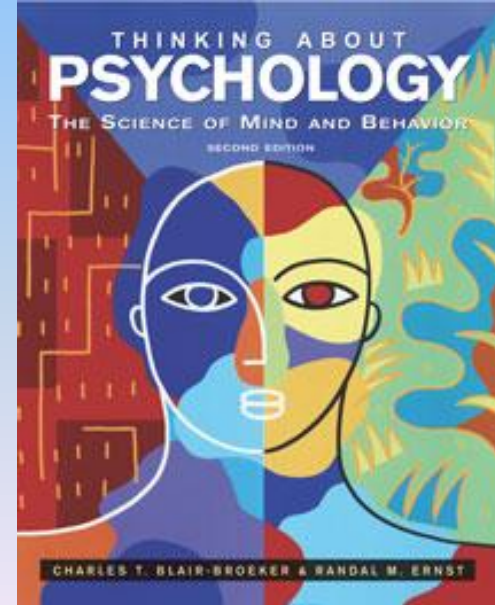


# Thinking About Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behavior 2e

Charles T. Blair-Broeker  
Randal M. Ernst



# Social Psychology Chapter



# Module 34

## Social Thinking and Social Influence

# Social Psychology

- The scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another
- Up until this point, we have been looking at *internal* factors (personality, motivation, etc.) that influence a person's thoughts and behaviors.
- In this module we will look at how *external* factors (like the situation and other people) affect our thoughts and behaviors.

# What influences how people act in certain situations?

- Social psychologists study the *social influences* that help explain why people act differently in the same situation and why the same person might act differently in different situations.
- For example, why are some people shy or quiet in this class, while others are outspoken?
- And, why are some of those same kids that are quiet in this classroom, extremely talkative in other situations?

# Module 34: Social Thinking and Social Influence

## Social Thinking

## Module 34: Social Thinking and Social Influence

# Attributing Behavior to Personal Disposition or the Situation

# Attribution Theory

- Theory that we tend to explain the behavior of others as an aspect of either an *internal disposition* (an inner trait) or *the situation*
- We make either a *dispositional* attribution or a *situational* attribution when explaining the behavior of others



# What is a Situational Disposition?

- When we make a situational attribution we explain (or attribute) someone's actions as being caused by the various factors in the situation

# Examples of Situational Attributions

- For example, maybe the driver tailgating you is *late for work or in a rush to get to the hospital.*
- Maybe the person who cut you in the lunch line needs to hurry up and eat because *he has homework to finish.*
- Maybe Mr. Ljungberg is grumpy because he *didn't have a cup of coffee* this morning.
- In each example, it is something about the *situation*, not their personal characteristics that led to the behavior.

# What is a Dispositional Attribution?

- When we make a dispositional attribution, we explain (or attribute) someone's actions as being caused by the person's *disposition*, i.e. their thoughts, feelings, personality characteristics, etc. (rather than the situation)

# Examples of Dispositional Attributions

- In the same example as before, when making a dispositional attribution you now explain (attribute) the driver tailgating you as being *an aggressive driver* or that he is “*just a jerk*”
- The person who cut you in line is *rude*
- Mr. Ljungberg is just *a grumpy person*
- In each of these explanations you attribute the behavior to some *internal characteristic of that person* rather than to something about the situation.

# Our *own* Behaviors

- Interestingly, when explaining *others* behaviors we tend to *underestimate the effect of the situation* (in a rush) and overestimate the effect of personal disposition (aggressive person)
- However, we do the opposite when explaining our own behaviors – i.e. “I was tailgating the person in front of me because *I was late to school*, not because I’m an aggressive driver”
- When we make this mistake with others it is known as the *fundamental attribution error*.

# Fundamental Attribution Error

- Tendency to attribute the *behavior of others to internal disposition* rather than to situations
- People tend to blame or credit the person more than the situation

# Situational Attribution



**Negative behavior**

Someone cuts into the line in front of you.

# Situational Attribution



## Negative behavior

Someone cuts into the line in front of you.



## Situational attribution

"That tired mother is so busy with her little boy, she didn't even notice the line."



# Situational Attribution



## Negative behavior

Someone cuts into the line in front of you.



## Situational attribution

"That tired mother is so busy with her little boy, she didn't even notice the line."



## Tolerant reaction

# Dispositional Attribution



## **Negative behavior**

Someone cuts into the line in front of you.

# Dispositional Attribution



## **Negative behavior**

Someone cuts into the line in front of you.



## **Dispositional attribution**

“Who does that lady think she is? I bet she always cuts in lines.”

# Dispositional Attribution



**Negative behavior**  
Someone cuts into the line in front of you.



**Dispositional attribution**  
“Who does that lady think she is? I bet she always cuts in lines.”



**Unfavorable reaction**



# Attribution



**Negative behavior**  
Someone cuts into the line in front of you.



**Situational attribution**  
“That tired mother is so busy with her little boy, she didn’t even notice the line.”



**Tolerant reaction**



**Dispositional attribution**  
“Who does that lady think she is? I bet she always cuts in lines.”



**Unfavorable reaction**

# Module 34: Social Thinking and Social Influence

## Social Thinking: Attitudes and Actions

# Attitude

- Belief and feeling that predisposes someone to respond in a particular way to objects, people, and events
- Without ever even meeting someone you may form an opinion about that person that is either positive or negative
- Can lead to prejudice and discrimination (discussed in Module 35)

# Attitudes Affecting Actions

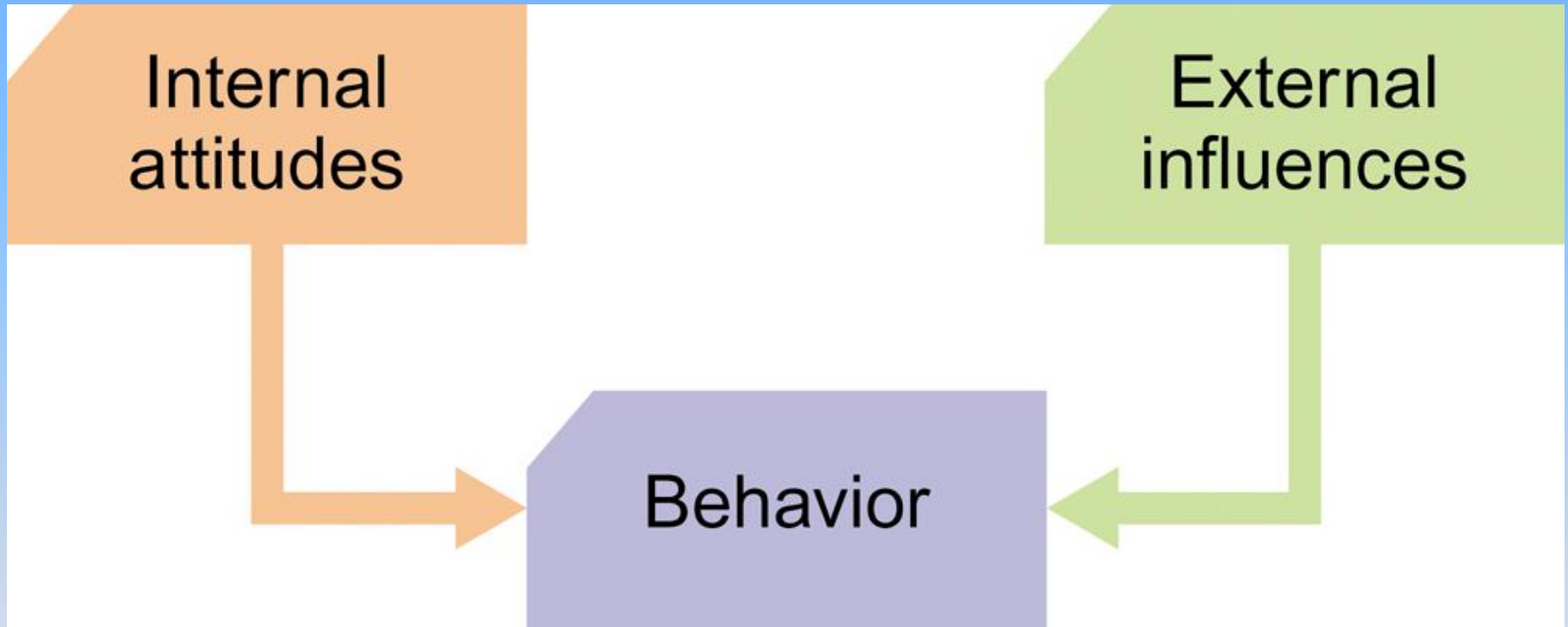
- Many studies suggest a person's attitudes *do not match* their actions
- For example, a student who says she is against cheating may later look at someone's paper for an answer.
- Or someone who claims to treat all people equally may behave differently toward someone of another race or ethnic group.



# Why?

- Why do we sometimes talk one way but act another?
- Do attitudes ever predict behavior?
- Attitudes can predict behavior if:
  - Outside influences are minimal
  - People are aware of their attitudes
  - Attitude is relevant to behavior

# Attitudes Affecting Actions



# Actions Affecting Attitudes

- Under some circumstances *one's actions can influence attitudes*. They include:
  - Foot-in-the-door phenomenon
  - Role playing
  - Cognitive dissonance

# Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon

- Tendency for people who have *first agreed to a small request* to comply later with a larger request
- First asking a parent if you can push your curfew back a half hour and then later asking to push it to a full hour
- Or first asking parent to borrow \$5 to go out with friends, and then asking for \$20

# Door-in-the-Face Phenomenon

- The door-in-the-face (DITF) technique is when the persuader *first attempts* to convince the respondent to comply *by making a large request* that the respondent will most likely turn down, much like a metaphorical slamming of a door in the persuader's face.
- So the *opposite* – ask your parent if you can stay out until 2am, but then make a more reasonable request of midnight

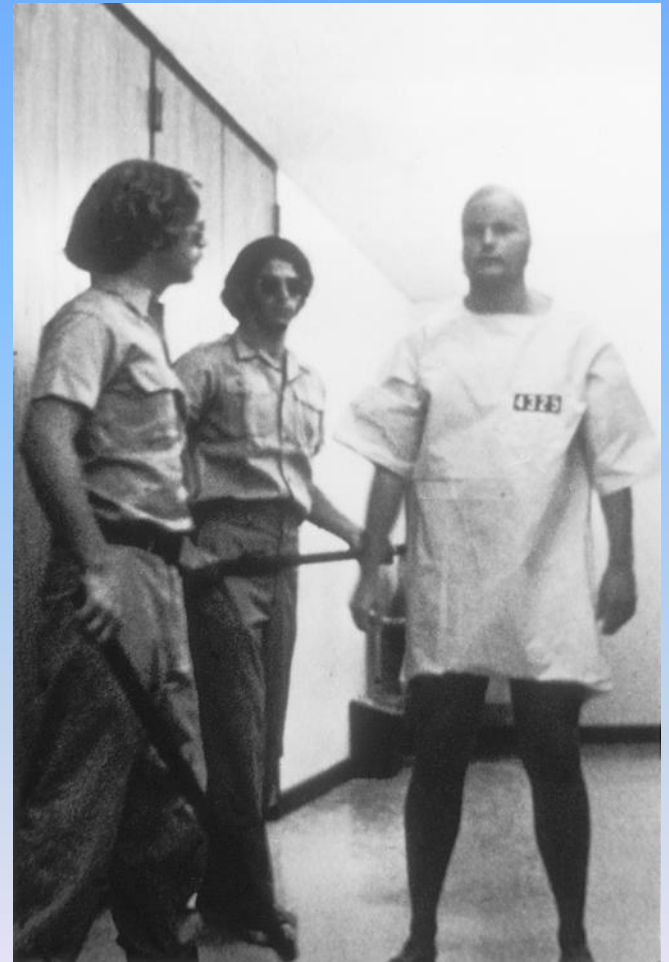
# Role Playing

- Playing a role can influence or change one's attitude
- Zimbardo's infamous Prison Study
  - College students were chosen to play the *role* of either guard or prisoner in a simulated prison.
  - The study was ended when the guards became too aggressive and cruel.
  - They not only *acted* like guards, they *felt* like real guards and became them.

# Stanford Prison Experiment

College students played the role of guard or prisoner in a simulated prison.

- The study was ended when the guards became too aggressive and cruel.
- The prisoners too, began to *feel* like “real” prisoners



# Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- Theory that *we act to reduce the discomfort* (dissonance) we feel when two of our thoughts (cognitions) are inconsistent
- When our attitudes are inconsistent with our actions, *we change our attitudes* to reduce the dissonance.
- You know smoking is bad, but light up at a party anyway. You get rid of the dissonance by rationalizing that smoking is a social activity that just helps you fit in with friends



# Cognitive Dissonance Theory



**J.J.'s attitude:**

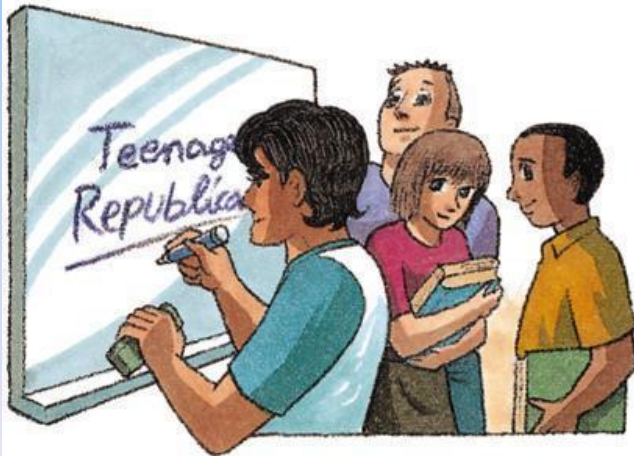
“My political beliefs are liberal.”

# Cognitive Dissonance Theory



**J.J.'s attitude:**

"My political beliefs are liberal."



**J.J.'s behavior:**

J.J. joins Teenage Republicans because his girlfriend is an officer.

# Cognitive Dissonance Theory



**J.J.'s attitude:**

"My political beliefs are liberal."



**Cognitive dissonance**

(awareness that attitude and behavior are inconsistent)



**J.J.'s behavior:**

J.J. joins Teenage Republicans because his girlfriend is an officer.



# Cognitive Dissonance Theory



**J.J.'s attitude:**  
"My political beliefs are liberal."

**Cognitive dissonance**  
(awareness that attitude and behavior are inconsistent)



**Dissonance resolved:**  
"Maybe the conservatives have a point."



**J.J.'s behavior:**  
J.J. joins Teenage Republicans because his girlfriend is an officer.

# Module 34: Social Thinking and Social Influence

## Social Influence

## Module 34: Social Thinking and Social Influence

# Conformity and Obedience

# Conformity

- *Adjusting one's behavior or thinking to coincide with a group standard*
- If the whole class votes to move the test back a day, but you don't want to because you already have another test that day, what will you do? Stick to your beliefs and be the lone vote against or conform to the class' desire to delay it?

# Solomon Asch (1907-1996)

- Social psychologist who researched the circumstances under which people conform





# Asch's Conformity Study



Standard line



1



2



3

Comparison lines

# Factors Increasing Conformity

- The person feels incompetent or insecure.
- The group has three or more people.
- The rest of the group is unanimous.
- The person is impressed by the status of the group.
- No prior commitments were made.
- The group is observing the person respond.
- One's culture encourages conformity.

# Stanley Milgram (1933-1984)

- Social psychologist who researched obedience to authority



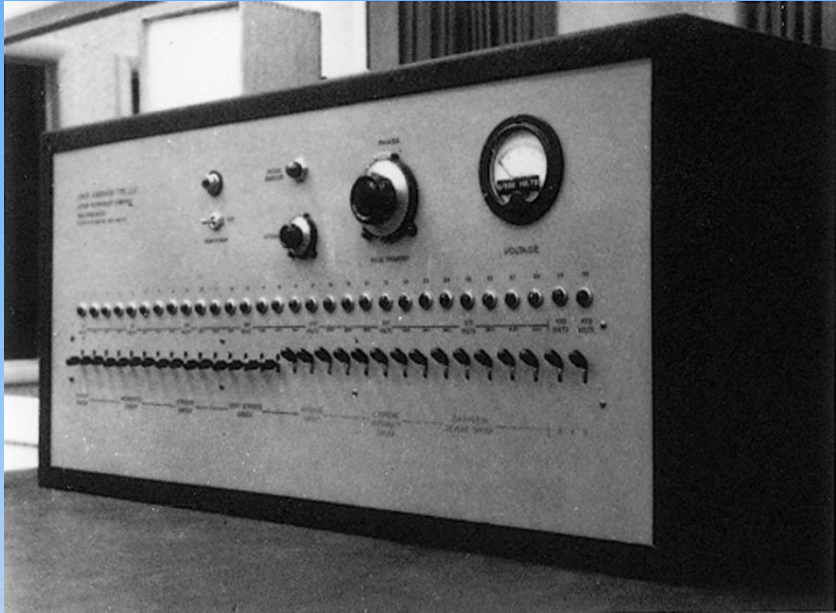
# Obedience

- Tendency to *comply with orders*, implied or real, from someone perceived as an *authority*

# Milgram's Obedience Experiments

- Famous experiments at Yale University that set out to understand how seemingly good people could engage in immoral behavior (Nazis claimed they were “just following orders”)
- Milgram's findings sparked debate about the *willingness of ordinary citizens to obey an authority figure* who instructed them to perform actions that conflicted with personal values.
- Also , his use of deception influenced the debate about the proper code of ethics in psych. research

# Milgram's Obedience to Authority



# The Experiment

- People in the experiment believed that they were giving an electric shock (which they really weren't) to a “learner” in the other room
- When the “learner” gave an incorrect answer the “teacher” was told to deliver increasingly stronger shocks to the “learner”(ranging from a low 15-volt shock all the way up to a maximum 450-volt shock)

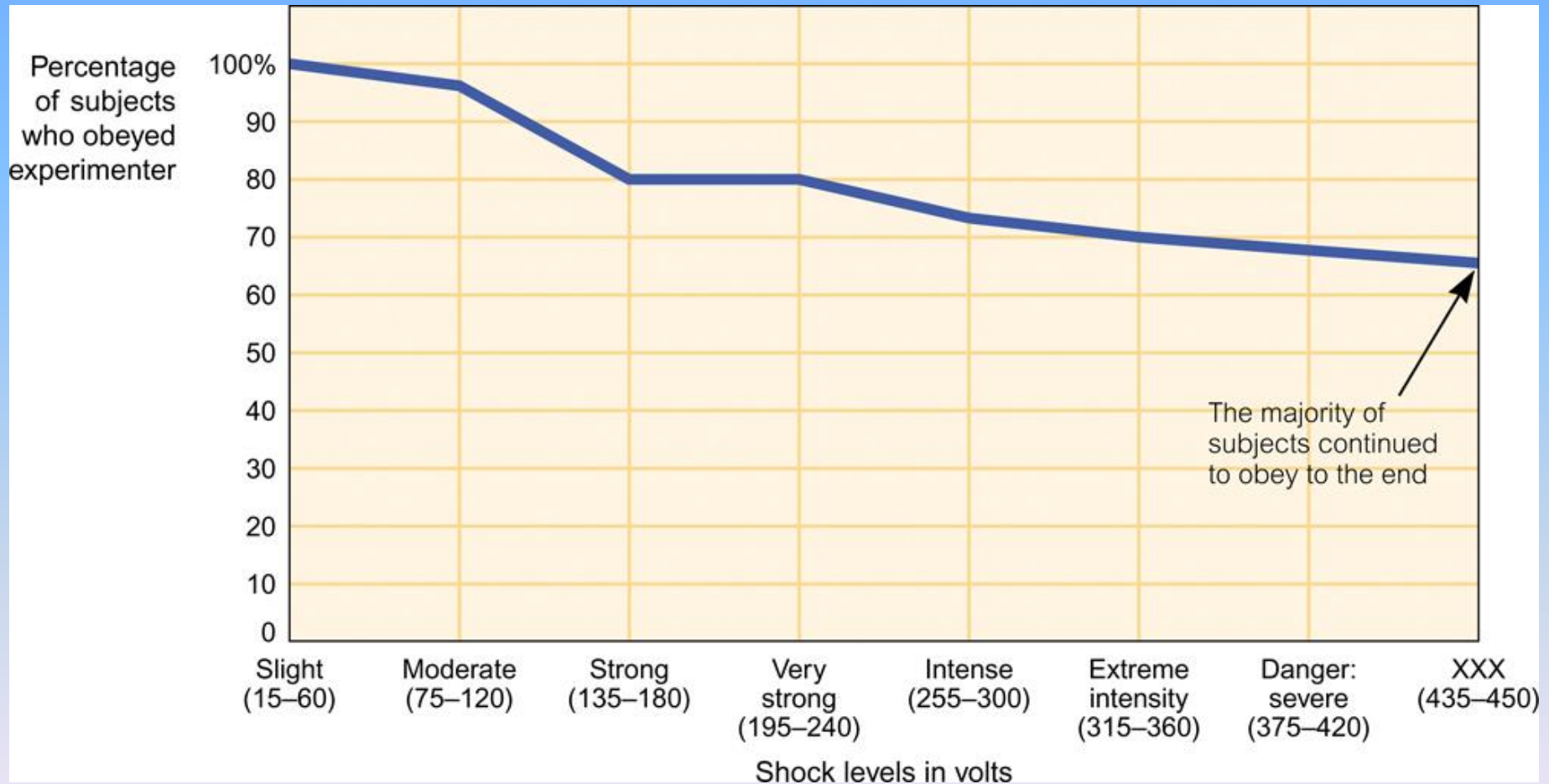
# The Results

- It was initially believed by psychiatrists that most participants would stop by 150 volts and that only 1 in 1,000 people (only the truly disturbed) would go all the way to 450 volts
- Instead, they were shocked (ha ha) to find out that an incredible 63% of the participants obeyed instructions and flipped all 30 switches up to the 450-volts!
- Though many were hesitant about doing it, nearly 2/3 of the people were obedient simply because someone in a white lab coat told them to do it!



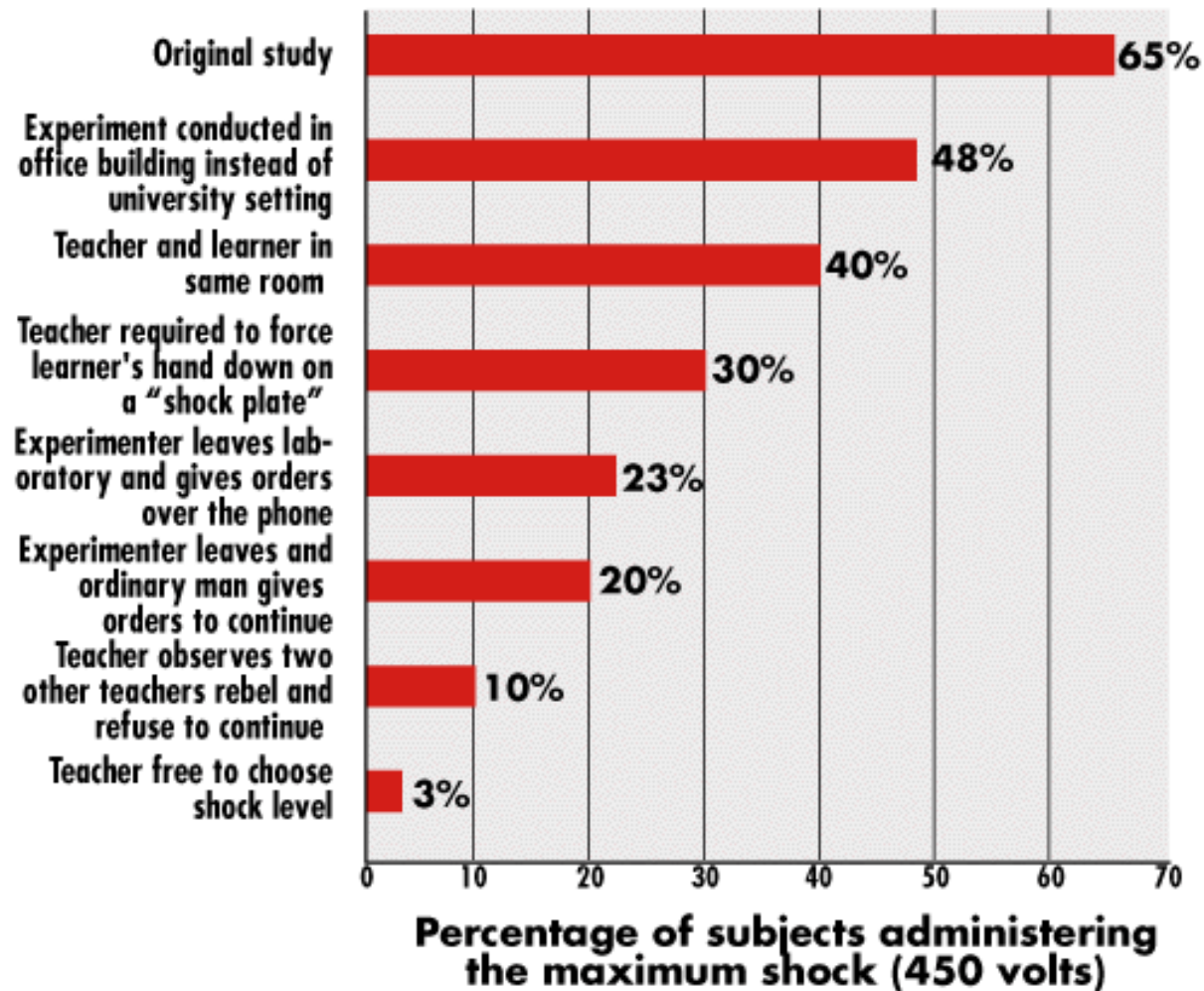
# Milgram's Obedience to Authority

(Data from Milgram, 1974)



# Milgram's Obedience to Authority

## Experimental Variations



# Group Influence

- Social Facilitation and Social Inhibition
- Social Loafing
- Deindividuation

# Social Facilitation

- The tendency for an individual's performance to *improve* when simple or well-rehearsed tasks are performed in the presence of others.
- *For example*, if you are good at shooting free throws then you will do even better shooting them in front of a crowd.
- Occurs with simple or well learned tasks but not with tasks that are difficult or not yet learned

# Social Inhibition

- The tendency for an individual's performance to *decline* when complex or poorly-learned tasks are performed in the presence of others.
- The presence of an audience often inspires well-trained actors and dancers to raise their performance to a new level (social facilitation)
- However, the pressure of an audience can have the opposite effect upon poorly prepared actors and dancers (social inhibition)

# Social Facilitation

Having a supportive audience for something you do well helps explain home-field advantage

**Table 34.1**

## Home-Field Advantage in Major Team Sports

<b>Sport</b>	<b>Games Studied</b>	<b>Home Team Winning Percentage</b>
Baseball	23,034	53.5%
Football	2,592	57.3
Ice hockey	4,322	61.1
Basketball	13,596	64.4
Soccer	37,202	69.0

# Social Loafing

- Tendency for people in a group to *exert less effort* when they work in a group rather than when they work alone
- People may be *less accountable* in a group, or they may think their efforts aren't needed.
- May try to “get a free ride” on a group project since it will be difficult to assess their contribution to the team or group

# Deindividuation

- Loss of self-awareness and self-restraint that occurs when in a group
- Fosters arousal and anonymity



# “I’m not responsible”

- People lose their sense of responsibility for their actions when in a group.
- The group thus “assumes responsibility” for aggressive or destructive actions that individuals would not commit if they were alone.
- Examples: looting or rioting after a sports victory

# Stanford Prison Experiment

- Zimbardo deliberately promoted the *deindividuation* of both the guards and the prisoners.
- Guards wore *identical* khaki uniforms and mirror sunglasses that prevented anyone from seeing their eyes or reading their emotions. All had billy clubs, whistles, and handcuffs.
- The prisoners all wore stocking caps, and hospital dressing gowns. They were identified by numbers sown into their gowns.

# Powerful effects of deindividuation

- As the guards became immersed in their roles, they developed a strong group cohesion that *reduced their sense of personal responsibility*. As they *stopped viewing the prisoners as individual human beings*, the guards' behavior became increasingly aggressive.

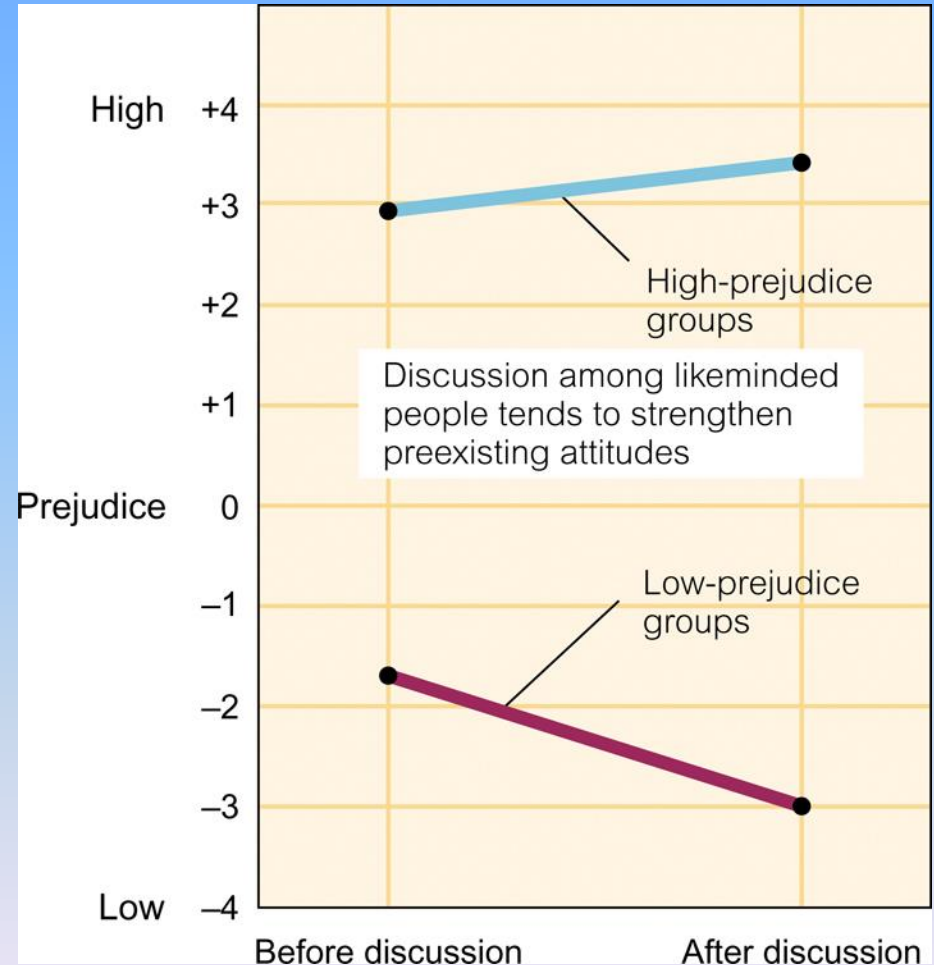


# Module 34: Social Thinking and Social Influence

## Group Decision Making

# Group Polarization

- The tendency for a group's predominant opinion to *become stronger* or more extreme after an issue is discussed.



# Example of Group Polarization

- Those who are *Trump supporters* will come away from a discussion with other Trump supporters *liking him even more*. Those who *already dislike Trump* will come away from a conversation with like-minded people *hating him even more*.



# Groupthink

- Mode of thinking that occurs when the *desire for harmony* in a decision- making group *overrides* a realistic appraisal of the alternatives.
- You “go along to get along” or you “don’t want to rock the boat”
- This can be avoided by consulting outside experts or having someone play the role of “devil’s advocate”

# Module 34: Social Thinking and Social Influence

## Our Power as Individuals



# Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

- When we *believe something to be true* about others (or ourselves) and we *act in ways that cause this belief to come true*
- For example, you think you're going to fail your Psychology test so instead of actually studying you spend the whole night playing games on your phone instead. Sure enough, you fail your test the next day just as you predicted you would.

# Minority Influence

- Those with a *minority opinion* can influence the majority, but *must be firm* in their convictions
- Those who waffle in their convictions have trouble persuading others, but those who are *unwavering* are far *more successful* in causing members of the majority to rethink their opinions.



Rosa Parks

The End