Social Context

Intro Psychology
Georgia Tech
Instructor: Dr. Bruce Walker

Today
• Self-Knowledge
• Social Context
• Obedience

Recall…
• Beliefs and attitudes can change (sometimes retrospectively or retroactively)
• We have less self knowledge than we think
• So who is really in control of our actions, and our beliefs?

Social facilitation
• Common view that the mere presence of other people might influence your performance…
• Does the complexity of the task matter?
• How much thought does this depend on?

Social facilitation
• Zajonc, Heingartner, & Herman (1969), I

“audience” boxes
Cockroaches run from start (bright light) to goal (dim light)
Faster when audience box is filled with other cockroaches than when empty

Social facilitation
• Zajonc, Heingartner, & Herman (1969), II

“audience” boxes
Cockroaches run from start (bright light) to goal (dim light)
Cockroaches worse with audience than without
Social facilitation

- Zajonc's explanation
  - Presence of "others" causes physiological arousal
  - Simple dominant responses become easier, faster with increased levels of arousal
  - Difficult nondominant (nonobvious) responses, arousal is distracting rather than energizing.
  - Predicts that experts and novices should differ in audience effects.

  - Expert and novice pool players made shots either with observers or without

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Expert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not observed</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of shots made

Social loafing

- Under what circumstances does the presence of others decrease our own efforts?

- Jackson & Williams (1985)
  - Subjects (humans) solved either easy or difficult mazes
  - Subjects always worked on mazes with another subject at another computer in the same room.
  - Half of the subjects told that their performance would be evaluated individually, half that their performance would be averaged.

Social loafing

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Social loafing

- Jackson & Williams (1985)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Averaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>14 s</td>
<td>10 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>50 s</td>
<td>68 s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social loafing

- Reduced effort generally comes when performance is not evaluated (and perhaps identified) individually

Social Facilitation versus Loafing

- **Facilitation**
  - Observers of individual performance
  - Increased arousal, better performance on simple tasks, worse on complex (compared to no observers)

- **Loafing**
  - Individual performance within group
  - Little attention to individual performance
  - Increases as task difficulty/complexity increases

Bystander Intervention

- **Kitty Genovese**
  - Woman attacked on the way to her car
  - Genovese screamed and attacker withdrew, came back, withdrew, came back, each time stabbing her
  - Murder took 45 minutes
  - Police identified at least 38 people who had heard the entire attack and never called the police, or investigated.

Bystander Intervention

- **Latané & Darley (1970)**
  - Not just stresses of urban living (initial explanations)
  - Most interesting aspect was how many people heard cries for help

Broader implications of social loafing?
Bystander Intervention

- Latané & Darley (1970)
  - People sat in individual cubicles, participating in discussion of college life with students in other cubicles
  - One student would suddenly have a seizure (cry for help, choking sounds, etc)
  - Only one real participant, others were working for experimenters

- Dependent variable was helping within 2 minutes.
  - Alone: 80%
  - 2 other people: 60%
  - 4 other people: 40%

Latané & Darley’s 5 step model of intervention

- Must go through all 5 steps to help:
  - Notice the event
  - Interpret the event as an emergency
  - Decide that you have personal responsibility to help
  - Decide what you should do to help
  - Decide how to do it.

Diffusion of responsibility

- Bystander’s individual sense of responsibility decreases as the number of other bystanders increase.
  - “If I don’t help, surely someone else will.”

Is it possible to increase helping?

- Beaman et al (1970)
  - Assigned people to two groups
    - Listen to a lecture on Latané & Darley’s studies of bystander intervention
    - Listen to an unrelated lecture
  - Two weeks later, participated in what they thought was an unrelated sociology study where they encountered a student lying on the floor.
  - Accomplice of Beaman acted unconcerned.
    - 25% of those who heard unrelated lecture helped
    - 45% of those who heard the Latané & Darley lecture helped

Conformity and Compliance

- Remember Asche’s studies

- Individual behavior is subject to substantial influences of others

- What specifically makes us subject to this influence?
Mindless conformity

- General expectation for certain rules, “autopilot”
  - “Imitation” parking attendants in SF
  - Obey internalized social norms automatically

Sequential Techniques

- “Door in the face” technique
  - Make a large request sure to be rejected, then follow it with a smaller acceptable one
  - Increased compliance for second request
    - contrast
    - reciprocity norm - decline one request, then feeling of increased obligation for second more reasonable request.
    - Short lived - may only work once

- “Foot in the door” technique
  - Make a small, hard to refuse request, then ask for a larger more intrusive favor
  - Freedman & Fraser (1966) - driving carefully
    - Initial request for small sign followed 2 weeks later by request for large intrusive sign
    - Initial request for large sign: 17%
    - Small sign, then large sign: 55%

Sequential Techniques

- “Foot in the door” technique
  - Effective for long term compliance
  - Appears to depend on people viewing themselves as “helpful” based on initial request
  - Second request increases compliance because of “helpful” image from first.

Compliance with Rules

- Cheating: Diener & Wallborn (1976)
  - Gave people a list of anagrams to solve, with answers on the back
  - Reward for solving many of them
  - 71% cheat when alone
  - Place people in a room with a mirror so that they can see themselves, and only 7% cheat!
Tip of the Iceberg?

- Many of the causes of our behavior occur below the surface of awareness
- We assume that it is “I” who is in the driver’s seat
- Many many examples suggest that “I” may actually be in the passenger seat...

### Obedience to authority

- Stanley Milgram
  - Otherwise normal and seemingly moral individuals do horrible things when put in the right situation.
  - Is there something wrong with these individuals?

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**TABLE 7.4 Milgram’s Baseline Results**

In Milgram’s original experiment, participants showed a troubling inclination to obey blindly. This table shows the number and percentage of male participants who delivered shocks of varying maximum intensity in response to the experimenter’s commands.

(Milgram, 1974.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shock Level (Volts)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>315</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 7.6 Factors That Influence Obedience**

Milgram varied many factors in his research program. Without commands from an experimenter, fewer than 3 percent of the participants evidenced full obedience. Yet in the relevant baseline condition, 65 percent of male and female participants followed orders. To identify factors that might reduce this level, Milgram varied the location of the experiment, the status of the authority, the participant’s proximity to the victim, and the presence of confederates who rebelled. The effects of these variations are illustrated here.

(Milgram, 1974.)

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**Figure 7.7 Social Impact: Source Factors and Target Factors**

According to social impact theory, the total influence of other people on a target individual depends on three factors related to the source person: their strength (size of source circles), immediacy (distance to the target), and number (number of source circles). Similarly, the total influence is diffused, or reduced, by the strength (size of target circles), immediacy (distance from source circle), and number of target persons. (Latané, 1981.)

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**Figure 7.8 Preceding examples show tendency to acquiesce to requests depending on subtle influences**

- Authority is often anything but subtle... and people follow orders to a surprising extent.
Obedience to authority

• My Lai
  – 150 US soldiers in Charlie Company (11th Infantry Brigade), on orders from 1st Platoon leader Lt. William Calley killed approximately 500 villagers, not a single one was male of military age.

Final Thoughts on Social Context

• Even though “others” can clearly influence us, we are still ultimately responsible for our actions
  • Remember that we, too, are part of society, so we have an impact on the actions of others
    – This is, in effect, a responsibility to be a positive influence

Upcoming

• Psychopathology
• Final Exam
  – 2006 Summer Short session exam
  – 1:00 Classes
  – Jul 31st (Monday) 2:50 - 5:40 pm