
PSY1102

Introduction to Applied Psychology

Class 22

Social psychology

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Agenda for today

1. Social psychology
2. Social thinking
 - a. Attributing behaviour to persons or to situations
 - b. Attitudes and actions
3. Social influence
 - a. Conformity and obedience
 - b. Group influence
 - c. The power of individuals

1. Social psychology

- The textbook defines (page 673) social psychology as “the scientific study of how we think about, influence, and relate to one another.”
- In other words, most of what we have covered so far deals with the individual. Social psychology looks at our relationships to and interactions with other people, and how other people can influence our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours.

2. Social thinking

- Social thinking gives rise to social behaviour.
- Because we are social animals, we strive to make sense of the social behaviour of ourselves and others.
 - To what can we attribute the behaviours of others?
 - Do our thoughts drive our actions, or vice versa?

2a. Attributing behaviour to persons or to situations

How do we tend to explain others' behaviour and our own?

- In trying to explain behaviour, a key term is attribution. When we discuss causes or contributing factors, we try to attribute the behaviour to one or more particular circumstances:
 - He's angry because she broke up with him.
 - She's happy because a friend is visiting.
- In formal terms, this is a manifestation of attribution theory, which can be ... uhh ... attributed to Fritz Heider (1958).

2a. Attribution (continued)

- Behaviour can be attributed to a person's internal disposition or to an external situation.
- Attribution to an internal disposition (dispositional attribution) is akin to labelling the person.
 - “He’s a grouch” is very different from “He’s grouchy because he’s coping with a lot of stress at the moment.”
- By contrast, situational attribution acknowledges that there are environmental or situational factors that may be affecting the person’s behaviour.

2a. Attribution in the classroom

- Consider my perception of your behaviour in the classroom.
- As I stand up here, speaking and looking around at quiet students, I wonder “why are the students so quiet?” Looking for something to attribute your silence to, I consider:
 1. You know all this stuff already, and are bored but polite.
 2. You don’t know this stuff, and are bored but polite.
 3. You’re asleep.
 4. You are intimidated by the dynamics of the classroom.
 5. You find the lectures fascinating, and don’t want to interrupt.

2a. Fundamental attribution error

- Fundamental attribution error overestimates the influence of personality and underestimates the role of environmental factors in guiding behaviour.
- In other words, based on your behaviour in class I may assume that most of you are quiet and “bookish”, whereas in reality your quiet behaviour may be attributable to the classroom situation.
 - For all I know, outside the classroom you may all be party animals.
 - For all you know, outside the classroom I may be a pole dancer in a strip club.

2a. Fundamental attribution error (concluded)

- As described in the textbook, in experimental situations participants may ascribe personalities to experimental confederates even when they know that the confederate is an actor playing a role!

2a. The effects of attribution

- The textbook does a good job (page 675) of describing some of the consequences of attribution to the person, blaming the person for ...
 - their own poverty; etc.
 - their joblessness.
- The textbook doesn't touch on the opposite error, where one blames the situation and avoids personal responsibility. For example, a doting parent may excuse an adult child who cannot hold a job or control expenses by ...
 - blaming the economy for the tough job market;
 - blaming the child's boss for causing the child to lose the job;
 - arguing that the child needs to purchase "nice things" to get a job,
 - and so on.

2b. Attitudes and actions

Does what we think affect what we do, or does what we do affect what we think?

- Although we use the term attitude in everyday speech, it's helpful to have an objective definition, such as the one provided by the textbook (page 675):
 - Attitudes are feelings, often influenced by our beliefs, that predispose us to respond in a particular way to objects, people, and events.
- There is evidence that attitudes affect actions and that actions affect attitudes.

2b. Attitudes affect actions

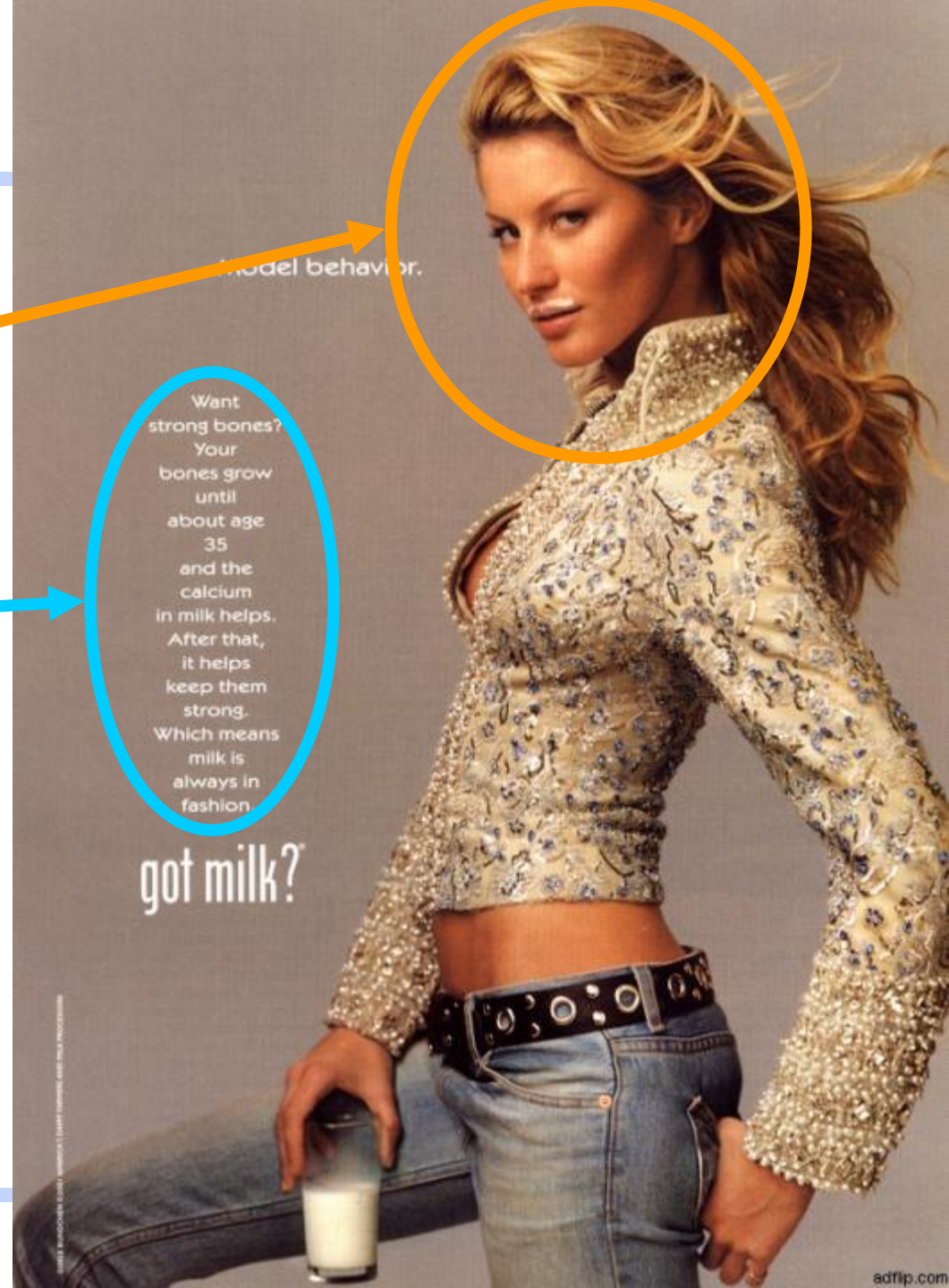
- To people who see themselves as rational, thoughtful people, it likely seems obvious that our attitudes affect our actions.
- We have a set of beliefs, and we act according to those beliefs. For example:
 - If we're religious, our actions are guided by our religious beliefs;
 - If we're grateful to someone, we thank them or do something nice for them;
 - If we hate a political system, we may volunteer to fight against it.

2b. Attitudes affect actions (continued)

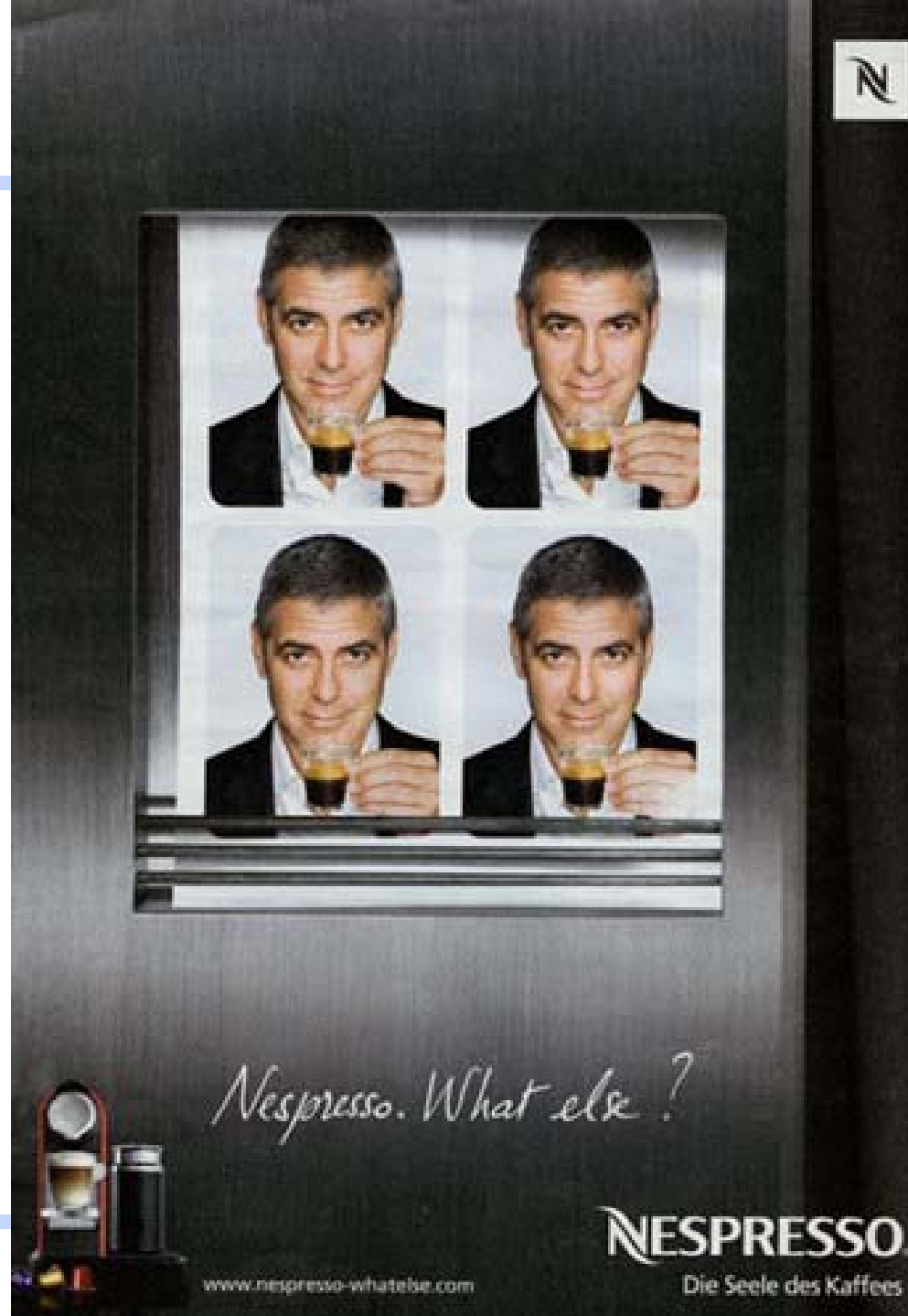
- There are two paths to persuasion:
 - Central route to persuasion occurs when interested people focus on the arguments and respond with favourable thoughts.
 - Peripheral route to persuasion occurs when people are influenced by incidental cues, such as a speaker's attractiveness.
- In other words, the central route involves a rational thought process, whereas the peripheral route focuses on the more superficial issues.
 - Using the central route, we make a considered response.
 - Using the peripheral route, we may be impulsive.

Peripheral message

Central message



- In terms of rational thinking, what is the relevance of George Clooney's apparent coffee preference to your shopping behaviour?
- Ads such as this one focus entirely on the peripheral route to persuasion.



The advertisement features a large, dark, textured background. In the upper center, there is a framed image consisting of four identical portraits of George Clooney, each holding a small glass of espresso. In the bottom left corner, there is a small image of a Nespresso coffee machine. To the right of the machine, the text "Nespresso. What else?" is written in a cursive script. In the bottom right corner, the Nespresso logo is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font, with the tagline "Die Seele des Kaffees" underneath it. The website address "www.nespresso-whatelse.com" is printed in a small, sans-serif font at the bottom center.

Nespresso. What else?

NESPRESSO
Die Seele des Kaffees

www.nespresso-whatelse.com

2b. Attitudes affect actions: external influences

- The effect of attitude on behaviour is greatest when the attitude is stable, specific to the behaviour, and easily recalled.
- How do we determine this?
 - It is relatively easy to measure the behaviour, which is observable and therefore objective.
 - How do we assess the person's attitude?
 - Once we can measure the attitude and the behaviour, we can correlate the two, which measures the strength of association between two items (e.g., attitude and behaviour).

2b. Attitudes affect actions: external influences

- Davidson & Jaccard (1979) studied the use of birth control pills among married women in relation to attitude.
- They asked about the women's attitude, and then monitored the use of birth control pills for the next two years.
- The strength of relationship depended on the specificity of the question.

<u>Asked about attitudes towards ...</u>	<u>Correlation</u>
Birth control	0.08
Oral contraceptives	0.32
Using oral contraceptives	0.53
Using oral contraceptives during the next two years	0.57

2b. Actions affect attitudes

- Perhaps less intuitively, there is also considerable evidence that our attitudes are shaped by our actions.
- We'll look at three types of evidence:
 - Foot-in-the-door phenomenon;
 - Role-playing;
 - Cognitive dissonance.

2b. Foot-in-the-door phenomenon

- The foot-in-the-door phenomenon is the tendency for people who have first agreed to a small request to comply later with a larger request.
- There are many examples of this, several of which are described in the textbook.
 - When a prisoner of war, complying with the enemy on small things, then getting drawn in to larger collaborations.
 - Complying with, or not objecting to, offensive comments made by someone about another person, ethnic group, etc.
 - Complying with social reforms one step at a time.

2b. Role-playing

- A role is a set of expectations (norms) about a social position, defining how those in the position ought to behave.
- The classic study in this field was Zimbardo's role-playing exercise in which college students played the role of prison guards or prisoners, with the students assigned randomly to these roles.
 - The “guards” became abusive;
 - The “prisoners” became submissive or rebellious.
- Consider your own behaviour when you became university students. Did you behave the same as you had previously, or did you “grow into” the role of university student, acquiring different attitudes?

2b. Cognitive dissonance

- Cognitive dissonance theory posits that we act to reduce the discomfort (dissonance) we feel when two of our thoughts (cognitions) are inconsistent.
- Cognitive dissonance theory was developed by Leon Festinger. According to this theory, it is almost as if our thought process is, “If I do it, I must believe it.”

3. Social influence

- The textbook states (page 680) that “social psychology’s great lesson is the enormous power of social influence.”
- Imagine that we were immune to the presence of other people:
 - Would we dress the same way we do now?
 - Would we groom ourselves the same way?
 - Would we behave the same way?
- In short, we design ourselves to deal with the world outside our selves.

3. Social influence (continued)

- Now turn these thoughts around and acknowledge that other people design themselves specifically to interact with you.
- How does this knowledge change your perception of their appearance, their behaviour, and your assumptions about their motivations for interacting with you?

3a. Conformity and obedience

What do experiments on conformity and compliance reveal about the power of social influence?

- As noted in the textbook, behaviour is contagious.
- Not only do we tend to do what we see other people doing, but we can also pick up on moods, tones of voice, and other cues to how another person is feeling.
- The textbook cites examples of the chameleon effect (mimicking behaviours) and mood linkage.

3a. Conformity and obedience: Group pressure

- Conformity means adjusting one's behaviour or thinking to coincide with a group standard.
- The classic study in this area is Asch's 1955 study in which a research participant was asked to identify which comparison line most closely matched the "standard line".
- Unbeknownst to the participant, the other five "participants" were confederates of the experimenter, primed to identify a line that, objectively, did not match the standard.
- Because of peer pressure, more than one-third of participants selected the inappropriate line chosen by the others.

3a. Conditions that strengthen conformity

As noted in the textbook (p. 682), conformity increases when:

- One is made to feel incompetent or insecure;
- The group has at least 3 people;
- The group opinion is unanimous;
- One admires the group's status and attractiveness;
- One has made no prior commitment to any response;
- Others in the group observe one's behaviour; and
- One's culture strongly encourages respect for social standards.

3a. Reasons for conforming

- Normative social influence is influence resulting from a person's desire to gain approval or avoid disapproval.
- We are also influenced by the opinions of other people. Informational social influence is influence resulting from one's willingness to accept others' opinions about reality.
 - As shown by Baron and his colleagues (1995), if we aren't sure which option is correct, and if it's important to be correct, we tend to side with others – even though they may be in the same boat! (One could also call this collective ignorance.)

3a. Obedience

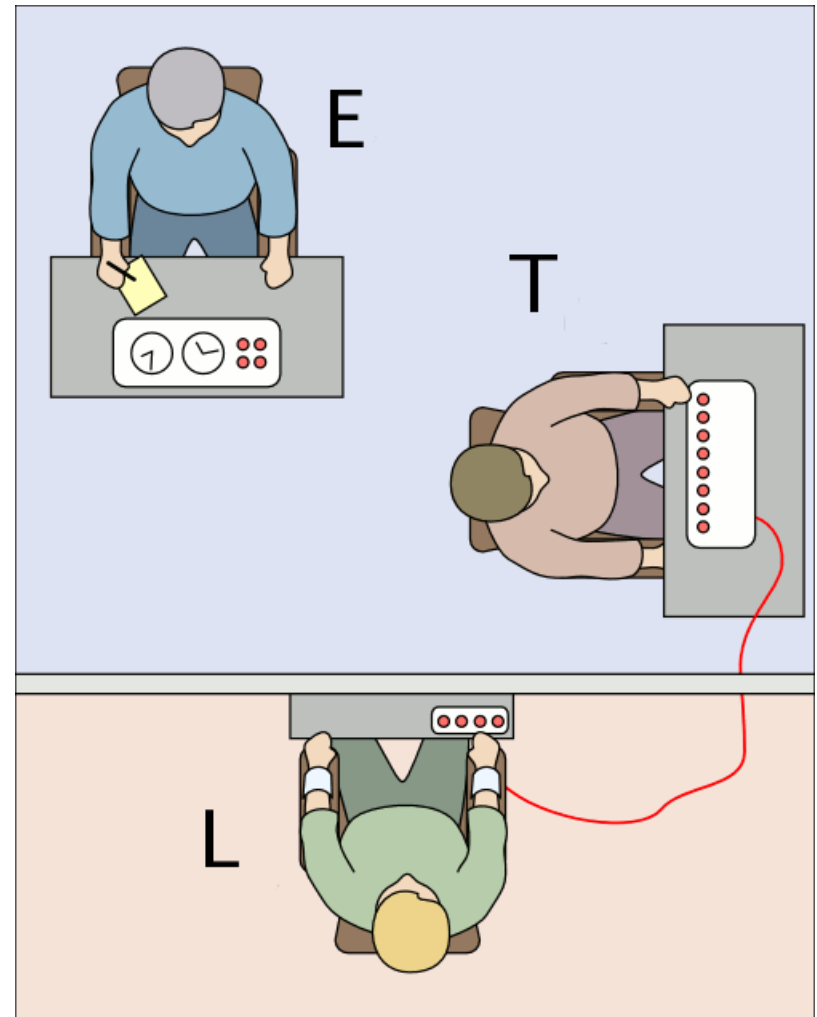
- Authority figures can be extremely effective at inducing compliance through:
 - Dilution of responsibility.
 - Consequences of disobeying (coercion).



Respect my
authorita...!

3a. Milgram experiment

The experimenter (E) orders the teacher (T), the subject of the experiment, to give what the latter believes are painful electric shocks to a learner (L), who is actually an actor and confederate. The subject believes that for each wrong answer, the learner was receiving actual electric shocks, though in reality there were no such punishments. Being separated from the subject, the confederate set up a tape recorder integrated with the electro-shock generator, which played pre-recorded sounds for each shock level.



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment

3a. Milgram experiment (continued)

- Participants in study were told to administer increasingly large electric shocks to the “learner” for each wrong answer.
- The figures below show the percentage complying with the experimenter’s instructions:
 - Slight shock (100%)
 - Moderate shock (100%)
 - Strong shock (80%)
 - Very strong shock (80%)
 - Intense shock (72%)
 - Extreme intensity shock (70%)
 - Danger: severe shock (68%)
 - Maximum: 450 volts (65%)



Stanley Milgram

Source: Milgram, Stanley (1963). Behavioral Study of Obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* **67**: 371–378

3a. The relevance of Milgram: Nuremberg trials

- After the defeat of the Nazi regime in Germany, several people were tried for war crimes at the famous trials in Nuremberg, Germany.
- The Nuremberg Code of Ethics (for medical experiments) was one of the outcomes of this set of trials.
- Another outcome was Nuremberg Principle IV, which states:
 - “The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him.”
- One of Milgram’s motivators for this experiment was the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the “architect of the Holocaust”.

Sources: www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/Nuremberg_trials.html,
www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/nuremberg.htm,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg_Code, and
http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/draft%20articles/7_1_1950.pdf

3a. Milgram experiment re-done: 2008

Replicating Milgram: Researcher finds most will administer shocks when prodded by 'authority figure'

Obedience rates essentially unchanged in more than 40 years; No differences between men and women

WASHINGTON – Nearly 50 years after one of the most controversial behavioral experiments in history, a social psychologist has found that people are still just as willing to administer what they believe are painful electric shocks to others when urged on by an authority figure.

Jerry M. Burger, PhD, replicated one of the famous obedience experiments of the late Stanley Milgram, PhD, and found that compliance rates in the replication were only slightly lower than those found by Milgram. And, like Milgram, he found no difference in the rates of obedience between men and women.

Source: www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-12/apa-rmr121708.php;

See also www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=2264

3b. Group influence

How is our behaviour affected by the presence of others or by being part of a group?

- Social facilitation is exemplified by stronger responses on simple or well-learned tasks in the presence of others compared to responses when alone.
- Social loafing is the tendency for people in a group to exert less effort when pooling their efforts toward attaining a common goal than when individually accountable.
- Deindividuation is the loss of self-awareness and self-restraint occurring in group situations that foster arousal and anonymity.

3b. Effects of group interaction

- Group polarization is the enhancement of a group's prevailing inclinations through discussion within the group.
 - In other words, rather than getting closer to a consensus the group becomes more polarised.
- Groupthink is the mode of thinking that occurs when the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides a realistic appraisal of alternatives.

3c. The power of individuals

How much power do we have as individuals? Can a minority sway a majority?

- Social control is the power of the situation, and it contrasts with personal control, the power of the individual.
- Unless an individual is alone, social control and personal control interact.

Solar system example.

3c. The power of individuals (continued)

- The textbook gives US-centric examples. Examples from other cultures include:
 - Elijah Harper, who, in 1990 – on behalf of Aboriginal people – blocked the Meech Lake Accord, a proposed Canadian constitutional amendment (for example, www.nationmedia.ca/elijahharper/bio.html).
 - Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor whose self-immolation sparked the Arab Spring in 2011 (for example, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16230190).
- Other examples include: Nelson Mandela; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Jack Layton; Pierre-Elliot Trudeau; René Lévesque.

3c. The power of individuals (concluded)

- In many cases, a committed individual who takes a stand may be in the minority, but has the potential to influence a large number of people, swaying their opinions to his or her way of thinking.
- Some experimental evidence for the minority influence suggests that a small number of consistent, committed individuals has more power to influence a majority than does a less committed but larger group.

Summary: Class 22

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