality

Prejudice develops when people have money, power, and prestige, and others do not. Social inequality increases prejudice.

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In and Out Groups

Ingroup: People with whom one shares a common identity. **Outgroup:** Those perceived as different from one's ingroup. **Ingroup Bias:** The tendency to favor one's own group.



Scotland's famed "Tartan Army" fans.

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Emotional Roots of Prejudice

Prejudice provides an outlet for anger [emotion] by providing someone to blame. After 9/11 many people lashed out against innocent Arab-Americans.

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Cognitive Roots of Prejudice

One way we simplify our world is to **categorize**. We categorize people into groups by stereotyping them.

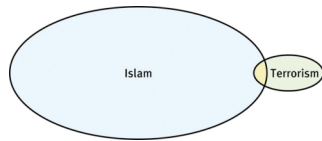


Foreign sunbathers may think Balinese look alike.

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Cognitive Roots of Prejudice

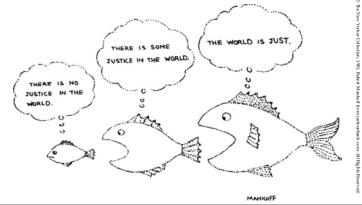
In **vivid cases** such as the 9/11 attacks, terrorists can feed stereotypes or prejudices (terrorism). Most terrorists are non-Muslims.



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Cognitive Roots of Prejudice

The tendency of people to believe the world is just, and people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (**the just-world phenomenon**).



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Hindsight Bias

After learning an outcome, the tendency to believe that we could have predicted it beforehand may contribute to blaming the victim and forming a prejudice against them.

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Aggression

Aggression can be any physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt or destroy. It may be done reactively out of hostility or proactively as a calculated means to an end.

Research shows that aggressive behavior emerges from the interaction of biology and experience.

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The Biology of Aggression

Three biological influences on aggressive behavior are:

1. Genetic Influences
2. Neural Influences
3. Biochemical Influences

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Influences

Genetic Influences: Animals have been bred for aggressiveness for sport and at times for research. Twin studies show aggression may be genetic. In men, aggression is possibly linked to the Y chromosome.

Neural Influences: Some centers in the brain, especially the limbic system (amygdala) and the frontal lobe, are intimately involved with aggression.

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Influences

Biochemical Influences: Animals with diminished amounts of testosterone (castration) become docile, and if injected with testosterone aggression increases. Prenatal exposure to testosterone also increases aggression in female hyenas.



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The Psychology of Aggression

Four psychological factors that influence aggressive behavior are:

1. Dealing with aversive events
2. Learning aggression is rewarding
3. Observing models of aggression
4. Acquiring social scripts

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Aversive Events

Studies in which animals and humans experience unpleasant events reveal that those made miserable often make others miserable.

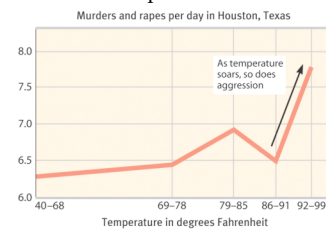


Ron Artest (Pacers) attack on Detroit Pistons fans.

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Environment

Even environmental temperature can lead to aggressive acts. Murders and rapes increased with the temperature in Houston.



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Frustration-Aggression Principle

A principle in which frustration (caused by the blocking of an attempt to achieve a desired goal) creates anger, which can generate aggression.

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Learning that Aggression is Rewarding

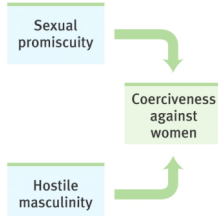
When aggression leads to desired outcomes, one learns to be aggressive. This is shown in both animals and humans.

Cultures that favor violence breed violence. Scotch-Irish settlers in the South had more violent tendencies than their Quaker Dutch counterparts in the Northeast of the US.

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Observing Models of Aggression

Sexually coercive men are promiscuous and hostile in their relationships with women. This coerciveness has increased due to television viewing of R- and X-rated movies.



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Acquiring Social Scripts

The media portrays *social scripts* and generates mental tapes in the minds of the viewers. When confronted with new situations individuals may rely on such social scripts. If social scripts are violent in nature, people may act them out.

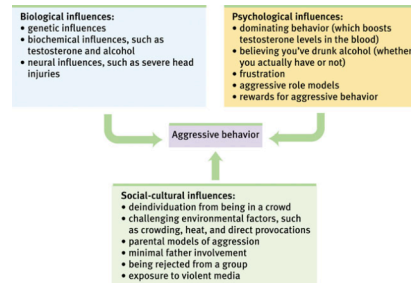
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Do Video Games Teach or Release Violence?

The general consensus on violent video games is that, to some extent, they breed violence. Adolescents view the world as hostile when they get into arguments and receive bad grades after playing such games.

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Summary



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Conflict

Conflict is perceived as an incompatibility of actions, goals, or ideas.

A **Social Trap** is a situation in which the conflicting parties, by each rationally pursuing their self-interest, become caught in mutually destructive behavior.

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A Game of Social Trap

By pursuing our self-interest and not trusting others, we can end up losers.

		Person 1	
		Choose A	Choose B
Person 2	Choose A	Optimal outcome +\$5	+\$10
	Choose B	-\$5	Probable outcome 0

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Enemy Perceptions

People in conflict form diabolical images of one another.



Saddam Hussein
"Wicked Pharaoh"



George Bush
"Evil"

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Psychology of Attraction

Proximity: Geographic nearness is a powerful predictor of friendship. Repeated exposure to novel stimuli increases their attraction (**mere exposure effect**).



A rare white penguin born in a zoo was accepted after 3 weeks by other penguins just due to proximity.

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Psychology of Attraction

2. **Physical Attractiveness:** Once proximity affords contact, the next most important thing in attraction is physical appearance.



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Psychology of Attraction

3. **Similarity:** Similar views among individuals causes the bond of attraction to strengthen.

Similarity breeds content!

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Romantic Love

Passionate Love: An aroused state of intense positive absorption in another, usually present at the beginning of a love relationship.

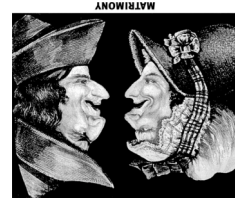
Two-factor theory of emotion

- Physical arousal plus cognitive appraisal
- Arousal from any source can enhance one emotion depending upon what we interpret or label the arousal

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Romantic Love

Companionate Love: A deep, affectionate attachment we feel for those with whom our lives are intertwined.



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Altruism

An unselfish regard for the welfare of others.

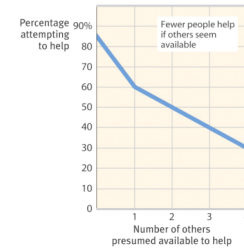
Equity: A condition in which people receive from a relationship in proportion to what they give.

Self-Disclosure: Revealing intimate aspects of oneself to others.

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Bystander Effect

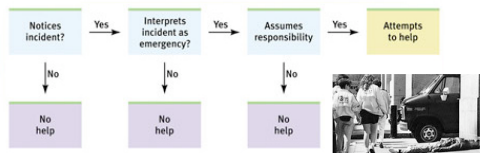
Tendency of any given bystander to be less likely to give aid if other bystanders are present.



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Bystander Intervention

The decision-making process for bystander intervention.



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The Norms for Helping

Social Exchange Theory: Our social behavior is an exchange process. The aim is to maximize benefits and minimize costs.

- **Reciprocity Norm:** The expectation that we should return help and not harm those who have helped us.
- **Social-Responsibility Norm:** Largely learned, it is a norm that tells us to help others when they need us even though they may not repay us.

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Peacemaking

Superordinate Goals are shared goals that override differences among people and require their cooperation.



Communication and understanding developed through talking to one another. Sometimes it is mediated by a third party.

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Peacemaking

Graduated & Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction (GRIT): This is a strategy designed to decrease international tensions. One side recognizes mutual interests and initiates a small conciliatory act that opens the door for reciprocation by the other party.

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