

Unit 10: Social Psychology

The scientific study of how we think about, influence and relate to one another.



Do people behave the way they do because of personal disposition or the situation?

Day 1: Attribution Theory, Attitudes, Conformity and Obedience

Today's Topic:

“The Big 3”

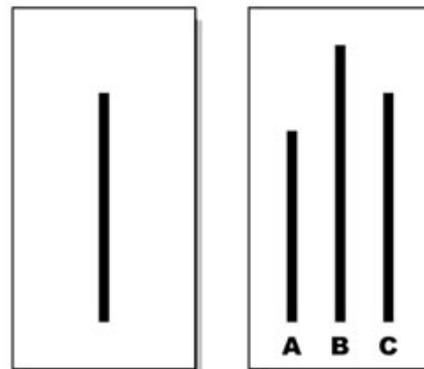
– Studies in Social Psychology



Solomon ASCH

- Conducted a famous study of **Conformity** (line length) (1950s)

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRh5qy09nNw>)



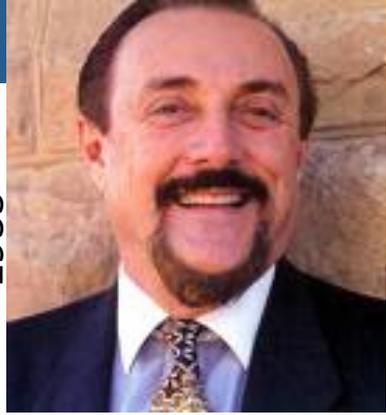
Stanley MILGRAM

- Conducted a famous study of **Obedience** (shock experiment)

(1961)



1933-1984



1933-

Philip ZIMBARDO

- Conducted the **Stanford Prison Study** (1971).
- Results showed that the role someone plays greatly impacts their behavior

**It's time for a little
questionnaire!**

Attribution

- By now you've probably decided whether your math teacher is serious, funny, scary etc. You've most likely attributed those traits to his or her internal disposition rather than the classroom situation.
 - **Attribution theory** – the theory that we tend to give causal explanations for someone's behavior, often by crediting either the situation or the person's disposition

Attribution— continued

- If your friend wants to borrow your notes, you almost immediately start to think of a reason for your friend's request
 - If you think she is lazy and doesn't pay attention in class, this is a **dispositional attribution**
 - If you remember she missed class the day before, you are making a **situational attribution**

Attribution– continued

We often make the mistake or error of attributing behaviors to inner dispositions than to situations. This is called the:

Fundamental attribution error – tendency for observers, when analyzing another's behavior, to underestimate the impact of the situation and overestimate the impact of personal disposition

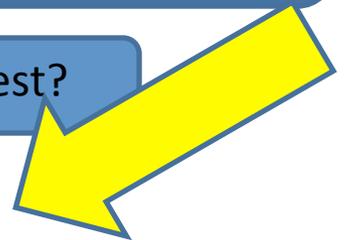
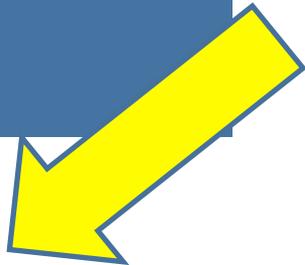


Snoopy, why did you fail that test?

I had four tests on the same day and the night before I had Red Baron flying lessons – I just didn't have time to study.

Snoopy, why did Woodstock fail that test?

He's a bird brain!



Attribution– continued

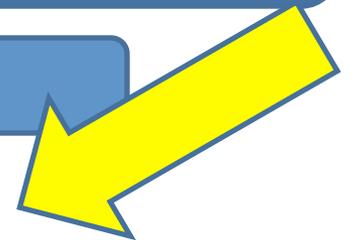
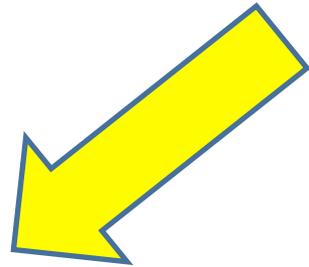


Mrs. Puff, why did SpongeBob fail the boating test?

He's a reckless idiot who doesn't know how to drive.

SpongeBob, why did you fail that boating test?

There was something wrong with the brakes and the steering wheel.



Attribution– continued

Actor-observer effect - attribute behaviors to situational effects when we are the actor, but attribute behavior to dispositional factors when we are the observer



- Also we tend to have a readiness to perceive ourselves more favorably than others
 - This is called the **self-serving bias**

Attribution– continued

Actor-observer effect - attribute behaviors to situational effects when we are the actor, but attribute behavior to dispositional factors when we are the observer

[1979 Who Concert in Cincinnati, OH](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFzXzBQCzjc)

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Attitudes— how do they develop?

- Behavior can affect attitudes - belief or feeling that predisposes one to respond in a particular way to objects, people and events
 - **Foot-in-the-door phenomenon** - tendency to comply with larger request after we have complied with a smaller one
 - Gateway drugs
 - Stealing
 - Racism
 - People can be moved away from their **attitudes** because they begin rationalizing behavior at smaller steps

Attitudes— how do they develop?

One theory is that we want our actions and attitudes to match. If they don't, we experience stress or tension called:

Cognitive dissonance – theory that we act to reduce the discomfort we feel when two of our thoughts are inconsistent

- The more dissonance the more likely we are to change attitudes.

Attitudes— how do they develop?

Cognitive Dissonance Activity:

Suppose you had volunteered to participate in a psychology experiment on campus. Upon arrival, you were seated at a table and asked to undertake a series of dull, meaningless tasks for about an hour.

Afterward, the experimenter convinced you to extol the virtues of the tasks you had performed by describing them to other potential participants as highly worthwhile, interesting, and educational. You were paid either \$1 or \$20 to do this. Suppose you were then asked to privately rate your enjoyment of the tasks on a questionnaire.

After which amount do you believe your actual enjoyment rating of the tasks would be higher—\$1 or \$20? Write down your answer.

Attitudes– how do they develop?

- Operant Conditioning
 - Our attitudes are either reinforced or punished
- Modeling
 - We learn our attitudes by watching our parents and other role models
- Classical Conditioning

Attitudes are not hereditary!

Conformity & Obedience

Conformity – changing one's behavior or thinking to coincide with the group's standard.

Conditions that strengthen conformity:

- Social insecurity
- Group over three
- Group is unanimous
- admire the group
- no prior commitment
- being observed
- culture encourages respect for social standards

Obedience – the tendency to comply with orders, implied or real, from someone perceived as an authority

Conformity & Obedience

- **Normative social influence**

- A person's desire to gain approval or avoid disapproval (to follow the “norms”) can shape behavior

- Example: turn around and face door in elevator

- **Informational social influence**

- A person's behavior may change because they have been made aware of new information

- Example: stop using the word “gyped;” seatbelt use

Obedience

Milgram – the results of his experiments solidify the idea that people will go to the extreme in order to obey someone they believe to be a legitimate authority.

Real life example: Jedwabne, Poland, July, 1941

The town of 3,200 Poles murdered half its population, 1,600 Jews.

Social Influence Activity