Social Psych
Pt 2

How do we explain this behavior?

• Cognitive Dissonance Theory
  – People change their beliefs about something when they experience conflicts within
  – Guards must have been conflicted- change their beliefs to thinking they were right
  – Example: Iraq war was justified by... WMD
    • At the beginning of the war- 38% of Americans believed that the war would still be justified if no WMDs were found
    • Well, no WMDs were found: this causes dissonance because people still want to support the troops and no feel anti-American
    • So, they change their viewpoints
      – Within a year, 58% of Americans said they supported the war, even if no WMDs were found

Conformity

• Adjusting one’s behavior or thinking to coincide with a group standard
• Asch’s conformity experiments
  – Subjects were asked “Which of the 3 lines is equal in length to a 4th line?”

Asch Continued

– When the five people before you all give the same wrong answer, will you be the one that disagrees with them and give the right answer?
  • 30-60% of the time, people go with the group’s wrong answer

Obedience

• Stanley Milgram
• 40 subjects
• Supposed to “teach” another subject
• 1 person labeled the teacher, 1 student
  – In reality, the subject was ALWAYS the teacher (an experimenter was a fake student)

The experiment

• A shock generator was used
• 15 volts to 450 volts
  – Marked from “slight shock” to “Danger: severe shock” to “XXX”
• As the student gets answers wrong, the voltage is supposed to increase
What were they told?

- “But actually, we know very little about the effect of punishment on learning, because almost no truly scientific studies have been made of it in human beings. For instance, we don’t know how much punishment is best for learning, and we don’t know how much difference it makes as to who is giving the punishment, whether an adult learns best from a younger or an older person than himself, or many things of that sort. So in this study we are bringing together a number of adults of different occupations and ages. And we’re asking some of them to be teachers and some of them to be learners. We want to find out just what effect different people have on each other as teachers or learners, and also what effect punishment will have on learning in this situation. Therefore, I’m going to ask one of you to be the teacher and the other one to be the learner. Does either of you have a preference?”

Next

- Of course it was rigged so that the subject would always be the teacher, and the other “subject (really an experimenter) was the learner.

The experiment

- The learner was giving a predetermined set of responses: three wrong answers for every one right answer
  - If the subjects stopped shocking they were told:
    - Please continue
    - The experiment requires that you continue
    - It is absolutely essential that you continue
      - Said in order: if the subject still refused, then the experiment was stopped

What did they hear from the learner?

- The learner was shocked in a different room
- No vocal response or anything was heard until 300 V was reached
  - At that point the learner would pound on the wall and scream
- From this point on, the learner would not answer the questions
  - The teachers were told that no response should be considered a wrong response and punished

What are your expectations here?

- How far will people go before refusing to continue?
  - 300 volts? 100 volts? 450 volts? Never stop?
- Fourteen Yale seniors were asked to predict the behavior of 100 hypothetical subjects
  - Most agreed: only 1-2 subjects would go all the way (the class mean was 1.2% of people would go all the way)

Reality: Results

- No one stopped before 255 Volts:
  - How many stopped at:
    - 270 V?
      - 0
    - 285 V?
      - 0
    - 300 V?
      - 5
New Label: Extremely Intense Shock

- 315 V? — 4
- 330 V? — 2
- 345 V? — 1
- 360 V? — 1
- 405 V? — 0

What about: Danger Severe Shock?

- 375 V? — 1
- 390 V? — 0
- 420 V? — 0

Finally: XXX

- 435 V? — 0
- 450 V? — 26
- 26 went the entire way!!!

How many obeyed?

Effects on the Participants

- Many subjects
  - Looked nervous
  - "reached a degree of tension rarely seen in sociopsychological laboratory studies"
  - Sweat, tremble, bite their lips, groan, dig their fingernails into their flesh
  - Nervous laughter
- Most subjects did these- not just a few

Extreme Effects

- 3 Subjects: full-blown uncontrollable seizures
  - 1 subject was so violently convulsing, they had to stop the experiment
## What did this show?
- The power of obedience
- Authority figures

## Next Ideas: The Story of Kitty Genovese
- A woman was stabbed and beaten by a man and in an obvious fight in an alley
- At least 12 and maybe up to 38 people were aware that there were problems occurring
- How many phone calls to the police were made? Did anyone intervene?

## Did anyone help?
- One neighbor shouted: “leave her alone”
  - The attacker left
- 10 minutes later he returned
  - Sexually assaulted her
  - Stole $49 from her
  - Stabbed her more times

## What about a police call?
- Reports of early calls to police were vague and unclear
- No police came, because it was reported that it was not urgent
- A final call was made after the final attack and Kitty Genovese died on the way to the hospital in an ambulance

## Why did this happen?
- Who accepts responsibility for things?
- Where is the accountability here?

## Social and Individual Behavior
- Do you work harder when placed in a group or do you work less?
- What about when someone is watching you do something by yourself… do you do better or worse?
Social Facilitation

- Stronger responses on *simple or well learned tasks* in the presence of others
- Drivers are faster to go the first 100 yards after the light has turned green if there is someone behind them (15% faster)
- This doesn’t work when the task gets hard - people do worse then

Social Loafing

- In groups: people do less work than when doing something by themselves
- A tug-of-war team pulls less than if you added up the force of all of their individual pulls
- No feeling of accountability

How can we explain riots?

- What about Altamont?
  - Free concert - 1969
    - Rolling Stones, Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead
    - 300,000 fans showed
    - Last minute change in venue and time left facilities unprepared
    - Security: the Hell's Angels
  - 4 killed, major riots

Riot Situations

- People act in ways they would not normally act
  - Woodstock 1999, Rodney King Riots, Hurricane Katrina Riots
- What causes this?

Deindividuation

- The loss of self-awareness and self-restraint occurring in group situations that foster arousal and anonymity
  - Mob mentality
    - People rioting do things that they would never otherwise do
    - More aroused due to social facilitation and less sense of responsibility due to social loafing

Question

- When placed in a group of politically liberal people to talk, will a liberal person become more liberal, more conservative, or not change?
Polarization

• The enhancement of a group's prevailing inclinations through discussion within the group
• A group of liberals discussing will become more liberal

Prejudice

• An unjustifiable (usually negative) attitude toward a group and its members
  – Stereotypes
  – Negative feelings
  – Predisposition to discriminate

Possible natural roots of prejudice

• People prefer more feminine traits
• Which do you think women believe would be nicer?

Us and Them

• Ingroup bias
  – Favoring one's own group
    • Usually linked by a common identity
• Scapegoat theory
  – The need for someone to blame
  – Students made to feel insecure about themselves are more likely to lash out at someone else to restore their own self-esteem

Aggression

• Frustration-agression principle
  – Frustration creates anger- leads to aggression
• Imagine how this applies to violence on TV and program viewing…

Some general ideas

• People exposed to more violence (TV or not) perceive the world as more violent and become tolerant of it
• People exposed to more pornography perceive the world as more sexual and become more accepting of:
  – Extramarital sex
  – Women submitting to men
  – A man seducing a 12 year old girl