

Social Psychology

General Psychology
47.101

Some definitions...

- Social Psychology: The scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another.

Outline

- Social Influence
 - Norms
 - Conformity
 - Compliance
 - Obedience
 - Helping behavior
- Social Cognition
 - Social Perception
 - Attitudes
 - Stereotyping and prejudice

More definitions...

- Social Influence: the extent to which others and/or situational factors influence our behavior

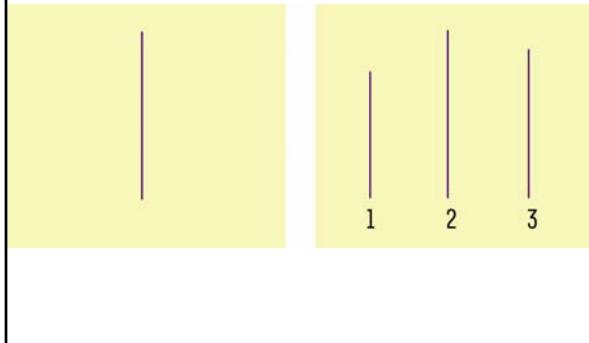
Norms

- Norms: learned, socially based rules that prescribe what people should or should not do
 - We follow them
 - Expect others to follow them
- Hard to vocalize, but we know when we see a violation
- Make situations more comfortable and less uncertain → creates social order
- Established by who?
 - Society...
 - But also the group... (can be more micro)

Conformity

- When people change their behavior or beliefs in order to match those of other members of a group...
 - Ex. Peer pressure...
- *A function of group norms...*

Match the line on the left to one on the right

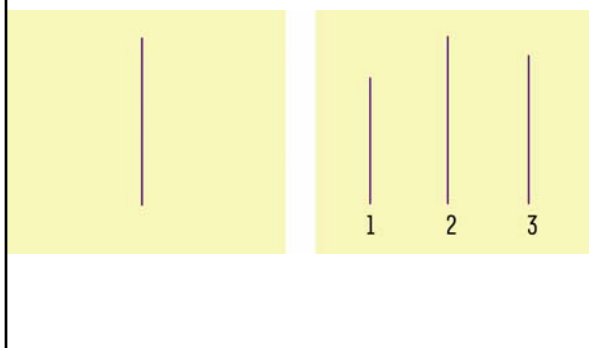


Can the situation affect our behavior?

- Even when it goes against our beliefs?
 - Asch's conformity studies



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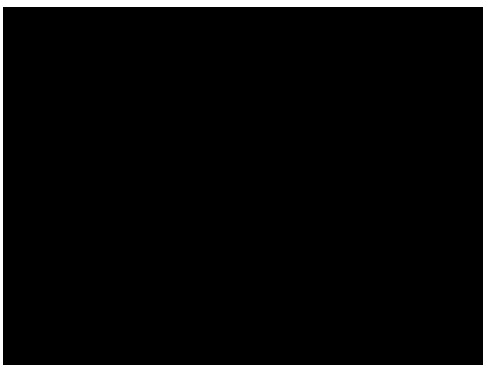


Asch's Studies of Conformity

- What did the participant do?
- 70% conformed at least once!
 - Most said they knew answer was wrong but didn't want to look peculiar



Elevator norms...and conformity...



Conformity

- Why?
 - Group norms are powerful...
 - Want to be right and norms can provide information
 - Want to be liked
 - Norms influence social rewards
- When?
 - Ambiguity
 - As situation becomes more uncertain, can look to other for clues about how to act
 - Size of majority and unanimity
 - Even one dissenter decreased conformity rate in Asch studies...

Compliance

- When people change in behavior because of a *request*.
 - How is compliance brought about?
 - If you want something, ask!



Compliance

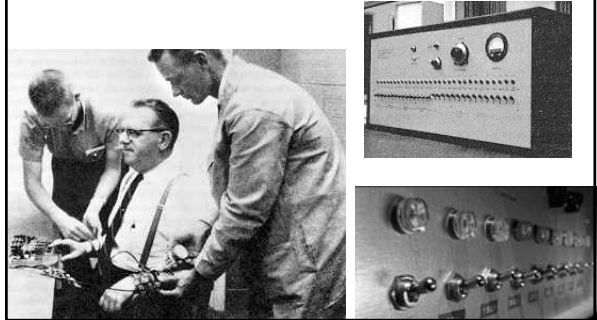
- When people change in behavior because of a *request*.
 - How is compliance brought about?
 - If you want something, ask!
- What about... "If you want something, ask for something else"!?
 - Foot in the door technique
 - Get person to agree to small request then ask for something larger
 - Sign to put "drive carefully" on lawn
 - » 17% agree on 1st round
 - » 55% agreed after signing a petition weeks earlier
 - Why does this work?
 - Commitment
 - Door in the face procedure
 - Ask for something big that will surely be denied, then ask for something smaller...
 - Appears to be a compromise... (framing!)

Obedience

- Change in behavior in response to a *demand* from an authority...

Can the situation lead you to hurt someone?

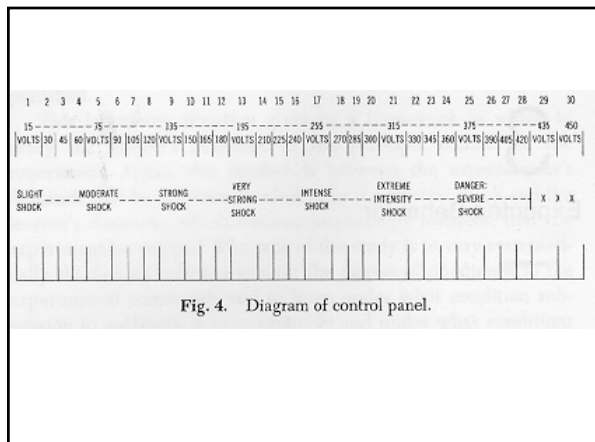
- Milgram's Studies of Obedience



Obedience to Authority

Cover story:

- Study of effects of punishment on learning
- One participant is the teacher; the other is the learner
 - Procedure rigged so that the naïve participant is the teacher;
 - learner is a confederate ("Mr. Wallace")
- Procedure: teacher shocks learner for errors
- Shocks increase in 15 volt increments



Scripted responses of Mr. Wallace

- 75 volts:
 - moan and grunt
- 150 volts:
 - demand to be released
- 180 volts:
 - cried out that he could not longer stand the pain
- 300 volts:
 - protested that he had a heart condition and insisted that he would not longer take part in the experiment
- 315+:
 - Ominous silence

Scripted responses of the experimenter

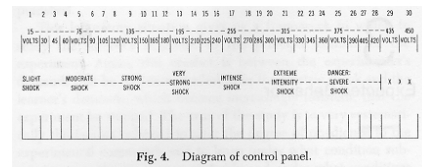
Gave these responses in this order, as needed:

- “Please go on”
- “Teacher, you must go on; your job is to punish the learner’s mistakes”
- “The experiment requires that you continue”
- “Teacher you have no other choice”



Degree of obedience

- 100% compliance until 210 volts
- Only 5 % stopped before 300 volts
- 65% went all the way to 450 Volts!!!



Factors that influenced obedience

- Experimenter status and Prestige:
 - Bridgeport office building (vs. Yale U) - 47% obey versus 65%
- Behavior of others
 - Liberating effects of group influence...
 - 2 other teachers who dissented
 - 2 disobedient confederates - 10% obey up to 450 volts

Real world applications...

- Can you think of some?
- “Captainitis”
- World Trade Center → “Go back to work”

Zimbardo's Prison Experiment

- Video

Zimbardo's Prison Experiment

Major factors that enabled brutality:

- Obedience to Authority
 - Experimenter gave orders to guards and encouraged tough behavior
- Deindividuation
 - The loss of one's sense of individuality and a loosening of normative constraints against deviant behavior
 - Guards wore uniforms, mirrored sunglasses
 - Anonymity
- Dehumanization
 - Prisoners stripped, wore prisoner clothes, given numbers as names

Zimbardo's Prison Experiment

Parallels to real-life examples?

- e.g., abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib
 - Obedience to Authority: Intimidation practices from higher-ups, encouraged to "soften" prisoner
 - Deindividuation: American soldiers wore same uniforms (anonymity), language barrier
 - Dehumanization: Iraqi prisoners stripped, kept in dirty cells, blindfolds/bags over heads, use of dogs

Questions raised by Milgram & Zimbardo

- How can we explain evil acts?
 - Other examples from history?
- Are people ever inherently evil?
- Or do situations cause evil?
- Ethical issues of this type of research
 - But is research worthwhile?

Helping

- An act that is intended to help another person
- Factors that influence:
 - Clarity of need
 - Presence of others
 - Perceived closeness

Clarity of need

- Sometimes it is not clear if/who needs help...
 - Notice & Interpret as emergency



- Asking for help makes a difference!

Presence of others

- Kitty Genovese (1964)
 - 30 min struggle
 - Stabbed repeatedly
 - Over 40 neighbors watched and did nothing...
- Bystander effect:
 - As # of people increase, likelihood of any one person helping decreases
 - Diffusion of responsibility
- Darley and Latane: If smoke filled into this room, what would you do???
 - Alone: 67% immediately
 - Group: 25% immediately

Perceived closeness

- Closer you feel to someone more likely to help
 - Establish some level of responsibility

Discovering Psychology

Power of the situation

20:08-20:55

Social Cognition

- Mental processes associated with the ways in which people perceive and react to other individuals and groups
- Social perception
 - Self
 - Others
- Attitudes
- Stereotypes and Prejudice

How do we perceive ourselves?

- Objective measures
 - How tall we are, or how much we weight
- Non-objective measures
 - Am I a good student?
 - With non-objective measures
 - Temporal perspective:
 - Compare how I am now with how I was before
 - Social comparison
 - Compare myself to other...

Social Comparison

- Comparing ourselves to others...
 - Who?
 - Look to others who are similar
 - Reference groups
 - Downward versus upward social comparison
 - Framing...

Social Identity Theory

- Identity is a function of the groups to which we belong
 - Categorize ourselves as members of group
 - Identification with group
 - Derive meaning from our relationship to the group

How do we perceive others?

- Schemas → Mental representations about what we know and have come to *expect* about categories of objects, events and people
 - Generalizations based on experience
 - Organize our world
 - Example a car...
 - Just like we have schemas about objects like cars, we also have them about people...

Left side ... close your eyes

Jim is rumored to be stubborn...

Right side ... close your eyes

Jim is rumored to be persistent

We know the following information about Jim...

- Once he makes up his mind to do something it is as good as done, no matter how long it might take or how difficult the going might be. Only rarely does he change his mind, even though in some situations it might have been better if he did...
- One on a scale from 1-5 (1= Not at all & 5 = Very much), answer the following questions
 - How likable is Jim?
 - Is he argumentative?
 - Would you like to have him as a roommate?

Schemas about others

1. Influence our attention
 2. Influence what we remember
 3. Affect of judgment about ambiguous behavior
 - *Can influence (and bias) our perceptions of others*
- Impression formation
 - Once formed a first impression can have lasting effects
 - impressions can change but slowly
 - "Cognitive misers"
 - Self fulfilling prophecy...
 - Tendency to behave in ways that make other confirm our expectations...

Demonstration of Self-fulfilling prophecy

- When an observer's expectations shape the actor's behavior
 - Rosenthal's Pygmalion in the classroom studies
 - Experimenter randomly assigned some children as "bloomers" according to bogus test
 - Teachers were naïve
 - Teachers gave more attention to "bloomers"
 - "Bloomers" showed more academic improvement a year later

Discovering Psychology

12:15-16:10

Explaining behavior: Attribution

- Another key aspect of our perception of others → explanations (cause) of individual behavior
- Internal versus external attribution...

Trait Identification Questionnaire

Serious	Light hearted	Depends on Situation
Energetic	Relaxed	Depends on Situation
Self-assertive	Unassuming	Depends on Situation
Reserved	Emotionally expressive	Depends on Situation
Intense	Calm	Depends on Situation
Quite	Talkative	Depends on Situation
Dominant	Submissive	Depends on Situation
Cautious	Bold	Depends on Situation
Uninhibited	Self controlled	Depends on Situation
Skeptical	Trusting	Depends on Situation

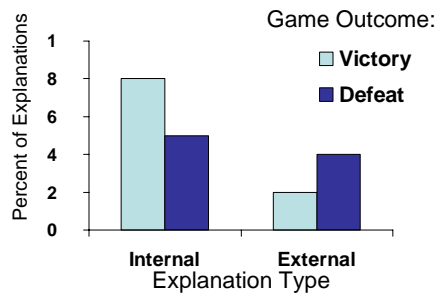
Biases in Attribution

- Attributions about **OTHERS**
 - **The Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE):**
 - Over attribute behavior of others to internal factors (such as personality traits)
 - **Ultimate Attribution Error**
 - When members of out group do something **positive** → **external factors** (luck)
 - Attribute **negative behaviors** → **internal factors**
- Attributions about **SELF**
 - **Actor-observer bias**
 - Tendency to attribute our own behaviors (especially when **negative** → **external factors**)
 - Why? Different amounts of info about you vs. others
 - **Self-serving bias**
 - Positive behaviors → Internal factors

College Board Study: Can we all be better than average?

Rating	Percentage
Above Average in Leadership Ability:	70%
Below Average in Leadership Ability:	7%
Above Average in Athletic Ability:	60%
Below Average in Athletic Ability:	6%
Top 10% in ability to get along with others:	60%

Self-serving Bias in the Sports Pages



Attitudes

- Attitude: Tendency to think, feel, or act positively or negatively toward objects in our environment
- Structure of attitude – 3 components
 - Cognitive component → belief
 - Affective component → feeling
 - Behavioral component → action

(1) Strongly Disagree- (5) Strongly Agree

- World hunger is serious problem that needs attention
- Our country needs to address the growing number of homeless
- The right to vote is one of the most valuable rights of American Citizens
- Our government should spend less money on nuclear weapons and more on its citizens

Turn your page over

- Yes or no....
- Do you personally do anything to lessen world hunger? (e.g. Donate money or food or write your representative)
- Do you personally do anything to help the homeless? (e.g. Volunteer at homeless shelters or donate money)
- Did you vote in the last election you were eligible?
- Do you personally convey your opinions to the government? (e.g. by writing your representative or participating in protests or marches)

What happened?

- Attitudes often not in line with behaviors?
- How did this make you feel?
 - Psychologically uncomfortable?
 - Dissonance...

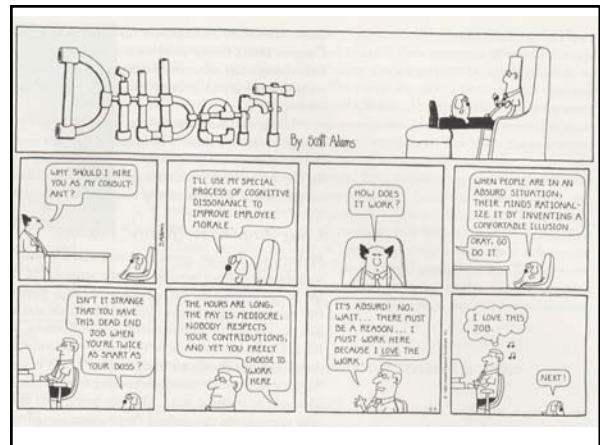
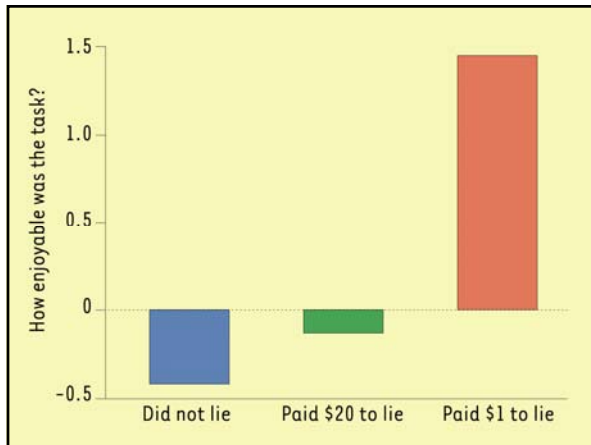
Determinants of behavioral component being consistent...

1. Consistency when thoughts and feeling are in agreement
2. Behavioral component in line with subjective norms
3. Perceived control
4. Direct experience with attitude object
 - Attitudes based on experience are more stable, more memorable → more salient

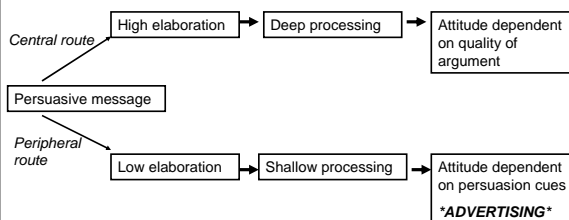
Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- Leon Festinger
 - When behaviors \neq attitudes \rightarrow dissonance
 - Reduce dissonance \rightarrow change our attitude so that it is in line with our behavior...
 - Cognitive Dissonance: Changing our attitudes to be in line with our behavior in order to reduce psychological discomfort

Discovering Psychology
 Judgment and decision making
 20:53 – 25:30



Persuasion: Changing Attitudes



- Which route will be followed?
 - Personal involvement with message important
 - Cognitive load/busyness





Stereotypes

- Stereotypes: A set of perceptions, beliefs and expectations about a members of a group.
 - Schemas about entire groups of people...
 - Are often be false or misperceptions
 - Can be positive or negative
 - Most common → observable characteristics (gender, race, age)
 - Assume everyone within a group is the same...

Prejudice

- Literal meaning: “pre-judgment”
- Unjustified negative attitude toward an individual based solely on that individual’s membership in a group

Let’s try it...

Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

- Stereotypes: Cognitive Component
- Prejudice: Affective component
- Discrimination: Behavioral component

Theories of Prejudice and Stereotyping

- Motivational theories
 - Enhance sense of security
 - Identification with in-group and strong rejection of outgroup
- Cognitive Theories
 - Natural by-product of categorization process
 - Schemas- help to organize the complexities of our world
- Learning Theories
 - From parents, peers, media



Jane Elliot's "experiment..."

[Discovering Psychology](#)
 Power of the situation
 5:46-9:46

Types of prejudice

- Old fashioned (Blatant)
 - Intentional, deliberate or conscious use of stereotypes and expressions of prejudice
- Modern (Subtle)
 - A form of prejudice that surfaces in subtle ways when it is safe, socially acceptable, and easy to rationalize
- Implicit
 - Influence of stereotypes or prejudice without the perceiver's awareness or intent...
 - IAT
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>



Reducing Prejudice

- Contact Hypothesis: Stereotypes and prejudice will be weakened by bringing groups into direct contact with one another
 - We like people we know more than strangers
 - Stereotypes will be disconfirmed
 - Perceptions of dissimilarity will be reduced
 - See others as individuals and not just members of a group
- But the conditions have to be right...
 - Equality of status, working toward common goal, supportive social norms