

Phase 2 - COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Week 8. Unit 2.5. US and THEM I: Justifying Ourselves & Judging Others; **Socialization and Self-Justification**
Reification; Attribution; Are conflicting social influences reconcilable?

FACILITATION: Study Group #5

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW:

READ or VIEW by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.5-1 [SA] Chapter 5

2.5-2 "A study of prisoners and guards in a simulated prison"

2.5-3 *Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment* (video viewing time 50 mins)

2.5-4 "Making sense of the nonsensical: An analysis of Jonestown"

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS: THINK OVER by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.5 – 1 [SA] Chapter 5

2.5 – 2 Haney, Craig, W. Curtis Banks, and Philip G. Zimbardo. "Study of prisoners and guards in a simulated prison." *Naval Research Reviews* 9, no. 1-17 (1973).

This is the original published report of the (in)famous social psychology experiment conducted at Stanford University in 1971. The experiment raises important scientific and ethical questions about research involving human subjects.

2.5 – 3 "Quiet Rage: The Stanford prison study," Musen, K. & Zimbardo, P. G. (1991). Stanford, CA: Psychology Dept., Stanford University. Videorecording.

2.5 – 4 Osherow, Neal. "Making sense of the nonsensical: An analysis of Jonestown." *Readings about the social animal* (1988): 68-86.

In November 1978, close to 1000 members of a "cult" settlement in Guyana, under the direction of the Reverend Jim Jones, fed a poison-laced drink to their children and then drank it themselves. Their bodies were found lying together, arm in arm. How could such a tragedy occur? The images of an entire community destroying itself, of parents killing their own children, appears almost incredible. The media stories about the event and full-color pictures of the scene documented some of its awful horror. Here, a social psychologist endeavors to illuminate the causes and to explain the processes that led to the tragedy. Does his analysis "make sense" to you? Does this event teach us anything of contemporary relevance?

Questions to Consider:

- What is "role socialization"?
- What is self-justification?
- Is dissonance reduction "rational" or "irrational"?
- What is "inadequate justification"?
- How does dissonance arise after a decision?
- How does dissonance theory relate to the justification of effort?
- What is meant by "the psychology of inevitability"?
- What is "learned helplessness"?
- Can you relate "learned helplessness" to the arguments made by Macy (see last week)?
- Describe "victim blaming"
- Self-Justification – dealing with cognitive dissonance
- Introduction to dissonance theory

- Dissonance and Dissonance Reduction
- What are "foot-in-the-door" techniques?
- Relate dissonance theory to gambling, low-balling, smoking, immoral behavior
- Relate dissonance theory to inadequate rewards
- Compare and contrast internal and external justification
- Inadequate rewards and education
- Compare and contrast mild versus severe initiation
- Relate dissonance theory to feelings of self-esteem
- Evaluate some critiques of dissonance theory

Keep a record of instances in which you find yourself experiencing dissonance and engaging in efforts to reduce it.

- What does Aronson mean when he says that "people cannot live by consonance alone?"
- Relate dissonance theory to making mistakes (esp. in MIT classrooms).

Research on self-justification and other issues has led to the development of powerful techniques for influencing people's attitudes and behavior. These techniques can be used for good or ill. What defenses do we have against unwarranted attempts at social influence? Does it help to know something about the purposes/intentions of those who possess the relevant knowledge and skills and the resources to use them? At an earlier point in the term, we considered the use of mass media and other powerful means of behavior control/modification to influence human attitudes and behavior in our society. Recall "The Corporation" video. How (if at all) has your view of the issues raised in that film and discussion been affected by what you have been learning in this class?

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9.70 Social Psychology
Spring 2013

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