



SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social Psychology can be defined as the scientific field that seeks to understand the nature and causes of individual behavior, feelings, and thought in social situations. Another way to put this is to say that social psychology investigates the ways in which our thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by the social environments in which we live—by other people or our thoughts about them.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL COGNITION

Social cognition can be defined as the manner in which we interpret, analyze, remember, and use information about the social world.

2.1: HEURISTICS

Representativeness heuristics: A strategy for making judgments based on the extent to which current stimuli or events resemble other stimuli or categories.

Availability heuristics: A strategy for making judgments on the basis of how easily specific kinds of information can be brought to mind.

Anchoring and adjustment heuristics: A heuristic that involves the tendency to use a number of values as a starting point to which we then make adjustments.

2.2: SCHEMA

Schemas can be defined as the mental frameworks centering on a specific theme that help us to organize social information.

Priming: A situation that occurs when stimuli or events increase the availability in memory or consciousness of specific types of information held in memory.

Perseverance effect: The tendency for beliefs and schemas to remain unchanged even in the face of contradictory information.

2.3: SOURCES OF ERRORS IN SOCIAL COGNITION

Optimistic bias: Our predisposition to expect things to turn out well overall.

Overconfidence barrier: The tendency to have more confidence in the accuracy of our own judgments than is reasonable.

Planning fallacy: The tendency to make optimistic predictions concerning how long a given task will take for completion.

Counterfactual thinking: The tendency to imagine other outcomes in a situation than the ones that actually occurred (“What might have been”).

Magical thinking: Thinking involving assumptions that don’t hold up to rational scrutiny—for example, the belief that things that resemble one another share fundamental properties.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL PERCEPTION

Social perception can be defined as the process through which we seek to know and understand other people.

3.1: NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal communication can be defined as the communication between individuals that does not involve the content of spoken language. It relies instead on an unspoken language of facial expressions, eye contact, and body language.

Nonverbal cues provided by changes in their facial expressions, eye contact, posture, body movements, and other expressive actions. As noted by De Paulo et al. (2003), such behavior is relatively irrepressible—difficult to control—so that even when others try to conceal their inner feelings from us, these often “leak out” in many ways through nonverbal cues. The information conveyed by such cues, and our efforts to interpret this input, are often described by the term nonverbal communication (Ko, Judd, & Blair, 2006).

3.1.1: Basic Channels of Non-verbal Communication

Research findings indicate that five of these channels exist: facial expressions, eye contact, body movements and touching.

3.1.1.1: Facial Expressions

It is possible to learn much about others’ current moods and feelings from their facial expressions. In fact, it appears that five different basic emotions are represented clearly, and from a very early age, on the human face: anger, fear, happiness, sadness, and disgust (Izard, 1991; Rozin, Lowery, & Ebert, 1994).

3.1.1.2: Eye Contact

We do often learn much about others’ feelings from their eyes. For example, we interpret a high level of gazing from another as a sign of liking or friendliness (Kleinke, 1986). In contrast, if others avoid eye contact with us, we may conclude that they are unfriendly, don’t like us, or are simply shy.

If another person gazes at us continuously and maintains such contact regardless of what we do, he or she can be said to be staring. A stare is often interpreted as a sign of anger

or hostility and most people find this particular nonverbal cue disturbing (Ellsworth & Carlsmith, 1973).

3.1.1.3: Body Language

Body language can be defined as the cues provided by the position, posture, and movement of others' bodies or body parts.

3.2: ATTRIBUTION

Attribution can be defined as the process of understanding the cause of others' behavior.

3.2.1: Theories of Attribution

3.2.1.1: Theory of Correspondent Inference

A theory describing how we use others' behavior as a basis for inferring their stable dispositions.

Jones and Davis's (1965) formulated theory of correspondent inference—asks how we use information about others' behavior as a basis for inferring their traits. In other words, the theory is concerned with how we decide, on the basis of others' overt actions, whether they possess specific traits or dispositions likely to remain fairly stable over time.

According to this theory, others' behavior provides us with a rich source on which to draw, so if we observe it carefully, we should be able to learn a lot about them. Up to a point, this is true. The task is complicated, however, by the following fact: Often, individuals act in certain ways not because doing so reflects their own preferences or traits, but rather because external factors leave them little choice. According to Jones and Davis's theory (Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & McGillis, 1976), we accomplish this task by focusing our attention on certain types of actions—those most likely to prove informative.

First, we consider only behavior that seems to have been freely chosen, while largely ignoring ones that were somehow forced on the person in question. Second, we pay careful attention to actions that show what Jones and Davis term **noncommon effects**—effects that can be caused by one specific factor, but not by others. Finally, Jones and Davis suggest that we also pay greater attention to actions by others that are low in social desirability than to actions that are high on this dimension. In other words, we learn more about others' traits from actions they perform that are somehow out of the ordinary than from actions that are very much like those of most other people.

In sum, according to the theory proposed by Jones and Davis, we are most likely to conclude that others' behavior reflects their stable traits (i.e., we are likely to reach correspondent inferences about them), when that behavior (1) is freely chosen; (2) yields distinctive, noncommon effects; and (3) is low in social desirability.

3.2.1.2: Kelley's Theory of Causal Attributions

According to Kelley (1972), in our attempts to answer the why question about others' behavior, we focus on three major types of information.

- First, we consider **consensus**—*the extent to which other people react to a given stimulus or event in the same manner as the person we are considering*. The higher the proportion of people who react in the same way, the higher the consensus.
- Second, we consider **consistency**—*the extent to which the person in question reacts to the stimulus or event in the same way on other occasions, over time*.
- And third, we examine **distinctiveness**—*the extent to which this person reacts in the same manner to other, different stimuli or events*.

According to Kelley's theory, we are most likely to attribute another's behavior to internal causes under conditions in which consensus and distinctiveness are low but consistency is high. In contrast, we are most likely to attribute another's behavior to external causes when consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness are all high. Finally, we usually attribute another's behavior to a combination of internal and external factors when consensus is low but consistency and distinctiveness are high.

CHAPTER 5

ATTITUDES

Attitudes can be defined as our valuation of various aspects of the social world.

Explicit attitudes: Consciously accessible attitudes that are controllable and easy to report.

Implicit attitudes: Unconscious associations between objects and evaluative responses.

Pluralistic ignorance: When we collectively misunderstand what attitudes, others hold and believe erroneously that others have different attitudes than us.

Theory of reasoned action: A theory suggesting that the decision to engage in a particular behavior is the result of a rational process in which behavioral options are considered, consequences or outcomes of each are evaluated, and a decision is reached to act or not to act. That decision is then reflected in behavioral intentions, which strongly influence overt behavior.

Theory of planned behavior: An extension of the theory of reasoned action, suggesting that in addition to attitudes toward a given behavior and subjective norms about it, individuals also consider their ability to perform the behavior.

5.1: PERSUASION

Persuasion can be defined as efforts to change others' attitudes through the use of various kinds of messages.

5.1.1: Persuasion: Communicators, Messages and Audience

Persuasion research conducted by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) focused on these key elements, asking: “Who says what to whom with what effect?” This approach yielded a number of important findings, with the following being the most consistently obtained.

- Communicators who are credible—who seem to know what they are talking about or who are expert with respect to the topics or issues they are presenting—are more persuasive than those who are seen as lacking expertise.
- Communicators who are physically attractive are more persuasive than communicators who are not attractive (Hovland & Weiss, 1951).
- Messages that do not appear to be designed to change our attitudes are often more successful than those that seem to be designed to achieve this goal (Walster & Festinger, 1962).

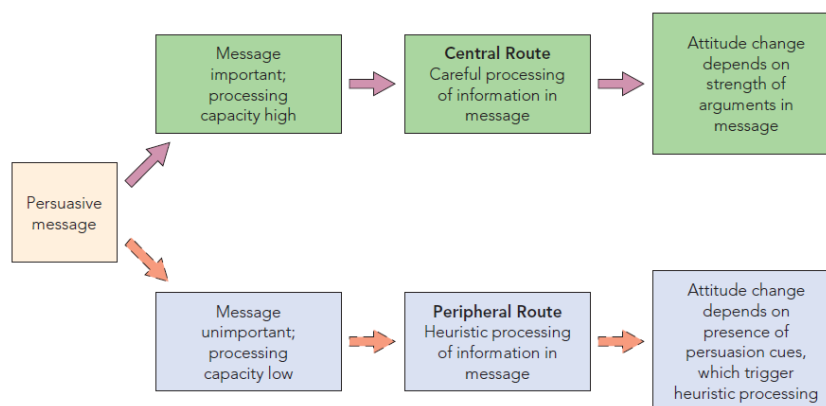
- One approach to persuasion that has received considerable research attention is the effect of **fear appeals**—messages that are intended to arouse fear in the recipient. Research found that When the message is sufficiently fear arousing that people genuinely feel threatened, they are likely to argue against the threat, or else dismiss its applicability to themselves (Liberman & Chaiken, 1992; Taylor & Shepperd, 1998).

5.1.2: Elaboration-Likelihood Model of Persuasion

A theory suggesting that persuasion can occur in either of two distinct ways, differing in the amount of cognitive effort or elaboration the message receives.

The elaboration-likelihood model (ELM; e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty et al., 2005) and the heuristic-systematic model (e.g., Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Eagly & Chaiken, 1998) provide the following answer. We engage in the most effortful and systematic processing when our motivation and capacity to process information relating to the persuasive message is high. This type of processing occurs if we have a lot of knowledge about the topic, we have a lot of time to engage in careful thought, or the issue is sufficiently important to us and we believe it is essential to form an accurate view (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1990).

In contrast, we engage in the type of processing that requires less effort (heuristic processing) when we lack the ability or capacity to process more carefully (we must make up our minds very quickly or we have little knowledge about the issue) or when our motivation to perform such cognitive work is low (the issue is unimportant to us or has little potential effect on us). Advertisers, politicians, salespeople, and others wishing to change our attitudes prefer to push us into the heuristic mode of processing because, for reasons we describe later, it is often easier to change our attitudes when we think in this mode than when we engage in more careful and systematic processing.



5.1.3: Resisting Persuasion Attempts

- **Reactance:** Negative reactions to threats to one's personal freedom. Reactance often increases resistance to persuasion and can even produce negative attitude change or opposite to what was intended.
- **Forewarning:** Advance knowledge that one is about to become the target of an attempt at persuasion. Forewarning often increases resistance to the persuasion that follows.
- **Selective avoidance:** A tendency to direct attention away from information that challenges existing attitudes. Such avoidance increases resistance to persuasion.

5.2: COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Cognitive dissonance can be defined as an internal state that results when individuals notice inconsistency between two or more attitudes or between their attitudes and their behavior.

5.2.1: Strategies for Resolving Cognitive Dissonance

- We can also reduce cognitive dissonance by acquiring new information (justifications) that supports our behavior.
- Another option for managing dissonance when inconsistency is salient involves deciding that the inconsistency actually doesn't matter! In other words, we can engage in trivialization—concluding that either the attitudes or behaviors in question are not important so any inconsistency between them is of no importance (Simon, Greenberg, & Brehm, 1995).
- Research by Steele and his colleagues (e.g., Steele, 1988; Steele & Lui, 1983) indicates that dissonance can be reduced via indirect means. That is, although the basic discrepancy between the attitude and behavior are left intact, the unpleasant or negative feelings generated by dissonance can still be reduced by.

CHAPTER 6

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Prejudice: Negative emotional responses based on group membership.

Discrimination: Differential (usually negative) behaviors directed toward members of different social groups.

Stereotypes: Beliefs about social groups in terms of the traits or characteristics that they are believed to share. Stereotypes are cognitive frameworks that influence the processing of social information.

Gender stereotypes: Stereotypes concerning the traits possessed by females and males and that distinguish the two genders from each other.

Glass ceiling: Barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified females from advancing to top-level positions.

Glass cliff effect: Choosing women for leadership positions that are risky, precarious, or when the outcome is more likely to result in failure.

Tokenism: Tokenism can refer to hiring based on group membership. It can concern a numerically infrequent presence of members of a particular category or it can refer to instances where individuals perform trivial positive actions for members of out-groups that are later used as an excuse for refusing more meaningful beneficial actions for members of these groups.

Realistic conflict theory: The view that prejudice stems from direct competition between various social groups over scarce and valued resources.

Social identity theory: A theory concerned with the consequences of perceiving ourselves as a member of a social group and identifying with it.

CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Social influence: Efforts by one or more persons to change the behavior, attitudes, or feelings of one or more others.

Conformity: A type of social influence in which individuals change their attitudes or behavior to adhere to existing social norms.

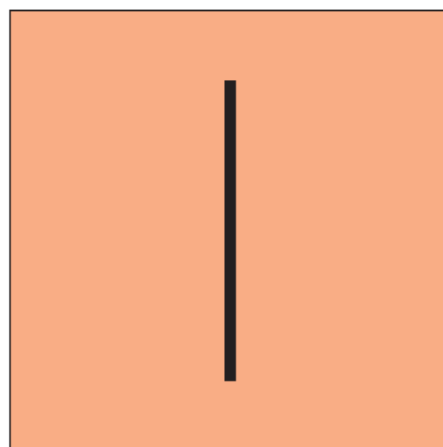
Compliance: A form of social influence involving direct requests from one person to another.

Obedience: A form of social influence in which one person simply orders one or more others to perform some action(s).

7.1: ASCH'S RESEARCH ON CONFORMITY

Important insights into our behavior were provided by studies conducted by Solomon Asch (1951, 1955). Asch created a compelling social dilemma for his participants whose task was ostensibly to simply respond to a series of perceptual problems. On each of the problems, participants

were to indicate which of three comparison lines matched a standard line in length.



Standard Line



Comparison Lines

Several other

people (usually six to eight) were also present during the session, but unknown to the real participant, all were assistants of the experimenter. On certain occasions known as critical trials (12 out of the 18 problems) the accomplices offered answers that were clearly wrong; they unanimously chose the wrong line as a match for the standard line. Moreover, they stated their answers before the real participants responded. Thus, on these critical trials, the people in Asch's study faced precisely the type of dilemma described above. Should they go along with the other individuals present or stick to their own judgments? The judgments seemed to be very simple ones, so the fact that other people agreed on an answer different from the one the

participants preferred was truly puzzling. Results were clear: A large majority of the people in Asch's research chose conformity. Across several different studies, fully 76 percent of those tested went along with the group's false answers at least once; and overall, they voiced agreement with these errors 37 percent of the time. In contrast, only 5 percent of the participants in a control group, who responded to the same problems alone, made such errors.

Of course, there were large individual differences in this respect. Almost 25 percent of the participants never yielded to the group pressure. At the other extreme, some individuals went along with the majority nearly all the time. When Asch questioned them, some of these people stated: "I am wrong, they are right"; they had little confidence in their own judgments. Most, however, said they felt that the other people present were suffering from an optical illusion or were merely sheep following the responses of the first person. Yet, when it was their turn, these people, too, went along with the group. They knew that the others were wrong (or at least, probably wrong), but they couldn't bring themselves to disagree with them.

7.2: COMPLIANCE

Compliance is a form of social influence involving direct requests from one person to another.

7.2.1: Principles of Compliance

Accordinging to Cialdini (1994, 2008), there are six basic principles of compliance.

- **Friendship/liking:** In general, we are more willing to comply with requests from friends or from people we like than with requests from strangers or people we don't like.
- **Commitment/consistency:** Once we have committed ourselves to a position or action, we are more willing to comply with requests for behaviors that are consistent with this position or action than with requests that are inconsistent with it.
- **Scarcity:** In general, we value, and try to secure, outcomes or objects that are scarce or decreasing in availability. As a result, we are more likely to comply with requests that focus on scarcity than ones that make no reference to this issue.
- **Reciprocity:** We are generally more willing to comply with a request from someone who has previously provided a favor or concession to us than to someone who has not. In other words, we feel obligated to pay people back in some way for what they have done for us.

- **Social validation:** We are generally more willing to comply with a request for some action if this action is consistent with what we believe people similar to ourselves are doing (or thinking). We want to be correct, and one way to do so is to act and think like others.
- **Authority:** In general, we are more willing to comply with requests from someone who holds legitimate authority—or simply appears to do so.

7.2.2: Tactics based on Compliance

- **Foot-in-the-door technique:** A procedure for gaining compliance in which requesters begin with a small request and then, when this is granted, escalate to a larger one (the one they actually desired all along).
- **Low-ball procedure:** A technique for gaining compliance in which an offer or deal is changed to make it less attractive to the target person after this person has accepted it.
- **Door-in-the-face technique:** A procedure for gaining compliance in which requesters begin with a large request and then, when this is refused, retreat to a smaller one (the one they actually desired all along).
- **That's-not-all technique:** A technique for gaining compliance in which requesters offer additional benefits to target people before they have decided whether to comply with or reject specific requests.
- **Playing hard to get:** A technique that can be used for increasing compliance by suggesting that a person or object is scarce and hard to obtain.
- **Deadline technique:** A technique for increasing compliance in which target people are told that they have only limited time to take advantage of some offer or to obtain some item.

7.3: OBEDIENCE

Obedience is a form of social influence in which one person simply orders one or more others to perform some action(s).

7.3.1: Milgram's Experiment on Obedience

Stanley Milgram (1963, 1965, 1974) designed an ingenious, if unsettling, laboratory simulation. The experimenter informed participants in the study (all males) that they were taking part in an investigation of the effects of punishment on learning. One person in each pair of participants would serve as a “learner” and would try to perform a simple task involving

memory (supplying the second word in pairs of words they had previously memorized after hearing only the first word). The other participant, the “teacher,” would read these words to the learner, and would punish errors by the learner (failures to provide the second word in each pair) through electric shock. These shocks would be delivered by means of the equipment which contained 30 numbered switches ranging from “15 volts” (the first) through 450 volts (the 30th). The two people present—a real participant and a research assistant—then drew slips of paper from a hat to determine who would play each role; as you can guess, the drawing was rigged so that the real participant always became the teacher. The teacher was then told to deliver a shock to the learner each time he made an error on the task. Moreover—and this is crucial—teachers were told to increase the strength of the shock each time the learner made an error. This meant that if the learner made many errors, he would soon be receiving strong jolts of electricity. It’s important to note that this information was false: In reality, the assistant (the learner) never received any shocks during the experiment. The only real shock ever used was a mild pulse from button number three to convince participants that the equipment was real.

During the session, the learner (following prearranged instructions) made many errors. Thus, participants soon found themselves facing a dilemma: Should they continue punishing this person with what seemed to be increasingly painful shocks? Or should they refuse? If they hesitated, the experimenter pressured them to continue with a graded series “prods”: “Please continue”; “The experiment requires that you continue”; “It is absolutely essential that you continue”; and “You have no other choice; you must go on.”

Since participants were all volunteers and were paid in advance, you might predict that most would quickly refuse the experimenter’s orders. In reality, though, fully 65 percent showed total obedience—they proceeded through the entire series to the final 450-volt level. Many participants, of course, protested and asked that the session be ended. When ordered to proceed, however, a majority yielded to the experimenter’s influence and continued to obey. Indeed, they continued doing so even when the victim pounded on the wall as if in protest over the painful shocks (at the 300-volt level), and then no longer responded, as if he had passed out. The experimenter told participants to treat failures to answer as errors; so from this point on, many participants believed that they were delivering dangerous shocks to someone who might already be unconscious!

Psychologists and the public both found Milgram’s results highly disturbing. His studies seemed to suggest that ordinary people are willing, although with some reluctance, to

harm an innocent stranger if ordered to do so by someone in authority—in a sense, echoing the theme stated by Zimbardo in his famous “Stanford Prison Study” and more recent writings (Zimbardo, 2007).

CHAPTER 8

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

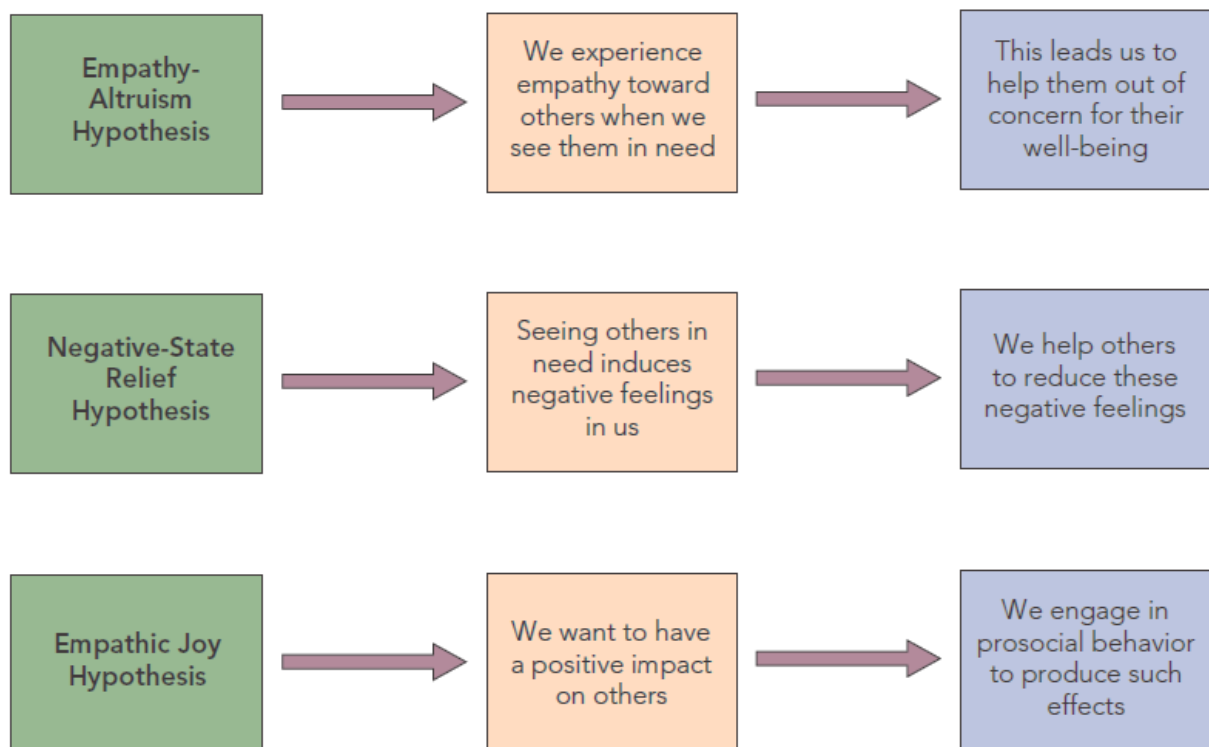
Prosocial behavior can be defined as the actions by individuals that help others with no immediate benefit to the helper.

Empathy: Emotional reactions that are focused on or oriented toward other people and include feelings of compassion, sympathy, and concern.

Empathy-altruism hypothesis: The suggestion that some prosocial acts are motivated solely by the desire to help someone in need.

Negative-state relief model: The proposal that prosocial behavior is motivated by the bystander's desire to reduce his or her own uncomfortable negative emotions or feelings.

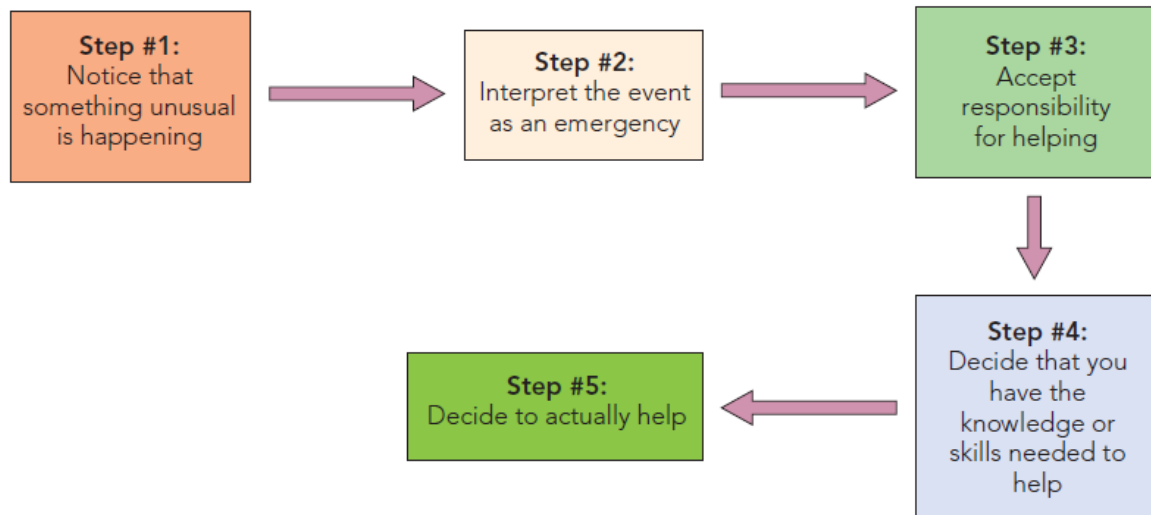
Empathic joy hypothesis: The view that helpers respond to the needs of a victim because they want to accomplish something, and doing so is rewarding in and of itself.



Diffusion of responsibility: A principle suggesting that the greater the number of witnesses to an emergency the less likely victims are to receive help. This is because each bystander assumes that someone else will do it.

Bystander effect: Refers to the fact that because none of the bystanders respond to an emergency, no one knows for sure what is happening and each depends on the others to interpret the situation.

8.1: FIVE STEPS TO ENGAGE IN PROSCIAL BEHAVIOUR



9: REFERENCES

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