

Social Psychology

Lesson 1: Introduction to Social Psychology

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1

Define social psychology and identify its core focus.

2

Trace the origin of social psychology as a field of study.

3

Evaluate human behavior based on the major perspectives in Social Psychology.

4

Name important figures in the development of Social Psychology and cite their contributions in the field.

Expected Learning Outcomes:



- What situations trigger you to be helpful?
- Why are you sometimes friendly and sometimes antagonistic toward others?
- Why do you suddenly lose words the moment you were asked a question in front of a crowd?
- What stimulates you to like or dislike someone?
- What situations trigger you to be greedy?

Social Psychology

- ▶ the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Allport, 1954, as cited in Hewstone & Stroebe, 2020).

Scientific...

- ▶ refers to the empirical method of investigation.
- ▶ Social psychologists design studies and base their conclusions on direct observation and measurement and do not just rely on intuition or common sense.

Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviors...

- include all the psychological variables that are measurable in a human being
 - **Overt behaviors** – directly observable
How to measure? Observation
 - **Covert behaviors** – NOT directly observable
How to measure?
Self-report measures, physiological measures and projective tests

actual, imagined or implied presence of others...

- ▶ suggest that humans are prone to social influence even when no other people are present.
- ▶ Our behavior, thoughts, and feelings change based on the mere idea of **being watched**, even if no one is actually present.

actual, imagined or implied presence of others...

Actual presence of people

Have you ever changed your opinion in a group setting just because you didn't want to be the only one disagreeing?

Imagined presence of others

Before you post something on social media, do you 'rehearse' how a specific person might react to it before you hit send?

Implied presence of others

Does the presence of a security camera, even if you aren't doing anything wrong, make you feel like you need to act 'more normal'?

SOCIAL PERCEPTION

Understanding how we view ourselves and others

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Understanding how we influence one another

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Understanding why we interact the ways we do with others

Three Main Areas of Interest



History of Social Psychology

History of Social Psychology

- The discipline of social psychology began in the United States at the dawn of the 20th century.
- The first published study in this area was an experiment by Norman Triplett on the phenomenon of social facilitation.
- Triplett published this experiment in 1898 and was credited with introducing empirical scientific methods into the social sciences.
- During the 1930s, many Gestalt psychologists, most notably Kurt Lewin, fled to the United States from Nazi Germany. They were instrumental in developing the field as something separate from the behavioral and psychoanalytic schools that were dominant during that time.

History of Social Psychology

- During WWII, social psychologists studied persuasion and propaganda for the U.S. military.
- After the war, researchers became interested in a variety of social problems, including gender issues and racial prejudice.
- Most notable of them all were the shock experiments on obedience to authorities conducted by Stanley Milgram.

History of Social Psychology

- In the sixties, there was growing interest in new topics, such as cognitive dissonance, bystander intervention, and aggression.
- It was not until the 1970s did social psychology enjoy accelerating growth in Asia – first in India, then in Hong Kong and Japan, and, recently, in China and Taiwan.
- Social psychology reached maturity in both theory and method during the 1980s and 1990s. Careful ethical standards now regulate research in the field.



Perspectives in Social Psychology

A. Socio-cultural Perspective

- explains how human behavior is influenced by social context, specifically through the influence of **group memberships and cultural backgrounds**

B. Evolutionary Perspective

- argues that people's characteristics and their social behaviors are the result of psychological adaptations that helped our ancestors survive and reproduce.

C. Social-learning Perspective

- Behaviors are learnt by observing and mimicking the modeled behaviors of others.

D. Social-cognitive Perspective

- focuses on how we notice, process, store and apply the things we learn about other people and social situations.

Human Behavior: **STEALING**

Socio-cultural perspective	Evolutionary perspective	Social-learning perspective	Social-cognitive perspective
People steal because our <i>culture appreciates objects more than people.</i>	People steal because gaining certain objects, even if through stealing, <i>improves a person's ability to survive.</i>	A person steals because he <i>learned through example</i> that stealing is an acceptable behavior.	A person steals because he simply <i>doesn't believe it is wrong.</i>



Historical Figures in Social Psychology

FLOYD ALLPORT

- he was the first to systematically apply experimental methods to the study of group process and social relationships.
- he was regarded as the “father of experimental social psychology”
- he published *Social Psychology* in 1924, a book that is based heavily on experimental and research studies and has become the standard for the field for decades (Katz, 1979).

SOLOMON ASCH

- he studied how peer pressure shapes human behavior.
- His early experiments on compliance and on how one forms impressions of others are widely recognized as among the century's seminal studies in social psychology (Stout, 1996).
- He also published seminal studies on the **primacy effect** and **halo effect**.

Primacy Effect

- the information we receive first about a person carries more weight than information received later
- ***Example:*** You meet someone who is described as intelligent, industrious, stubborn and envious.
- ***Which word stuck with you the most?*** Intelligent and Industrious

Halo Effect

- When one positive thing is known or believed about a person, we tend to infer that the individual is positive overall and thus has other positive features.
- ***Example:*** *If you see a someone as attractive, you will also perceive them to be confident, smart, generous and loyal.*

NORMAN TRIPLETT

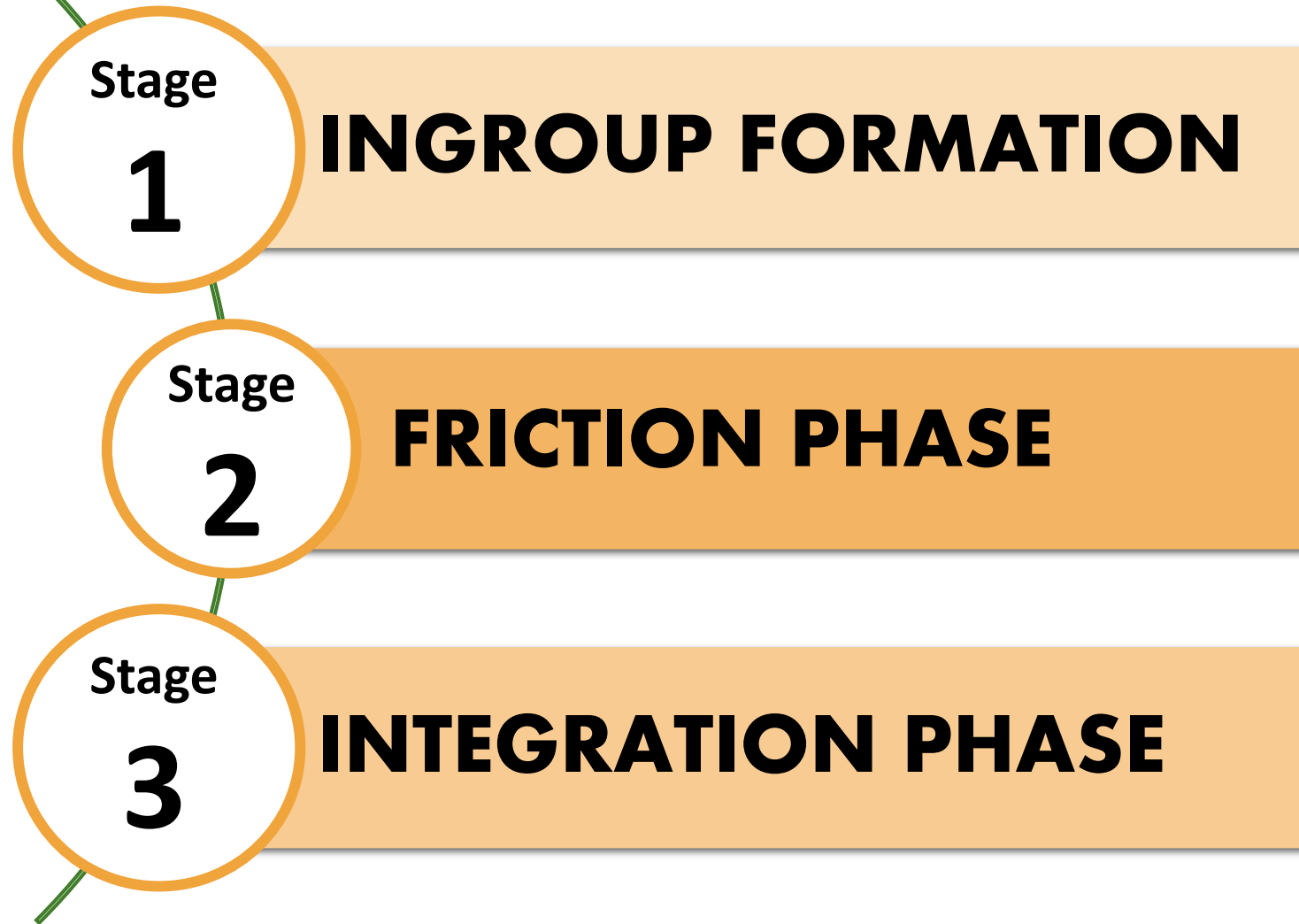
- he published one of the first experiments related to social psychology.
- The report, appearing in the American Journal of Psychology in 1898, compared how fast children wound a reel when alone and in competition with another child.
- He concluded that the presence of another contestant "serves to liberate latent energy not ordinarily available."

MUZAFER SHERIF

- He conducted research and studies on social norms and perception, reference groups, the self, social judgment, communication, and attitude formation and change.
- He also conducted the Robbers Cave Experiment on intergroup relations in 1954 (Harvey, 1989).
- The Robber's Cave experiment demonstrated how intergroup conflict, ignited by dividing boys at a summer camp in two competing groups, could be resolved after working toward super ordinate goals.

ROBBER'S CAVE EXPERIMENT

**Eagles
vs.
Rattlers**



CAROLYN WOOD SHERIF

- together with her husband, Muzafer Sherif, they conducted research on intergroup conflict and cooperation through the "Robber's Cave" experiment.
- She also conducted research on self-system and social judgment (Shaffer & Shields, 1984).
- She worked with Carl Hovland to develop social judgment theory, an influential theory about how and when attitude change takes place.

MAXIMILIEN RINGELMANN

- he conducted some of the first experiments in social psychology on 1880s.
- These experiments showed that individual members of a group often become less productive as the size of their group increases -- a phenomenon referred to as the **Ringelmann effect** and now better known as **social loafing**.

STANLEY MILGRAM

- he was famous for conducting set of studies suggesting that most people will obey an experimenter's order to administer potentially deadly levels of electric shock to a protesting stranger.
- He also invented several research techniques such as the lost-letter technique, cyranoid technique, and small-world technique.

Lost-letter Technique

Goal: *Assess prejudice in an unobtrusive way*

The Medical Research Associates

Mr. Walter Carnap

Friends of the Nazi

Friends of the Communist Party

CYRANOID TECHNIQUE

- Named after the play *Cyrano de Bergerac (1897)*
- **Characters in the experiment:**
 - **Source** – the one who generates the actual words and thoughts
 - **Shadow** – he speaks the words provided in real-time by the Source
 - **Interactant** – the one who engages with the Shadow
- This technique was used to study social perception, obedience, and conformity.

SMALL WORLD TECHNIQUE

“All people in the world are six or fewer social connections away from each other.”

We are all connected by a very short chain of acquaintances where "strangers" are just friends-of-friends-of-friends.

EVELYN HOOKER

- she was the first social scientist to study the psychosocial adjustment of gay men outside hospital or prison settings.
- Her results showed no difference between gay and heterosexual men, challenging antigay stereotypes and eventually leading the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its diagnostic manual of mental disorders.

CARL HOVLAND

- he conducted path breaking research on attitude change, propaganda, and persuasion, including studies of the sleeper effect, source credibility, two-sided persuasive appeals, and contrast effects.

KURT LEWIN

- he was an early leader of group dynamic research and is regarded by many as the founder of modern social psychology.
- Lewin's Equation, $B=f(P,E)$, stipulates that behavior is a function of the person and environment.
- He coined the term "action research".
- *"No action without research; no research without action."*

LEON FESTINGER

- he developed the **theory of cognitive dissonance**, a motivational theory suggesting that people seek to minimize discomfort caused by inconsistent beliefs and behaviors.
- He also developed social comparison theory in 1954 and documented the key role of proximity in social relationships.

Questions to Ponder

1. Have you ever changed your behavior just because you felt like someone was watching, even if you were actually alone?
2. If you had to choose one of the four major perspectives in social psychology, which one do you find most compelling or scientifically sound?
3. Describe a scenario where you utilized social comparison to evaluate your own abilities or social standing.
4. How have the primacy and halo effects manifested in your personal interactions? Provide an example where an early observation dominated your overall evaluation of someone.
5. Describe a situation where you experienced intense in-group loyalty and out-group hostility, similar to the tension between the Rattlers and the Eagles.

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