
PSY1102

Introduction to Applied Psychology

Class 24

Social psychology (concluded)

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Agenda for today

1. Social relations
 - d. Altruism
 - e. Conflict and peacemaking

1d. Altruism

When are we most – and least – likely to help?

- Altruism is defined as unselfish regard for the welfare of others.
- As noted in the textbook, altruism became a concern of social psychologists after the murder of Kitty Genovese on the streets of New York City in 1964, an event witnessed by several people, none of whom did anything to help.
- We will cover two topics related to altruism:
 - Bystander intervention
 - The norms for helping

1d. Bystander intervention

- After the Genovese murder, people were disgusted by the apparent unwillingness of bystanders to get involved, even if this just meant picking up the phone to call police. Why did people not get involved?
 - The sad case of Amanda Todd, who committed suicide in September 2012 as a result of in-person and on-line bullying, could be seen as another example of others failing to take action.
- Based on research by Darley and Latané, one of the answers seems to be “because I thought someone else would do something”, an answer that relies on the presence of others.

1d. Bystander intervention (continued)

- Research by Darley and Latané suggests that the bystander's decision process involves:
 - Noticing the incident;
 - Interpreting it as an emergency; and
 - Assuming responsibility for helping.
- At each stage, the presence of others provides an opportunity for a bystander to decline to get involved.
- Collectively, we each assume that if no one else is getting involved, then the situation must be under control or must not be serious.

Yes, and how many times must a man turn his head
And pretend that he just doesn't see?

- *Blowin' in the Wind*, by Bob Dylan

1d. Bystander intervention (continued)

- This phenomenon is called the bystander effect, which is the tendency for any given bystander to be less likely to give aid if other bystanders are present.
- The likelihood of helping is inversely related to the number of bystanders; this is called diffusion of responsibility, where any single bystander is less likely to help.

1d. Bystander intervention (continued)

- When are we most likely to help? When ...
 - The person appears to need and to deserve help;
 - The person is in some way similar to us;
 - We have just observed someone else being helpful;
 - We are not in a hurry;
 - We are in a small town or rural area;
 - We are feeling guilty;
 - We are focused on others and not preoccupied; and
 - We are in a good mood.

1d. Down in the Tube Station at Midnight (The Jam)

The distant echo –
 Of faraway voices boarding faraway trains
 To take them home to
 the ones that they love and who love them forever
 The glazed, dirty steps repeat my own and reflect my
 thoughts
 Cold and uninviting, partially naked
 Except for toffee wrappers and this morning's paper
 Mr. Jones got run down
 Headlines of death and sorrow they tell of tomorrow
 Madmen on the rampage
 And I'm down in the tube station at midnight

I fumble for change and pull out the Queen
 Smiling, beguiling
 I put in the money and pull out a plum
 Behind me
 Whispers in the shadows gruff blazing voices
 Hating, waiting
 "Hey boy" they shout "have you got any money?"
 And I said "I've a little money and a take-away curry,
 I'm on my way home to my wife.
 She'll be lining up the cutlery,
 You know she's expecting me
 Polishing the glasses and pulling out the cork"
 And I'm down in the tube station at midnight

I first felt a fist, and then a kick
 I could now smell their breath
 They smelt of pubs and Wormwood Scrubs
 And too many right-wing meetings
 My life swam around me
 It took a look and drowned me in its own existence
 It blended in with the weather
 It filled my eyes, ears, nose and mouth
 It blocked all my senses
 Couldn't see, hear, speak any longer
 And I'm down in the tube station at midnight
 I said I was down in the tube station at midnight

The last thing that I saw
 As I lay there on the floor
 Was "Jesus Saves" painted by an atheist nutter
 And a British Rail poster read "Have an Awayday, a
 cheap holiday – Do it today!"
 I glanced back on my life
 And thought about my wife
 'Cause they took the keys and she'll think it's me
 And I'm down in the tube station at midnight
 The wine will be flat and the curry's gone cold
 I'm down in the tube station at midnight
 Don't want to go down in a tube station at midnight

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxhN7MQ6uYw&feature=related

1d. The norms for helping

- When we do help, why do we do so?
- Social exchange theory posits that our social behaviour is an exchange process, the aim of which is to maximise benefits and minimise costs.
 - The implication of the “exchange” is that there is a cost-benefit analysis implicit in the decision-making process: what are the potential costs to me, and what are the potential benefits?
 - Costs can include time taken, financial cost, physical risk, etc.
 - Benefits can include social approval, self-approval, less guilt.

1d. The norms for helping (continued)

- The reciprocity norm is an expectation that people will help those who have helped them, and will not hurt them.
 - “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
 - We exchange birthday presents with other people, invite people for dinner, etc.

In the 2006 Winter Olympics, Canadian cross-country ski team member Sara Renner broke a ski pole. Immediately, a Norwegian team coach handed her another one. Canada took silver in the event, and Norway placed fourth. The Norwegian coach said, “Our policy of the Norwegian team, and my policy, is we should help each other. We should compete on the same ground. Everybody should have two skis and two poles. We try to do our best so our skiers can be on the top of the podium, but the issue here is we need to help each other.” (http://s14.invisionfree.com/Elliot_Lake_Forum/ar/t311.htm).

“The Olympic spirit is the way we try to follow,” Haakensmoen said. “Without that, we are in big trouble. Every skier, every staff member from Norway follows that. If you win but don't help somebody when you should have, what win is that?” (www.ethicsscoreboard.com/heroes/0602_haakensmoen.html)

1d. The norms for helping (continued)

- The social-responsibility norm is an expectation that people will help those dependent on them.
 - We support our children and elders, we volunteer, we give money to charities, etc.
- In a society, these types of interactions among the members of society help cement the bonds that provide structure to the society.

1e. Conflict and peacemaking

How do social traps and mirror-image perceptions fuel social conflict?

- Conflict is a perceived incompatibility of actions, goals, or ideas.
- What is it in the human mind that causes destructive conflict?
- We'll consider several topics:
 - Social traps
 - Enemy perceptions
 - Contact
 - Cooperation
 - Communication
 - Conciliation

1e. Social traps

- A social trap is a situation in which the conflicting parties become caught in mutually destructive behaviour by means of each of them pursuing their own self-interests.
- Ironically, one of the tools that helped create the atmosphere for nuclear arms-reduction treaties between the US and the USSR was the concept of MAD – mutually assured destruction – in which each side could maintain enough nuclear weapons to annihilate the other side if they were attacked.
- Social psychologists have explored competitive vs. cooperative behaviour through the use of payoff matrices, where there are varying costs and benefits for cooperative vs. competitive behaviour.

1e. Social traps: game matrix

- Picture yourself playing a game with another person.
- You can choose A or B. The other person can also choose A or B. You make your choices simultaneously.
- Suppose you choose A:
 - If the other person chooses A, you win \$5.
 - If the other person chooses B, you lose \$5.
- Suppose you choose B:
 - If the other person chooses A, you win \$10.
 - If the other person chooses B, you break even.
- What is your best strategy? The answer depends on whether you and the other person work competitively (self-interest) or cooperatively.

1e. Social traps: game theory

- In game theory, researchers can vary the payoff matrix to see how it affects behaviour for a one-off interaction vs. an ongoing relationship.

1e. Enemy perceptions

- When we're in conflict with others, we form a perception of "the enemy", just as "the enemy" forms a perception of us.
- Mirror-image perceptions are the mutual views often held by conflicting people, where we may see ourselves as ethical and peaceful but see the other side as evil and aggressive.
 - Ronald Reagan calling the Soviet Union "the evil empire";
 - George W. Bush calling North Korea, Iran, and Iraq the "axis of evil";
 - Iran calling the US "the great Satan".
- This name-calling is designed to objectify and depersonalise "the enemy", and can lead to escalating and self-justifying actions.
 - "Mommm, he's hitting me!"
 - "She poked me first!"

1e. Contact

How can we transform feelings of prejudice, aggression, and conflict into attitudes that promote peace?

- It's clear that we make extensive use of tools to foster conflict, often defending what we perceive to be our own self-interests. What tools do we have to scale back the potential for conflict?
- There is considerable evidence that contact between groups that differ in terms of skin colour, religion, age, sexual orientation, or other characteristics can foster more positive attitudes.
- However, the potential for misunderstanding the attitudes, motives, and behaviours of the “other” group needs to be monitored and addressed in a positive manner.

1e. Cooperation

- We have seen (Zimbardo's Stanford Prison simulation) that it is relatively easy to divide one group into two arbitrary sub-groups and have them interact negatively with each other.
- As discussed in the textbook (p.717), Sherif gave opposing groups superordinate goals – shared goals that override differences among people and require their cooperation – and found that this helped foster cooperation.
 - During the Second World War, the Sarajevo Haggadah (a sacred Jewish text from 1350) was rescued and guarded for many years by a Muslim cleric.
 - In 2012, after an avalanche buried dozens of Pakistani troops in Kashmir, the US sent in specialist teams to help (www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/04/20124942547764345.html).

1e. Communication

- Clearly, one option is for the two parties involved in a dispute to communicate with each other.
- If this is not feasible, then a third-party mediator, whose role is to be a neutral party, may be appropriate.
- The mediator's role is to help each side see the other's perspective, and to turn competition into cooperation to achieve a solution.

1e. Conciliation

- One strategy to reduce international tensions is GRIT: Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction.
- Steps in GRIT include:
 - Side A announces its recognition of mutual interests and its intent to reduce tensions.
 - Side A makes one or more small, conciliatory acts.
 - Side B reacts, either with conciliation or hostility.
 - Side A reacts in kind.
- This approach is also appropriate for interpersonal relationships. In this case, one question is, “Who has the courage to take the first step?” However, the question hovering in the background is, “What is the potential cost to me of taking the first step, when I contrast this to the cost to me of losing the entire relationship?”

Miscellaneous musical references

- Passionate love: “Weak in the Knees”, by Serena Ryder (www.youtube.com/watch?v=5geByqtSP4w). Also, “Fools in Love”, by Joe Jackson (www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGPb7qL-Sck).
- Companionate love: Two songs by Graham Parker: “Socks and sandals” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c-1eOzpS6o), and “All Being Well” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylj1eWaFE9Q).
- Prejudice concerning sexual orientation: “The Fence (Matthew Shepard’s Song)”, by Peter Katz (go to www.peterkatz.com/music.html, where you can play the song; read the lyrics at www.peterkatz.com/lyrics.html#THE_FENCE).
- Unconditional positive regard (humanistic therapy): “Son”, also by Peter Katz at www.peterkatz.com/music.html.

Summary: Class 24

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