UNIT 1.2
social psychology

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Scientifically studies how we think about, influence, and relate to one another.

· social thinking

Social thinking involves thinking about others, especially when they engage in behaviors that are unexpected.

1. Does his abstenteeism signify illness, laziness, or a stressful work atmosphere?

2. Was the horror of 9/11 the work of crazed evil ppl or ordinary ppl corrupted by life events?

social psychology's most important lessons

- we construct our social reality

- our social intuitions are often powerful but sometimes perilous

- social influences shape our behavior

- personal attitudes + dispositions also shape behavior

- social behavior is psychologically rooted

- social psych's principles are applicable in everyday life

role playing: situations affect attitudes

- Zimbardo (1971) assigned the roles of guards + prisoners to random students and found that guards + prisoners developed role-appropriate attitudes
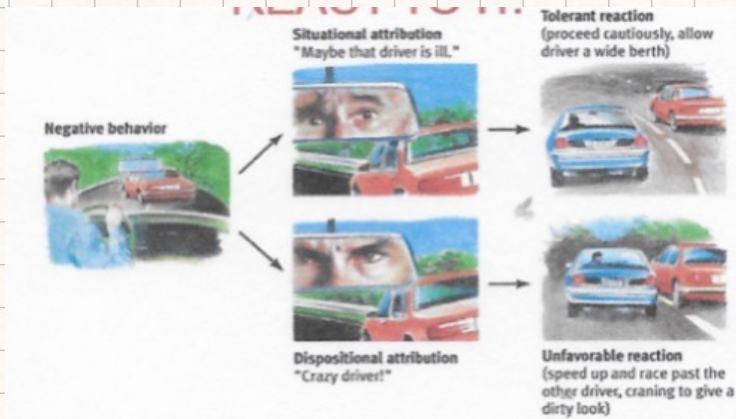

Courtesy Philip Zimbardo/www.lucifereffect.com

ABU GHRAIB: creating a culture of cruelty

- a prison is a place of enormous power differential
- aversive experiences predispose one to anger and aggression
- a novel environment w/o established norms for acceptable behavior lead us to look to others for direction, especially to those in charge
- "peer modeling" also helps to define reality
- dehumanization of prisoners as animals or scum was made easier in Iraq because of the foreign language + customs
- a "we" vs. "they" mentality existed
- the mechanics of "moral disengagement" were evident
- de-individualization of the guards diffused responsibility + undermined self-restraint
- unresponsive bystanders, who had private concerns, did not openly disagree or challenge the immoral behavior going on in the prison.

→ a formula that pertains to "good people" seeing /contributing/ creating a "culture of cruelty"

Negative behavior

Situational attribution
"Maybe that driver is ill."

Tolerant reaction
(proceed cautiously, allow driver a wide berth)

Dispositional attribution
"Crazy driver!"

Unfavorable reaction
(speed up and race past the other driver, craning to give a dirty look)

attributing behavior to persons or situations

- attribution theory: Fritz Heider (1958) suggested that we have a tendency to give casual explanations for someone's behavior, often crediting either the situation or the person's disposition.

  → fundamental attribution error: the tendency to over-estimate the impact of personal disposition & underestimate the impact of the situations in analyzing the behaviors of others; attributing a disposition to personality

- self-serving bias — people accept more responsibility for good deeds than for bad, and for successes than for failures, when such an evaluation is unjustified (psychological pressures)
  1. believing that you are more intelligent than you actually are
  2. believing that a positive outcome is completely due to your talents when it may be partly explained by chance factors or the efforts of others
  3. blaming a negative outcomes in your life on other ppl or bad luck when it may partly be due to making bad decisions
  4. believing you can be a famous singer when most ppl doubt your singing ability

  ATTRIBUTION THEORY:
  - dispositional vs. situational attribution
  - explaining others — fundamental attribution error
  - explaining self — self-serving bias

effects of attribution

- moral model → responsible for problem & solution
  (i.e "you got yourself in this mess, you get yourself out")
- compensatory model → not responsible for problem, but responsible for solution
  (i.e "I may be down, but I keep getting up")
- medical model → not responsible for problem nor solution
  (i.e "you got sick, but we will treat it for you")
- enlightenment model → responsible for problem, "helpless & needing discipline" for solution

dispositions

dispositions are enduring personality traits. So, if Joe is quiet, shy, and an introverted child, we think that he is likely to be like that in a number of situations.

A teacher may wonder whether a child's hostility reflects an aggressive personality (dispositional attribution) or is a reaction to stress or abuse (a situational attribution)

social thinking

- store info
- interpret info
- remember info

(i.e. I came to accept that I was powerless...")

attitudes & actions

- attitudes are feelings, influenced by our beliefs, that predispose a person to respond in a particular way to objects, other ppl, or events

attitude change + persuasion

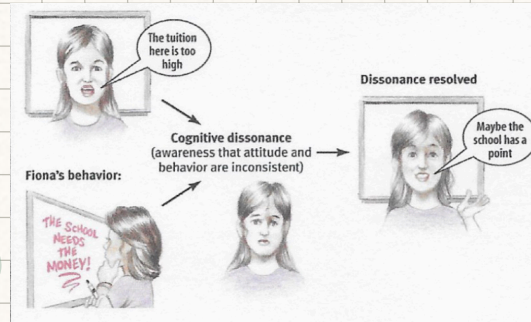| • CENTRAL ROUTE PERSUASION	• PERIPHERAL ROUTE PERSUASION
= attitude change path in which interested ppl focus on the arguments & respond w/ favorable thoughts	= attitude change path in which ppl are influenced by incidental cues, such as a speaker's attractiveness

- our attitudes predict our behaviors imperfectly b/c other factors, including the external situation, also influence behavior
- actions can affect attitudes: not only do people stand for what they believe in (attitude), they start believing in what they stand for — cooperative actions can lead to mutual liking
- attitudes follow behavior (Festinger, 1957)

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

when our attitudes and actions are opposed, we experience tension. To relieve ourselves of this tension we bring our attitudes closer to our actions.

Why do actions affect attitude?

The tuition here is too high

Fiona's behavior:
THE SCHOOL NEEDS THE MONEY!

Cognitive dissonance (awareness that attitude and behavior are inconsistent)

Dissonance resolved

Maybe the school has a point

Actions

Attitudes

→ Small Request – Large Request
(i.e. in the Korean war, Chinese communists solicited cooperation from US army prisoners by asking them to carry out small errands. By complying to small errands they were likely to comply w/ larger ones)

Foot - in - the-Door Phenomenon:
the tendency for people who have first agreed to a small request to comply later w/ a larger request

• social influence
the greatest contribution of social psychology is its study of attitudes, beliefs, decisions, and actions and the way they are molded by social influence.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE:
- conformity & obedience
- group influence
- the power of individuals

• social contagion:
→ The Looking Glass Effect: when we are keenly aware of our attitudes, they are more likely to guide our actions
→ Mimicry: A part of empathy, it helps us to connect to others; can be pro-social or anti-social
→ Chameleon Effect: Adjusting one's behavior or thinking to coincide w/ a group standard
→ Mood Linkage: we feel happy when w/ happy ppl, & depressed around unhappy ppl
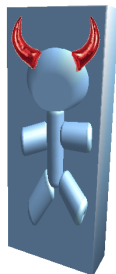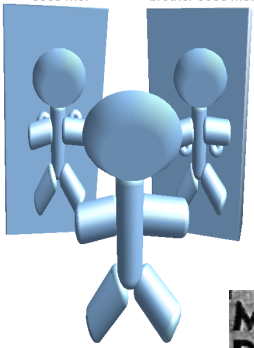
habits of thinking

The Looking Glass Self

How my mom and dad see me.   How my girlfriend sees me.   How my older brother sees me.   How my ex-girlfriend sees me.
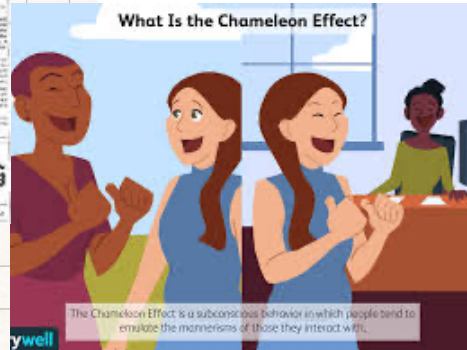
Mystery Windshield Damage Spreads In Seattle And County

The Seattle Daily Times

Mood linkage/mood contagion & Mob violence?

What Is the Chameleon Effect?

The Chameleon Effect is a subconscious behavior in which people tend to emulate the mannerisms of those they interact with.

18

CONFORMITY AND OBEDIENCE

Behavior is contagious, modeled by one followed by another. We follow behavior of others to conform. Other behaviors may be an expression of compliance (obedience) toward authority.

— Group pressure & conformity
- Suggestibility is a subtle type of conformity, adjusting our behavior or thinking toward some group standard.
- Solomon Asch (1951) — Asch Experiment
  → Subjects were asked which line A-C matched the target line. Many subjects chose the wrong line because of the answers that other subjects (actors) gave

  Target line   A B C
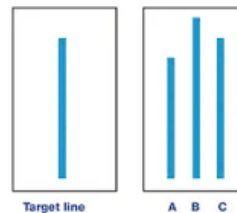
  → This experiment showed the extent of social pressure from a group that can cause conformity; felt ambivalence between their perceptions + those of the group
- Dan Ariely — Cheating & Dishonesty
  → we are predictably irrational
  → we can be influenced in ways that we don't even realize
  → "fudge factor": goals to look at ourselves and feel good (Looking Glass Effect) as well as cheat and benefit from it
  → we cheat up to the level that we would find it comfortable [to still feel good about ourselves]; we also think that we should be able to increase it or shrink it [to affect the amount of cheating someone does]
  → in society, people contemplate morality when it matters
- Conditions that strengthen conformity
  → one is made to feel incompetent or insecure
  → group has at least 3 ppl
  → group is unanimous
  → one admires the groups' status
  → one has made no prior commitment
  → others in group observe one's behavior

→ one's culture strongly encourages respect for social standards
- obedience
  - people comply to social pressures, how would they respond to outright command?
  - Stanley Milgram (1933-1984) designed a study that investigates the effects of authority on obedience
    → the most famous study of obedience where the subject was given direct orders from an authorative figure to inflict shocks of pain to another figure (confederate) that measured from 15 V to 450 V
    → this focused on the conflict between obedience to authority and personal conscience and measured how much an individual would comply to orders even when it goes against personal moral   (torn between the pleas + orders) ←
    → many of the subjects (the shockers) were in a state of conflict and uncomfortability
    → Milgram's experiment suggested that people are susceptible to obeying authority but also demonstrated that obedience is not inevitable
    → this idea is still permiating today & consistent in certain situations
      ↳ people get trapped in the conflict that critical thinking does not come into play
    → the power of individualization over people ; social conflict
    → showed how people would obey instructions from those who they saw as legitamate authority figures
    → unexpectedly powerful human tendency to obey authorities
    → provides a reference point for certain phenomena that strain our understanding
    → subjects (teachers/shockers) were exhibiting cognitive dissonance, which felt resolved by obedience
    → individual resistance: 1/3 of the individuals in Milgram's study resisted social coercion

GROUP INFLUENCE: ~effects of group interaction

- group polarization: discussion among like-minded people tends to strengthen preexisting attitudes ; looking at what is going on between 2 groups
- group think: group members suppress/self-censor dissenting views to avoid conflict (i.e. Bay of Pigs + Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam war, Invasion of Iraq) ; looking at what is going on in the actual group
- social psychologists study various groups:
  1. one person affecting another
  2. Families
  3. Teams
  4. Committees

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR: in the presence of others

- social facilitation : improved performance on tasks in the prescence of others (i.e. racing, competition)
- social loafing: the tendency of an individual in a group to exert less effort toward attaining a common goal than when tested individually (Latané, 1981) (i.e. tug of war, group project)
- de-individualization: the loss of self-awareness + self-restraint in group situations that foster arousal + anonymity (i.e. mob behavior: looting vs. surviving)

THE POWER OF INDIVIDUALS

- social control vs. personal control
- minority influence