

Social Psychology

Defining Social Psychology

informal definition: the study of how people think about, influence, and relate to other people

formal definition: the study of how a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others

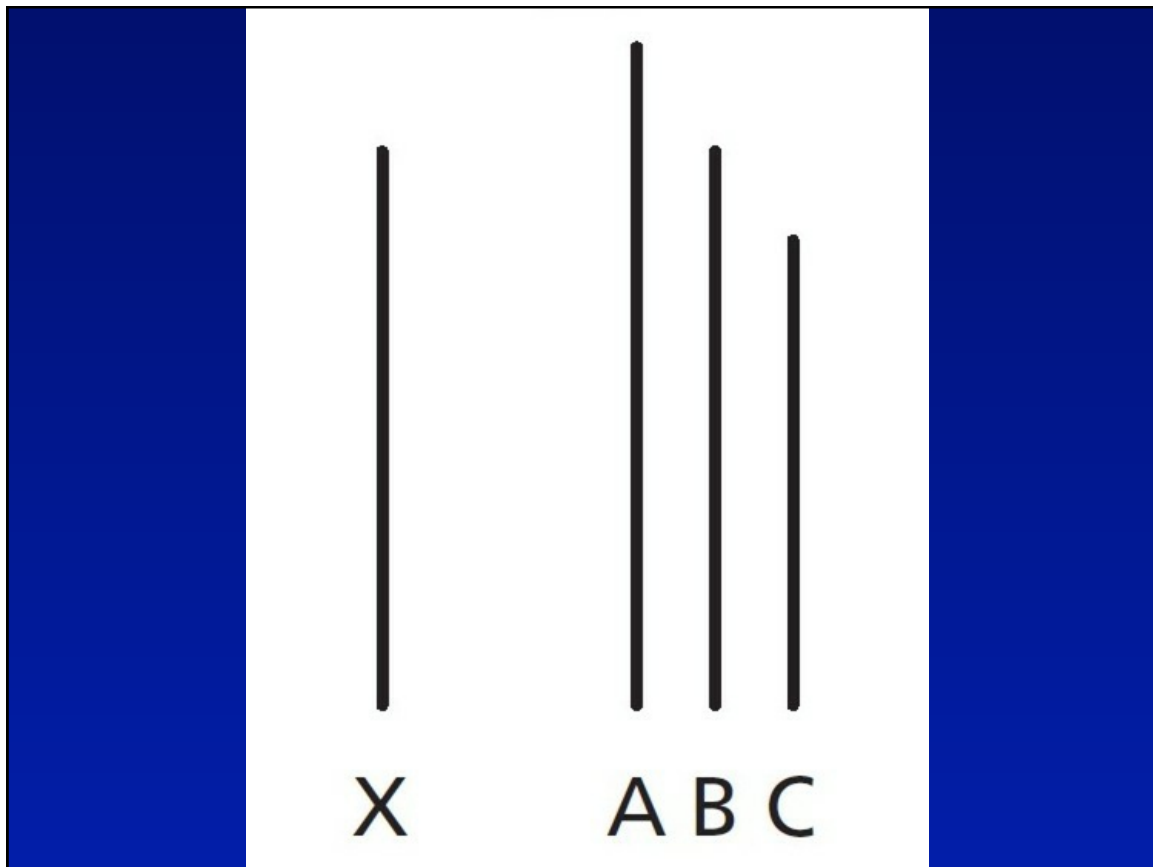
Groups & Group-influenced Motives

Social Influence: the way others affect us

- Conformity
- Compliance
- Obedience

Conformity

- change in behavior to “fit in with” social norms
 - Norms = widely accepted rules on how we “should” behave
- Classic studies
 - Sherif (1936) autokinetic effect
 - Asch (1951) line length estimation task
 - Zimbardo (1973) Stanford Prison Experiment



Conformity

factors involved in conformity

- cohesiveness & group desirability
- group size – Social Influence Model
- social support
- ambiguity

WHY? motivation to conform:

- normative social influence: desire to be liked
 - can lead to public conformity
- informational social influence: desire to be right
 - can lead to “conversion” - public conformity AND private real acceptance of group perspective

Compliance

- doing what's asked
 - to receive social rewards and/or avoid social punishments
 - involves a direct request
 - generally one individual influencing another, as opposed to pressure from a group
- procedures used in persuasion / obtaining compliance
 - ingratiation; foot in the door; door in the face...

- ingratiation: efforts to get others to like us
 - target-directed tactics: focus on appeal to others
 - impression management/self-presentation: appeal of self
- foot-in-the-door: small request, followed by larger request (which is the real goal)
 - shift in self-perception to someone who helps others
 - COGNITIVE DISSONANCE - desire for consistency
- door-in-the-face: large request, followed by small request (which is the real goal)
 - reciprocal concessions - reduce demand, reduce resistance
 - complier is concerned with self-presentation
 - anchoring – with larger comparison, request seems smaller
- foot-in-the-door more versatile – self-perception shift is longer lasting than reciprocal concessions

cognitive dissonance

- Leon Festinger (1957)
 - psychological discomfort (dissonance) caused by two inconsistent thoughts
 - 1959 study: have participants do very boring task, then FOR PAY, persuade others to do it by saying it was enjoyable
 - paid \$20 to lie: participants rated the task as boring
 - paid \$1 to lie: participants rated the task as enjoyable
 - because if I'm only being paid \$1, why would I say it was enjoyable? I must actually find it enjoyable!

Obedience

- influence by demand or order, usually from someone with more power
 - Milgram (1963, 1974) experiments
 - factors involved in obedience
 - high status of authority figure
 - belief that someone else responsible
 - absence of clear-cut point for switching to disobedience
 - gradual nature of obedience situation

Conflict & Cooperation

Altruism and Aggression



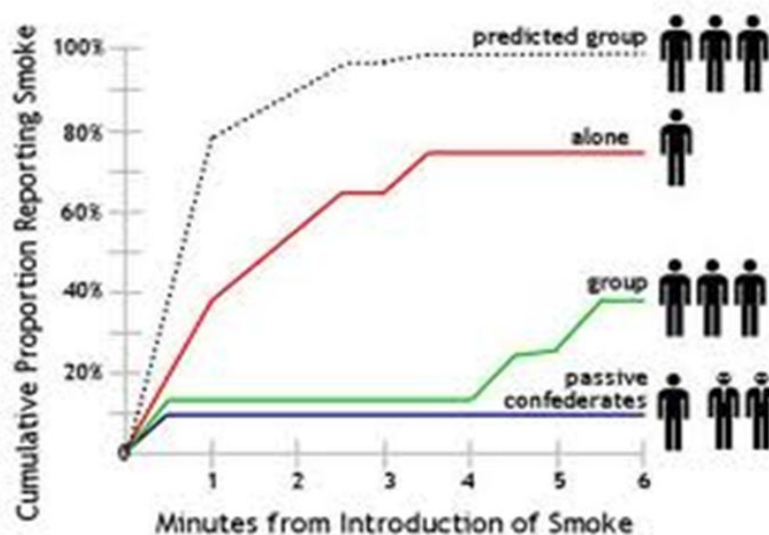
Bystander Effect & Diffusion of Responsibility

- Kitty Genovese murder, 1964, Queens NYC
 - 28 yr old stabbed outside apartment at night
- INCORRECT but famous New York Times story:
 - 38 witnesses watched, heard screams, did nothing to help, didn't call police
- ACTUALLY:
 - there weren't 38 witnesses; some heard noise but didn't recognize as cry for help; one shouted and attacker fled; murder happened in two attacks over a half hour, the second out of sight and silent; two called police, one came out to help her as she was dying, ETC.
- But misrepresentation of events did prompt research

Altruism

- Selfless acts that help other people with no obvious benefit to the helper
- Why not help?
 - Diffusion of responsibility
 - Pluralistic ignorance

Results for the 'smoke-filled room' experiment



- Emergency Response Decision Model
 - Notice the emergency
 - Interpret as emergency
 - Assume responsibility
 - Decide how to help
 - Decide whether to help

- Experiment with seminary students (clergy-in-training) on way to give talk
 - even if planned talk was on a Bible story about helping a stranger (“Good Samaritan”), when told they were running late they didn’t notice or help person in need on the way
- Experiment with unclear relationship between arguers
 - woman in altercation with man down the hall who yelled “why did I ever marry you?” elicited less help from observers than if she yelled “I don’t even know you!” - observers interpreted whether situation required help based on apparent relationship

- Motivational theories on helping
 - empathetic-altruism hypothesis
 - help purely for sake of helping
 - negative-state relief model
 - help to relieve negative emotions experienced in viewing others in need
 - empathetic-joy hypothesis
 - help out of joy received from observing others' needs being met

Aggression

- behavior directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment

Aggression

- Nature theories
 - psychoanalytic view
 - Thanatos (death wish; Freud)
 - sociobiological view
 - competition for scarce resources and desire for dominance lead to aggression
 - physiological view
 - “violence center” in brain - no; testosterone (male hormone) - somewhat

Aggression

- Nurture theories
 - frustration-aggression theory
 - aggression produced by circumstances
 - frustration when path to desired goal is blocked
 - aggression results – e.g., road rage
 - [relief]
 - social learning theory
 - aggressive behavior is learned

Aggression

- Other factors involved
 - anonymity
 - with increased anonymity, more aggression
 - environmental stress
 - heat, noise, crowding

Social Cognition

- Process through which we notice, interpret, remember, and use information about our social world
- cognitive misers – stingy with cognitive resources, try to get by with least mental effort
- processes: input, process, output
 - attention
 - memory: elaboration, organization, storage, & retrieval
 - self-reference effect: increase retrieval by relating info to self
 - schemas: sets of rules or features representing categories
 - social inference: generating decisions / behavior from information stored in memory

Social Perception

- Process through which we seek to know and understand others
- Why? need to make sense of others' behavior to know how to behave around them
- How? make attributions - explanations of others' behavior we infer and assign to them
 - nonverbal communication - seeing behaviors
 - impression formation
 - unified (traits, observations, appearances all combined) and integrated in memory (first impressions, every observation made in context of others, contributing to broader wholistic impression)

- Attributions: process by which make inferences about *causes* of behaviors & attitudes
 - Heider (1958) & Weiner (1971; 1979) – dimensions of attributions / explanations of behavior:
 - locus of causality: internal vs. external
 - perceived stability: stable vs. unstable
 - perceived controllability: controllable vs. uncontrollable

Example: attributions for explaining Achievement

		<u>Locus of Causality</u>	
		internal	external
<u>Stability</u>	stable	ability	difficulty of task
	unstable	effort	luck

Controllable (other three factors really aren't, in this case)

- heuristics & other biases of the “cognitive miser” can lead to errors in attribution
 - stereotype: generalization about group’s characteristics that ignores individual variation
 - “fundamental attribution error”: exaggeration of internal causes (and underestimation of external causes) in judging others’ behavior; we assume their behavior reflects their qualities and abilities, not their situation
 - as opposed to “self-serving bias” about OURSELVES, in which we favor internal attributions for our successes but external causes for our failures