Chapter Seventeen:
Social Behavior

Social Psychology
The study of how people influence others’ behavior, beliefs and attitudes
Helps us understand why many forms of social influence are so powerful

Why We Form Groups
Need to Belong Theory - biologically based need for interpersonal connections
Even the threat of social isolation can promote unhealthy behavior and compromise IQ scores.
Social exclusion activates the same brain areas as physical pain.

Evolutionary factors - social influence processes (conformity, obedience) generally serve us well, unless accepted unquestioningly
The Presence of Others

**Social facilitation or disruption** - enhancement of easy tasks, or disruption of difficult ones, elicited by the presence of others

- Riding with fellow cyclists vs. shooting free throws with large crowd watching

Attributions: Assigning Cause to Behavior

**Fundamental Attribution Error** - tendency to overestimate the impact of dispositional influences (personality, attitudes, intelligence) on other people’s behavior

- Results in underestimation of situational influences
- Cultural disparity for the FAE: Asian cultures are more likely to consider situational factors

Social Comparison

**Social Comparison Theory** - we evaluate our beliefs, attitudes, and abilities by comparing ourselves to others

**Mass hysteria** - outbreak of irrational behavior that is spread by social contagion

- Collective delusions - many people become simultaneously convinced of bizarre falsehoods
Mass Hysteria

Graph of UFO Sightings
The number of UFO sightings shot up dramatically following the launches of Sputnik I and II and following the American launch of the space probe Mariner 4.
(Baker & Nickell, 1992)

Urban Legends Fit Our Preconceptions and Tap into Our Emotions (Usually Negative)

Social Influences

Conformity - tendency of people to change their behavior because of group influence
Asch paradigm - cover story, confederates
Parametric studies determined which factors influenced the level of conformity:
  - Unanimity
  - Difference in the wrong answer
  - Size of the majority
Solomon Asch (1907-1996)
One of the great social psychologists
Merged social science with natural science with his experiments
Studied independence and conformity

The Experiment
Subjects were taken into a room with five other people (all confederates of the experimenter)
The group is shown the following cards and asked to match the line on the left to the same length line on the right

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Line</th>
<th>Choose one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Results
On 12 of 18 trials, the confederates answered incorrectly
The participants conformed to wrong answer 35% of the time
Even in a clear cut situation, pressure to conform is still strong

Conformity Characteristics
Brain imaging studies show increased amygdala activity (anxiety)
Autokinetic effect - group judgments gradually converge around a common norm
Individual and cultural differences:
  Low self-esteem
  Asians vs. Americans

Social Influences
Deindividuation
  Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison study
  Abu-Ghraib Iraqi prison
  Crowds (e.g., games, concerts)
Philip Zimbardo (1933-present)

Stanford professor who has honorary degrees from 3 continents

Social psychologist most famous for his “Guards & Prisoners” experiment

The Prison Study

Subjects were physically and mentally healthy young men who volunteered to participate for money who were randomly assigned to be prisoners or guards

Those assigned the role of prisoner became distressed, helpless, and panicky

Those assigned the roles of guards became either nice, “tough but fair,” or tyrannical

Study had to be ended after 6 days

The Power of Roles

Factors causing people to obey:
- Allocating responsibility to the authority
- Routinizing the task
- Wanting to be polite
- Becoming entrapped

Entrapment: A gradual process in which individuals escalate their commitment to a course of action to justify their investment of time, money, or effort
Social Influences

**Groupthink** - emphasis on group unanimity at the expense of critical thinking and sound decision making

- Challenger explosion
- Bay of Pigs invasion

Symptoms of Groupthink

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An illusion of the group’s invulnerability</td>
<td>“We can’t possibly fail!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An illusion of the group’s unanimity</td>
<td>“Obviously, we all agree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An unquestioned belief in the group’s moral correctness</td>
<td>“We know we’re on the right side.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity pressure—pressure on group members to go along with everyone else</td>
<td>“Don’t rock the boat!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping of the out-group—a caricaturing of the enemy</td>
<td>“They’re all nutty.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-censorship—the tendency of group members to keep their mouths shut even when they have doubts about the group’s decision</td>
<td>“I suspect the group hasn’t taken too long, but I’d better not say anything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindguards—self-appointed individuals whose job it is to stifle disagreement</td>
<td>“Oh, you think you know better than the rest of us?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Influences

**Group polarization** - tendency of group discussions to strengthen dominant positions held by individual group members

- Cults and brainwashing - promote groupthink by:
  - Employing persuasive leadership that fosters loyalty
  - Disconnecting group members from outside world
  - Discouraging questioning of leadership
  - Gradually indoctrinating new members

Resisting cult influence via the **inoculation effect**
True or False?

1. Cult members are typically emotionally disturbed.  
   **FALSE**. Most are psychologically normal.

2. Suicide bombers are often well-off and well-educated.  
   **TRUE**. Most suicide bombers in the Middle East, including many Al Qaida members, fit this description.

3. All cult members are brainwashed into unthinking followers.  
   **FALSE**. There is scant evidence that brainwashing permanently alters victims’ beliefs.

Stanley Milgram (1933-1984)

- Was high school classmates with Phil Zimbardo
- Studied under Allport and Asch
- Most famous work was on obedience, but also came up with the “Six degrees of separation theory”

The experiment

- The participant was introduced to a confederate who posed as a participant and took on the role of a learner

- Subjects were supposed to shock the “learners” when they did not successfully repeat words

- With each failure, the shock level increased, up to a maximum of 450 volt shocks
The experiment

With each shock, the “learners” protested that they had a heart condition, were in pain, and then just became silent.

If subjects refused to give the next shock, they were simply told in a firm voice by a person in a white lab coat that “The experiment must continue, read the next list of words”
The Results

Findings have been replicated across many cultures and with both adults and children

Why?
The experimenter explained that he would be responsible for the consequences
The experimenter possessed signs of authority
The requests were gradual in nature

Factors Leading to Disobedience

When the experimenter left the room
When the victim was in the same room
When the experimenter issued conflicting demands
When the person ordering them to continue was an ordinary man
When the subject worked with peers who refused to go on

To Help or Not?
Prosocial and Antisocial Actions

Bystander Nonintervention
Kitty Genovese stabbing
Deletha Word beating

Why?
Pluralistic ignorance - does anyone else think this is an emergency?
Diffusion of responsibility - passing the buck
We’re More Likely to Help when Alone than in a Group

Bystander Intervention
Across three classic experiments of bystander intervention, the percentage of people helping when in groups was markedly lower than the percentage of people helping when alone.

Critical Thinking Question
Imagine yourself being attacked by a mugger in the midst of a crowd of onlookers. Based on the theories of pluralistic ignorance and diffusion of responsibility, how could you maximize your chances of receiving help?

Shout ‘I need help’ or ‘I’m being attacked’, to identify the situation as an emergency.
Single out (pointing, eye contact) a particular person in the crowd to provide help (e.g., ‘YOU call 911’).

Prosocial and Antisocial Actions
Social Loafing - For a group, the whole is less than the sum of its parts

Why?
Diffusion of responsibility - in groups, individuals feel less responsible for outcome
What does this mean for brainstorming with a group?
Prosocial Behavior and Altruism

Altruism - helping selflessly
- Role of empathy
- Situational influences:
  - Possibility to avoid/escape
  - Victim characteristics
  - Mood
  - Knowledgeable about bystander nonintervention (enlightenment effect)
- Individual and gender differences
  - Men, less traditional, extraverted, medical workers

Why do we hurt others?

Aggression
- Situational influences
  - Interpersonal provocation
  - Frustration
  - Media influence
  - Aggressive cues
  - Arousal
  - Alcohol and other drugs
  - Temperature

Aggression
- Personality Traits:
  - Negativity
  - Impulsivity
  - Lack of closeness with others
- Sex Differences:
  - Males more physically aggressive
  - Females engage in more relational aggression
- Cultural Differences:
  - Within the U.S., and internationally
Attitudes and Behavior

Beliefs vs. Attitudes
Attitudes are more likely to predict behavior when:
- They come to mind easily (accessible)
- The person is a low self-monitor

What influences our attitudes?
- Our personality
- The recognition heuristic
- Characteristics of the messenger
- Implicit egoism

Implicit Egoism

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognition A: "I'm not an honest person."
Change Cognition A: "I'm not an honest person after all."

Cognition B: "I cheated on my psychology exam."
Change Cognition B: "I didn't really cheat; I just saw someone's answers."

Generate Cognition C that reconciles A & B: "I had to cheat because the test was unfair."
Evidence for Cognitive Dissonance

Festinger et al., 1956
Infiltrated small cult ("The Seekers")
What happened when the end of the world didn’t come that year? Beliefs were strengthened

Festinger laboratory studies
Subjects given less money for boring task reported enjoying task more

Alternative explanations?
Self-perception theory
Impression management theory

Persuasion

Two pathways for persuading others
Central route - evaluate merits thoughtfully
Peripheral route - snap judgments

Effective techniques
Foot-in-the-door
Door-in-the-face
Low-ball

Pseudoscience Marketing Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudoscience Type</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Problem</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placebo use</td>
<td>Placebo effect</td>
<td>Placebo use in a clinical trial can lead to false positive results</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandwagoning</td>
<td>Bandwagon effect</td>
<td>&quot;The more people think it, the more they buy it.&quot;</td>
<td>Bandwagon effect can lead to false positive results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority appeal</td>
<td>Authority effect</td>
<td>&quot;An expert says that...&quot;</td>
<td>Authority effect can lead to false positive results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot-in-the-door</td>
<td>Small step</td>
<td>&quot;Just sign up for a trial and see if you like it.&quot;</td>
<td>Foot-in-the-door can lead to false positive results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-in-the-face</td>
<td>Large step</td>
<td>&quot;You'll be sorry if you don't sign up.&quot;</td>
<td>Door-in-the-face can lead to false positive results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-ball</td>
<td>Low-cost offer</td>
<td>&quot;Buy one, get one free.&quot;</td>
<td>Low-ball can lead to false positive results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudoscience marketing</td>
<td>Sales pitch</td>
<td>&quot;Buy now and save!&quot;</td>
<td>Pseudoscience marketing can lead to false positive results</td>
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</table>

Foot-in-the-door or Door-in-the-face

"The more people think it, the more they buy it."
Prejudice

Evolutionary origins?
   Adaptive conservatism – distrust anything unfamiliar

Why do we tend to form alliances with those like ourselves?
   In-group bias
   Out-group homogeneity

Discrimination

Prejudice (attitudes) vs. discrimination (behaviors)

Consequences of discrimination: reducing job opportunities
   Interviewer behaviors and applicants’ reactions

Studies: minimal group paradigm
   Dot estimation
   Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes demonstration

Stereotypes

Why? Simplification of social world

Nonprejudiced people try to resist them

Some may be partially accurate (e.g., women tend to be more talkative)

Some are massive overgeneralizations - reflect illusory correlations

Result in ultimate attribution errors - attributing behavior of entire groups to their dispositions
Factors Contributing to Prejudice

1. Scapegoat hypothesis
2. Just-world hypothesis
3. Conformity to social norms - rejection of out-group
4. Individual differences - authoritarian traits, extrinsic religiosity

Prejudice Remedies:
- Robbers Cave study and jigsaw classrooms
  - Cooperation toward shared enjoyable goal
  - Groups of equal status
  - Disconfirmation of negative stereotypes

Critical Thinking Question

What are some reasons people cling to the idea of a ‘just/fair world’?

- To explain why bad things happen to people
- To feel more secure about their own situation
- To preserve a sense of order in the world