

Science of Psychology

PSY W1001 Section 2
MW 8:40-9:55 Fall 2012



Wednesday, November 21
Social Psychology

Announcements

- Written Assignment
 - Late Assignments Due by 5pm on Friday
 - Late assignments only earn half credit
 - No assignments accepted after 5pm on Nov. 23 for any reason
- Exams will be returned at the end of lecture
 - Also available next week after lecture
- No make-up lecture from hurricane
 - Be prepared for faster pace in remaining lectures.

Social influence: Obedience

- Would you hop on one foot with your hands in the air just because your professor told you to?
 - Yes, in fact you would!!!
- Society demands some obedience
 - Stop at red lights
- When is it too much?
 - Nazis
- Disposition versus situation

Personality and Obedience

- Authoritarian personality
 - beliefs about power, obedience, and importance of strong leadership
- More nuanced investigations since the 50s and 60s have focused on related fears/ beliefs / attitudes:
 - Need for order or structure
 - Intolerance of ambiguity
 - Concern with death and societal instability

In other words ...

- The situation was the prime variable to investigate
- What aspects of the situation are salient in driving this kind of obedience? How coercive need it be?
 - Milgram's experiments: sought to answer these questions
 - Series of experiments run that have influenced decades of thought and follow-up studies

Early experiments in obedience

- Video

Milgram - Obedience

- Teacher and Learner
 - Learner was a confederate
- Teacher administers “shocks”
- How many comply?
 - **65% of all participants**, equal percentage for male and female, obeyed to the end
 - moral qualms, distress
 - Not just a function of the era (replicated recently)

Milgram's experiments, cont'd

- Profound ethical questions:
 - Under what conditions can you cause someone to believe that they have behaved in this way?
 - Is it ethical to do this to someone? (Self-knowledge, stress, etc.)
 - Does the gain from doing the experiment outweigh the distress caused to the participants (the teachers)?

Variables that influence obedience:

- Decreased sense of personal responsibility
- Increased psychological distance from actions and results
- Dehumanization of victim
- Progressive escalation of requests – the “slippery slope” of obedience

Overview of Milgram's experiments:

- The situation is more powerful than anyone at the time had predicted
- Although 65% obeyed, 35% did not: what factors were important for those who refused?

Compliance

- Norm of reciprocity
 - we feel compelled to comply when someone has helped us in the past
- 2 related techniques:
 - “Door in the face” technique
 - Large, unfulfilled request followed by smaller request
 - “That’s-not-all” technique
 - Price for original...but that’s not all!
 - Initially unreasonable amount seems better when there is something added in

Would you confess to a murder that you didn't commit?

- Kassin
 - *Five Ways in Which Innocence Can Put Innocents at Risk*
 - False positive errors by police
 - Innocent suspects waive their rights to silence and to counsel
 - Innocent suspects trigger highly confrontational interrogations.
 - Certain interrogation techniques (e.g., isolation, false evidence, minimization) increase the risk of a false confession.
 - Police over-believe the confessions

Social Loafing

- Are two (or more) heads better than one?
 - Ringelmann (1913): in a group of men, each pulled *less* hard than if pulling solo
 - Latane (1981): “social loafing”
 - People work less hard in groups
 - Consistent across cultures, across many variables



Self vs. Group

- Sometimes: others' presence drastically changes our behaviors
 - Riots, lynch mobs, etc.: behavior can become disinhibited, cruel, vicious
 - Deindividuation
 - We lose awareness of ourselves as individuals, feel less responsible for our behavior
 - Role we play
 - May obscure our individuality as well

The Stanford Prison Study

- Random assignment of “Prisoner” and “Guard”
- Experiment had to be stopped after only 6 of 14 days;
 - “guards” became sadistic,
 - “prisoners” began to experience full psychological breakdowns
- Real world examples
 - Abu Ghraib
 - Soldiers vs. Prisoners



Helping and Altruism

- How do social environments influence helping behavior?
- “The Bystander Effect”
 - Our understanding of the situation influences our decisions on acting or not acting
 - Pluralistic ignorance: if others are not doing anything, probably nothing needs to be done
 - Problem: others are using the same reasoning...

The Bystander Effect and the murder of Kitty Genovese

- Kitty Genovese: murdered on a public street in Kew Gardens, Queens (1964)
 - Attack lasted over an hour
 - Witnessed by more than 35 people (from upstairs windows overlooking the street)
 - Not a single person helped, not a single person called the police
 - Why?

The Bystander Effect

- Diffusion of responsibility:
 - we feel less compelled because we feel less responsible
 - Darley and Latane studies on the A train
- Each bystander feels increasingly less responsible if there are *many* bystanders
- We weigh the costs of helping as well as the benefits:
 - Physical danger weighed as well as psychological cost – i.e., being late if one stops to help

Relationships

- Can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em



Attraction: Do Opposites Attract?

- Some relationships rooted in attraction, not fairness
- Proximity
 - people like that which is familiar, and proximity increases familiarity
- Similarity
 - race, ethnic origin, social/educational background, income, religion strongly affect choice in marital partner

When you say *I love you*.....

- Different types of love
 - Romantic
 - Companionate
- Three features often examined:
 - Presence / absence of ...
 - Intimacy
 - Passion
 - Commitment

Romantic Love

- A “wildly emotional state” featuring “tender and sexual feelings, elation and pain, anxiety and relief, altruism and jealousy...” (Berscheid & Walster, 1978)
 - Men
 - fall in love more easily and more quickly than women
 - Women
 - fall out of love more easily than men

Companionate love

- Romantic love dies down...
- May result in an end to the relationship
- May result in dislike/indifference
- May result in “gentler state of affairs”
 - Companionate love
 - marked by higher levels of
 - Affection
 - Trust
 - Caring
 - Long history of shared experiences

Study Questions

- Is obedience bad? What makes a person more or less likely to be obedient?
- Describe the method of Milgram's classic experiment in obedience, defining the independent and dependent variables
- Did everyone obey in Milgram's experiment? What variables affected the likelihood of obedience?
- What were some of the ethical concerns raised by Milgram's experiments? How were those ethical concerns addressed?
- Describe 2 sales techniques that increase the likelihood of compliance and give an example of each.
- Would you confess to a crime you didn't commit? What are the reasons Kassin suggest would influence the likelihood of an innocent person confessing to a crime they did not commit?
- Describe the Stanford Prison Experiment. What did this experiment suggest about the behavior of groups?
- What is the bystander effect? Describe the original experiments that explored this effect.
- What is pluralistic ignorance? Explain how this concept affects the behavioral of individuals in a group.
- What are the 2 main components of attraction?
- What are the 2 main types of love? What are the components of love that are most often studied?