

ap psych social psychology vocab

ap psych social psychology vocab encompasses the essential terms and concepts that students must master to excel in Advanced Placement Psychology, particularly within the social psychology unit. This vocabulary covers a wide range of topics including social influence, group behavior, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships. Understanding these terms is crucial for grasping how individuals think, feel, and behave in social contexts. This article provides a comprehensive overview of key social psychology vocabulary, explaining each term in detail and illustrating how they relate to broader psychological theories. By familiarizing with this vocabulary, students will be better prepared for AP exams and capable of applying social psychology principles in real-world situations. The following sections break down important concepts and terminology, organizing them for effective study and review.

- Fundamental Concepts in Social Psychology
- Social Influence and Conformity
- Attitudes and Persuasion
- Group Dynamics and Behavior
- Interpersonal Relationships and Attraction

Fundamental Concepts in Social Psychology

Social psychology investigates how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others. The foundation of ap psych social psychology vocab begins with understanding these basic concepts that describe the social nature of human beings.

Social Cognition

Social cognition refers to how individuals process, store, and apply information about other people and social situations. This includes how we perceive others, form impressions, and make judgments. It is a critical aspect of social psychology as it shapes social interactions and responses.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory explains how people infer the causes of their own and others' behavior. It distinguishes between internal (dispositional) attributions, which assign behavior to personal traits, and external (situational) attributions, which assign behavior to

environmental factors. Understanding attribution errors is key vocabulary in ap psych social psychology.

Self-Serving Bias

Self-serving bias is the tendency to attribute one's successes to internal factors and failures to external causes. This bias protects self-esteem and is a common phenomenon studied within social psychology to explain how people maintain positive self-perceptions.

Social Schemas

Social schemas are mental structures that help individuals organize knowledge about the social world. These cognitive frameworks influence how we interpret information and behave in social settings. Schemas simplify complex social interactions but can also lead to stereotyping.

Social Influence and Conformity

Social influence is a major theme in ap psych social psychology vocab, encompassing the ways individuals change their behavior to meet the demands of a social environment. This section covers key terms related to conformity, compliance, and obedience.

Conformity

Conformity involves changing one's behavior or beliefs to match those of a group, often to fit in or be accepted. Classic studies by Solomon Asch demonstrate the power of conformity in group settings.

Normative and Informational Social Influence

Normative social influence arises from a desire to be liked or accepted by others, leading to conformity even if one privately disagrees. Informational social influence occurs when individuals conform because they believe the group is competent and has the correct information.

Compliance

Compliance refers to changing behavior in response to a direct request from another person, often without authority pressure. Techniques such as the foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face illustrate compliance strategies.

Obedience

Obedience is a form of social influence where individuals follow orders from an authority figure. The famous Milgram experiment highlighted how ordinary people could obey harmful commands under authority pressure.

Attitudes and Persuasion

Attitudes represent learned predispositions to respond favorably or unfavorably toward certain objects, people, or events. This section clarifies key vocabulary related to attitude formation, change, and the mechanisms of persuasion.

Components of Attitudes

Attitudes consist of three components: affective (emotions), behavioral (actions), and cognitive (beliefs). Understanding these components helps explain how attitudes influence behavior.

Persuasion

Persuasion is the process of changing attitudes through communication. The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) describes two routes: the central route, which involves careful evaluation of arguments, and the peripheral route, which relies on superficial cues.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance refers to the psychological discomfort experienced when an individual holds conflicting attitudes or behaviors. People are motivated to reduce this discomfort by altering attitudes or rationalizing behavior, a concept central to social psychology.

Foot-in-the-Door Technique

This compliance technique involves getting someone to agree to a small request first, increasing the likelihood they will agree to a larger request later. It demonstrates the role of commitment in persuasion.

Group Dynamics and Behavior

Group behavior and dynamics are critical areas within social psychology, focusing on how membership in a group influences individual and collective actions.

Social Facilitation

Social facilitation refers to improved performance of tasks in the presence of others, especially for well-learned or simple tasks. Conversely, it can impair performance on complex or new tasks.

Social Loafing

Social loafing is the tendency for individuals to exert less effort when working in a group compared to working alone. This phenomenon highlights challenges in group productivity and accountability.

Deindividuation

Deindividuation occurs when individuals lose self-awareness and self-restraint in group situations, often leading to impulsive or deviant behavior. It explains behaviors seen in crowds or riots.

Groupthink

Groupthink is a faulty decision-making process where group members prioritize harmony and conformity over critical evaluation. This can lead to poor decisions and suppression of dissenting opinions.

Common Group Behaviors

- **Group Polarization:** Tendency for group discussion to enhance the group's prevailing attitudes.
- **Social Identity:** Part of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a social group.
- **Ingroup Bias:** Favoring one's own group over others.

Interpersonal Relationships and Attraction

Interpersonal relationships are a fundamental subject within a psychology vocab, focusing on the factors that influence liking, attraction, and social bonds between individuals.

Proximity

Proximity, or physical closeness, is a key predictor of interpersonal attraction because it increases the likelihood of interaction and familiarity.

Similarity

People tend to be attracted to others who share similar attitudes, values, and backgrounds. Similarity fosters understanding and validation.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity refers to the tendency to like those who express liking toward us. Mutual exchange of positive feelings strengthens relationships.

Altruism and Prosocial Behavior

Altruism involves selfless concern for the welfare of others, leading to prosocial behavior such as helping and cooperation. Understanding the motives behind altruism is an important vocabulary topic in social psychology.

Bystander Effect

The bystander effect describes the phenomenon where individuals are less likely to help a victim when other people are present, due to diffusion of responsibility.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is social psychology in AP Psychology?

Social psychology is the scientific study of how individuals think, feel, and behave in social contexts, focusing on how the presence of others influences behavior.

What does 'social facilitation' mean in social psychology?

Social facilitation refers to the tendency for people to perform better on simple or well-learned tasks when in the presence of others.

Define 'fundamental attribution error.'

The fundamental attribution error is the tendency to overestimate the influence of personality traits and underestimate the influence of situational factors when explaining

others' behavior.

What is 'cognitive dissonance'?

Cognitive dissonance is the discomfort experienced when holding two conflicting thoughts or beliefs, often leading to a change in attitude or behavior to reduce the inconsistency.

Explain the concept of 'groupthink.'

Groupthink occurs when a group values harmony and conformity over critical evaluation, leading to poor decision-making outcomes.

What is 'conformity' in social psychology?

Conformity is the act of changing one's behavior or beliefs to match those of a group, often due to real or imagined group pressure.

Describe 'obedience' as studied in social psychology.

Obedience is a form of social influence where an individual follows a direct order from an authority figure, often studied through experiments like Milgram's obedience study.

What does 'social loafing' refer to?

Social loafing is the phenomenon where individuals exert less effort when working in a group compared to when working alone.

Additional Resources

1. Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion

This classic book by Robert Cialdini explores the key principles behind why people say "yes" and how to apply these understandings in social contexts. It dives into concepts such as reciprocity, commitment, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity, all crucial vocabulary in social psychology. The book is both research-based and practical, making it essential for understanding social influence and compliance.

2. Social Psychology by David Myers

A comprehensive textbook widely used in AP Psychology courses, this book covers fundamental social psychology concepts including attitudes, conformity, group behavior, prejudice, and interpersonal attraction. Myers presents complex theories in an accessible manner, supplemented by real-world examples and experiments. It's an excellent resource for mastering social psychology vocabulary and concepts.

3. The Social Animal by Elliot Aronson

This engaging book provides an in-depth look at human social behavior, focusing on themes like conformity, obedience, persuasion, and group dynamics. Aronson's writing combines storytelling with scientific research, making key social psychology terms memorable and understandable. It's a valuable read for students wanting to grasp how social influences

shape human behavior.

4. *Obedience to Authority* by Stanley Milgram

Milgram's seminal work details the famous obedience experiments that reveal the extent to which individuals comply with authority figures, even when asked to perform harmful actions. The book is foundational for understanding concepts like authority, obedience, and ethical considerations in social psychology. It offers critical insight into human behavior within social structures.

5. *Thinking, Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman

While not exclusively about social psychology, this book explains how two systems of thinking—fast, intuitive thinking and slow, deliberate thinking—affect decision-making and social judgments. Kahneman's work helps clarify vocabulary related to cognitive biases, heuristics, and social perception. It's crucial for understanding how people interpret and react to social information.

6. *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology* by Rupert Brown

This book focuses specifically on the social psychology of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. It discusses the causes and consequences of these phenomena and explores strategies for reducing intergroup conflict. The text is useful for learning specialized social psychology terms related to social identity and intergroup relations.

7. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* by Donelson R. Forsyth

Forsyth's book provides a thorough overview of how groups form, function, and influence individual behavior. Key vocabulary includes groupthink, social facilitation, conformity, and leadership styles. It is a vital resource for understanding the social psychological processes that occur within group settings.

8. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* by Erving Goffman

Goffman's influential sociological text examines how individuals manage impressions in social interactions, introducing concepts like dramaturgy and front-stage/back-stage behavior. This book enriches understanding of social roles, self-presentation, and the performative aspects of social behavior, which are important in AP Psychology's social psychology unit.

9. *Mindwise: How We Understand What Others Think, Believe, Feel, and Want* by Nicholas Epley

Epley explores the cognitive processes behind theory of mind and empathy—how we infer others' mental states and intentions. The book offers insights into social cognition, perspective-taking, and attribution, key terms in social psychology vocabulary. It's an engaging read for those interested in the mechanisms of social understanding.

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