

The society of captives

Society



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In the book *The Society of Captives* Sykes defines and explains deprivation theory and emotional responses of imprisoned persons. The theory is based on the idea that several psychological-related personality attributes have been explicitly conceptualized as coping styles, that is, characteristic tendencies to employ certain coping strategies in response to stressors.

Deprivation process can be interpreted as a coping process and a response to incarceration and the “custodians’ regime” (Sykes 1971, p. 64). The deprivation response also may be viewed at a social level of analysis.

Psychological stress can cause strain and conflict in interpersonal relationships, undermine group cohesion, and disrupt the functioning of organizations and institutions. Transactional approaches to stress point to the potential importance of the interplay between individual and social level stress processes. An individual may employ coping strategies whose effects on the social and physical environment have implications for future stress.

Deprivation activity may eliminate, moderate, create, maintain, or exacerbate social level stressors, or it may enhance or diminish the social resources available to support subsequent coping efforts. The main elements of the deprivation theory are deprivation of liberty, deprivation of heterosexual relationships, deprivation of autonomy, deprivation of security, etc. The notion that personality shapes the perception of potentially stressful situations is an important component of the theory surrounding most personality attributes suspected of influencing susceptibility to stress. Given exposure to a particular environmental demand or constraint, psychological structures associated with health protecting personality characteristics presumably operate so as to decrease the probability of a stress appraisal

and, under the same conditions, health damaging attributes would be expected to increase the probability of a stress appraisal. Effects on stressor appraisal may account for a significant portion of the influence of personality on individual differences in the deprivation response.

Deprivation theory underlines that personality traits are explicitly conceptualized in terms that point to linkages to appraisal and problem representation. For example, one component of hardiness is a tendency to perceive life change as a challenge rather than a threat. Another component, internal locus of control, involves the belief that factors influencing the outcomes an individual experiences reside within the person, and are therefore at least potentially controllable. Thus, these dispositions show close conceptual relations to the appraisal process. Similarly, it is reasonable to posit an association between the generalized expectation for positive outcomes that characterizes optimistic individual and a tendency to form stress dampening appraisals of demanding situations. With respect to damaging attributes, the pessimistic attribution style is likely to promote negative appraisals of life events, and the cynical beliefs of hostile individuals are plausibly associated with stress inducing appraisals in the interpersonal domain. Following Sykes: “ what makes this pain of imprisonment is bite most deeply is the fact that confinement of a criminal represents a deliberate, moral rejection of the criminal by the free community” (1971, p. 65).

Inmates perform different argot roles. It can be explained by the fact that not all cognitive and behavioral responses to stressors reflect coping. Coping refers to activity that is conscious, deliberate, and effortful. Exposure to <https://assignbuster.com/the-society-of-captives/>

stress may elicit other, more automatic responses that, like coping, may play a role in determining how the stressful encounter is resolved. Examples of such automatic responses include motor patterns involved in the expression of emotion through facial movements or vocal tone, processes involved in the inhibition of communication between brain centers involved in emotion and language, and ego-defense mechanisms such as repression. The prisons population is divided into several groups including gorillas, merchants, wolves, punks, fags. Argot roles reflect anger, hostility, and aggressiveness as salient features of personality attributes that show promise as possible risk factors for physical violence. These three terms can be used to refer, respectively, to affective, cognitive, and behavioral constructs, and each may be conceived as either a state or trait. Factor analyses of relevant trait measures have generated findings consistent with this tripartite approach. Several studies have identified anger experience and anger expression factors (also referred to as neurotic and antagonistic hostility), which to some extent correspond to affective and behavioral dimensions, and appears to be a cognitive-attitudinal dimension. However, data calling into question the psychometric structure of some of the more frequently used scales for measuring anger-related attributes pose problems for the three factor structure of total scale scores. Given the need for further clarification of these issues, the terms anger/hostility or anger-related are used here to refer collectively to the full set of characteristics in this domain, recognizing that the number and nature of its distinct elements remain to be determined. Following Sykes, “ cohesive responses to the harsh conditions of prison life are to be found in the society of captives as well as “ alienative” responses even if prisoners fail to attach distinctive argot terms” (1971, p. 107).

The difference between coping, and what might be referred to as more automatic self-regulation, may be conceptualized in terms of a continuum involving differences in the degree to which the activity is mediated by verbal-propositional cognition as opposed to schematic cognitive processing, or, at a more rudimentary level, reflex circuits. Stress may be manifested in many ways. Deprivation and the more automatic self-regulatory responses already discussed represent one set of stress manifestations. However, argot roles are usually used to refer to indicators that reflect the negative impact or adaptive cost of stressful transactions. These responses may be characterized as falling within several broad domains, namely, subjective experience, cognitive functioning, emotional expression, physiological activity, and instrumental behavior.

A close link between deprivation and argot roles can be explained by absence of freedom and increased aggression towards the society and each other. These constructs bear a resemblance to helplessness/hopelessness, a passive orientation toward psychological stress that has been linked to poor cancer prognosis suggested that “fatalism” may be a better label for a “realistic acceptance” construct that was implicated as a factor producing shorter survival time. There is also evidence of an association between pessimism/fatalism and enhanced risk of complications. The term depression has been used to refer to depressive symptoms, that is, self-reports of low self-satisfaction, psychological distress, vegetative symptoms, and somatic complaints, which should be distinguished from a formally diagnosed clinical disorder. Research examining depression in relation to the progression of diseases has yielded mixed findings, however, and studies attempting to

demonstrate a relationship between depression and cancer have yielded predominantly negative results.

In sum, trait hostility, which is also thought to involve a cognitive- affective structure, as distinct from being a coping style per se, has been associated with an antagonistic style of coping with interpersonal stressors. For certain emotion-related personality characteristics, such as the repressive coping style, it has been suggested that negative emotional reactions are themselves a source of threat in stressful circumstances. In other words, after an environmental challenge or demand initiates a stress response, the repressive individual becomes anxious or upset, and this emotional reaction generates an additional threat appraisal because it conflicts with a desire to maintain emotional self-control. The derivative style is a tendency to attribute negative life events to internal, stable, and global causes. This construct was developed as a means of accounting for individual differences in the severity, generality, and duration of human responses to uncontrollable stressors. Fatalism, like pessimism, involves negative expectations about future outcomes.