Instructors: Stephan Chorover and Jovan Ristic
9.70 Social Psychology

Prereq.:
U (Spring)
3-0-9 HASS

Examines interpersonal and group dynamics; considers how the thoughts, feelings and actions of individuals are influenced by (and influence) the beliefs, values and practices of large and small groups. Learning occurs mainly through class discussions and participation in study groups. Regular homework assignments, occasional lectures and demonstrations.

S. L. Chorover and J. Ristic

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The 9.70 Learning Process

"Science Walks on Two Legs": Social Psychology in Theory and Practice

We will pursue a scientific understanding of social psychological beliefs, values and practices in two complementary ways: Our textbook and other materials will provide the topical framework for the course; our participation in the 9.70 learning process itself will provide a real social situation in which to apply the theories of social psychology.

9.70 is not a "lecture" class. Those “taking” the class are expected to play active roles in the process of its organization and development into an effective learning system.

Why will we be using the class itself as a focus? Because it is the one social system we all share in common, and because many features of social systems are generic. Accordingly, many issues and crises that will arise for us in the class will be common to the organization and development of other human social systems as well.

You should therefore expect learnable knowledge and skills acquired through your 9.70 learning experience to be valuable in your future personal and social endeavors, both academic and professional.

Two Complementary Approaches to Studying Social Psychology

Your 9.70 learning experience will expose you to social-psychological beliefs, values and practices associated with two different scientific paradigms. The first – the modern scientific paradigm – is exemplified in and espoused by the textbook. The second paradigm – a systemic, contextual, action-research, or human-ecological perspective – will be introduced and advocated by the instructors.

You will have a chance to compare these two approaches as we explore them sequentially in the second and third class sessions. It is important to emphasize that we do not regard the two paradigms as separate or contradictory. Neither is wholly sufficient and the use of both is necessary to provide a scientifically credible understanding of the subject before us.

Collaborative Learning System

The class develops as a Collaborative Learning System at three levels: the individual, the study group, and the class as a whole. The structure and functions of the learning
system are defined in the process of its own organization and development.

Everybody entering into the present situation (or "setting") brings his/her own uniquely individual background, formative experiences and points of view. This "mental set" includes a full complement of personal and social (academic, professional, scientific, pedagogical, etc.) assumptions, intentions, interests and attitudes.

How can people with so many different perspectives and backgrounds join together to form a community of inquiry in an MIT class? We do not underestimate the difficulty of creating a Collaborative Learning System here. Given some of the "default assumptions" about what a class should be, we have many barriers to overcome. But our longtime experience teaches us that it can be done – and done well – if we all make a serious effort to overcome our own prejudices and learn to trust each other, to value the learning process, to encourage personal initiative and to reinforce social responsibility, while rejecting cynicism, freeloading, deception, and cheating.

This is tantamount to organizing ourselves, however provisionally, into an actual scientific community or a "consensual domain". Within such a setting, one ultimate objective is for "meaning" and "power" to be equitably shared. For example, it is important for everyone participating in such a community explicitly accepts it as a "default assumption" that all observations/interpretations made by members are equally valid and deserving of serious consideration unless explicitly called into question or shown to be false or invalid.

Because 9.70 is a collaborative learning process, we are all individually and collectively responsible for devising and implementing a mode of self-organization that includes an equitable division of roles and responsibilities.

You have responsibility to participate actively in making the Collaborative Learning System work; it is not only up to the instructors to tell you what to do and you are not expected to merely comply with instructions without understanding and taking responsibility for your own behavior.

Subsystems

Constituent parts of the 9.70 collaborative learning system:

- individual students
- study groups
- individual instructors
- instructional subsystem
- class as a whole

These exist in the larger contexts (levels of interaction) including (but are not limited to) the B&CS department, student community as a whole, the Institute as a whole, the local community (Cambridge/Boston), larger social (e.g. geopolitical) and natural (bioregional) levels etc...

Thus, while the main goal of the 9.70 learning system is the development and
maintenance of sustainable collaborative relations on individual, study group and whole class levels, we must also be mindful of influences arising from other levels as well.

**Study Groups**

The class will be divided randomly into Study Groups. This approach is required because of participants' different backgrounds, preconceptions and expectations. The randomization also neutralizes the influence of "invisible loyalties." Everybody ends up in a group that is formed in the same way, and everyone and all groups are put on a "level playing field."

Study groups meet independently to work and study together. The workload includes a study group commitment of **two hours of collaborative work each week**. With class meetings, that adds up to at least five contact hours per week.

The time and place of study group meetings should be agreed upon among the members. However certain scheduling constraints apply (see below in Study group Minutes).

Bear in mind that you are supposed to be meeting as a study group. Schedule and attend regular meetings at times and in places where interruptions and distractions won’t impair your ability to concentrate and to listen and talk with each other. Avoid "floating" from one meeting place/time to another.

The group should conscientiously negotiate, devise, and implement an equitable way of working together, establishing an open and effective way for members to give and get feedback. Strive for a fair division of labor and a workable system of checks and balances to enhance the quality of the collaborative learning on all levels (individual, study group, and whole-class).

**Study Group Minutes**

Each week, each study group is responsible for preparing a brief (1-2 page) collaborative paper – a "study group minutes."

"Minutes" **must be received by both instructors via email** (see page 12 for email addresses) **no later than 6 pm on the Wednesday** evening before the next Thursday class. Accordingly, your study group should **not arrange to meet on Wednesday evenings or before class on Thursdays**. However, your weekly study group meetings should not occur before everyone has had a chance to complete the assigned homework for that week. (It is thus best to schedule meetings for Tuesdays or Wednesdays, if possible.)
The minutes will be read and evaluated by the instructor(s) and you will receive written feedback by 8 pm Wednesday evening. A copy of your minutes (with the feedback) will also be forwarded to the study group whose turn it will be to facilitate the next day’s class meeting.

Study group email lists will be created to simplify all this correspondence. We will therefore need your data.

The readers of your contributions will be trying to evaluate and facilitate the ongoing learning process. We do not want a word-by-word transcript of your meeting. Nor will it suffice for us to receive a mere list of who was present and what was discussed. Rather, we expect to receive meaningful "process notes", "summary statements" and "formative evaluations" relating to all aspects of the learning experience. You can help most by reporting (e.g.):

- conclusions about topically relevant issues from the assigned readings/films
- the quality of your meeting, of your discussions and conclusions
- your discussions and conclusions about the quality of the learning process, the classroom or group discussions, the role and performance of the instructional subsystem (What is good about the class? What is bad – boring, wrong, confusing, etc.?)

You should also include:

- a brief summary statement from each member, regarding the form, content and quality of his/her own 9.70-related activities since the previous class session.
- concise answers to questions posed in the Syllabus
- any organizational, procedural or substantive issues, questions or criticisms that group members feel strongly about – pertaining to the subject matter, or the study group and/or class meetings.

In sum, weekly minutes will be most useful to the facilitation process (see next section), if they provide theoretically and practically relevant feedback regarding the organization and development of the class and its subsystems.

Facilitation

The first three class sessions will be led / facilitated by the instructors. From the fourth session onward, study groups will take over. Each study group in turn will share the power and responsibility of facilitating the class. By the end of the term, all individuals and each study group will have had an opportunity to facilitate the learning process.
The "demand characteristics" of this leadership role will vary predictably in accordance with topical shifts in the syllabus. Unpredictable changes in the task should also be expected as substantive and procedural issues arise at individual, study group and whole class levels of organization and development.

The facilitating study group will work with the class and with the instructors to define and to deal with arising issues in the collaborative learning process. The instructor(s) will forward copies of each study group minutes, with comments to the facilitating group of the week whose members will already be well-along in the process of planning the next day’s class. The facilitating group of the week will carefully read all this material and incorporate relevant points into their class agenda. In addition to the agenda, the facilitating group will also prepare two summary overviews and evaluations of:
(1) the last week’s class,
(2) the form and content of the submitted minutes.

As soon as possible after completion, copies of the foregoing – together with the proposed agenda – should be forwarded to all study groups (in time to allow them to be read and digested before the upcoming class). As a backup, hard copies should be printed out, and made available in class.

**Formative and Summative Evaluation**

Conventional grading practices call for the instructors to evaluate the performance of students on an individual basis. The nature of the subject, and the size and organization of the class make such a grading system wholly inappropriate here. Of course, the instructors will actively participate in the grading process, and the instructor-in-charge will be responsible for endorsing the grade that appears next to your name on the official grade sheet at the end of the term. But please do not expect that grade to reflect merely or even mainly the instructors’ own personal assessment of the quality of your own individual work in 9.70.

It is essential to emphasize that in the context of the 9.70 Collaborative Learning Process, we have to perceive and practice evaluation as a continuous and collaborative process which reflects and is based on the three constituent levels of the System: individual students, study groups and the class as a whole.

The organization and development the 9.70 Collaborative Learning System will proceed through a number of stages or phases. Formative and summative evaluation processes will be relied upon to both guide our progress and to assess our effectiveness in negotiating our way through the relevant developmental phases (e.g. in particular, the basic trust issue, and the transition from group to class coherence/cooperation).

Learning formative and summative evaluations of individual and group performance in collaborative social situations is an important social-psychological skill, and it will have
practical application in connection with the "ultimate" in classroom evaluation routines: "grades and grading."

Your final letter grade will be the result of the successful evaluation process – at the VERY end.

In 9.70, we have tools for the formative and summative evaluation process at all the three levels of its organization:

- at the individual student level: • timesheet (see below)
  - journal (see below);
- at the study group level: • minutes (see page 6 )
- at the class as a whole level: • parts of class sessions should be devoted to process evaluation

Timesheet

This is intended to assist in Formative and Summative Evaluation of your 9.70 learning experience.

Use it to comment on meetings and assignments, and to keep track of the time and effort you devote to your performance in this class. This information is to be exchanged and acknowledged within the study group by all members. Experience teaches us that students in this class need to learn to give and take constructive feedback and this means keeping track of the quantity and quality of your participation in real time (or soon thereafter).

NOTE: In the event of disagreements relating to final grades (e.g. between self-assessments and peer-evaluations) we may find ourselves forced to ask to examine the contents of your Timesheets and Journals.

Journal

As the process of development must be tracked, everyone is expected to keep a journal. Approach this task with the stance of a serious researcher – e.g. a member of an expedition keeping a field notebook. Honesty, accuracy and diligence count! Be faithful in making regular and relevant entries. Use your Journal to record (and thereby to explore) your own thoughts and feelings about any aspect of 9.70 as well as any other topics of social psychological interest.

It would be easy enough for us to simply require you to make your written work available for periodic or on-demand inspection. But that would be pedagogically self-defeating. What we will do, however, is to ask you to keep your journal with you at all times. In addition, you should be prepared to show (without disclosure of the contents in detail) that it is being well-used for the purposes already outlined.
Requirements and Criteria for Successful Completion of the Class

Summing up what is presented above in detail, we can list the requirements and criteria as follows:

• **success at all the three levels:**
  - if not achieved at class level, **excellence of performance** cannot be achieved at group level;
  - if not achieved at group level, it cannot be achieved at individual level.

• **success does not show only at the end; as a process it involves:**
  - reading and viewing assignments; discussions;
  - active participation – at group level;
  - at class level.
  - continuous collaborative evaluation (as explained above);
  - study group minutes (as explained on page 6);
  - facilitation preparation and process (as explained on page 8).

• **successful completion includes:**
  - completed term project(s);
  - completed summative evaluation.

C Class Materials

Required Text


*SA* is a book about the psychology of human interaction, written from the personal and social (e.g. academic and professional) point of view of an acknowledged authority on the experimental study of social psychology.

Topic by topic, Aronson will lead us through the scientific literature relating to the dynamics of social influence in a wide range of both routine and problematical situations and provide us with some theoretically sound and practically useful answers to questions of a kind that most of us will keep on asking about ourselves and other people throughout our lives. Pertinently, this update of *SA* integrates relevant developments since the 8th edition.
(1999) including the tragedy at Columbine, (see also Aronson’s "Nobody Left to Hate") and the terrifying mass murders/suicides of 9-11-01.

Professor Aronson will introduce us to some key substantive, procedural and ethical issues in experimental social psychology and take us on an up-to-date tour of its large and varied literature.

**Additional Readings and Viewings**

All readings and viewings should be completed **before** you meet with groupmates to discuss the week’s assignments and other matters.

Comprehension is key! Read texts and watch films carefully, attentively and conscientiously. To maximize comprehensibility, it is important that the order of assignments be followed as listed, and sometimes you may find it necessary to read or watch more than once. The acquisition of learnable knowledge is a cumulative process. If, after giving the material the most careful and sustained consideration of which you are capable, you still "don’t get it," then discuss it with your groupmates and/or bring it to the attention of the class and the instructors.

As you do the readings and watch the films, focus on the social-psychological significance of the issues being raised and their meaning in the context of your 9.70 learning experience. Consider both the media and the messages. Don’t be surprised or unduly put off by the fact that some of the imagery is dated and the video itself is of low audiovisual quality. Furthermore, the people and situations portrayed may look strange – they may sport passé haircuts and outmoded dress styles. Don’t let that distract you from your main task.

In the past, many 9.70 students reported finding some of the assigned readings and videos mildly (and sometimes powerfully) disturbing. How do you generally deal with information that makes you feel uncomfortable? You may experience feelings of disbelief, revulsion, or alienation that make it difficult for you to cognitively and affectively "take in" the information. If this happens, please understand that your reactions are natural and normal. All of us are inclined to distance ourselves from unpleasant information and prefer to avoid situations in which we find the behavior (and thoughts and feelings) of others to be intellectually and emotionally disturbing. This tendency – a common defense mechanism in psychological parlance – is worth paying attention to in itself. Nevertheless, endeavor to overcome this tendency, lest it impede your understanding of the material.
Instructors

Instructors-in-charge:

Steve Chorover

Jovan Ristic (pronounced Yovan Reastich)
Detailed Syllabus

phase 1 DIDACTIC ORIENTATION

unit 1.1

February 3
Themes: A Definition of the Situation;
Sets & Settings;
Start of the 9.70/04 Collaborative Learning System Lifecycle

AT THE POINT OF ENTRY

Hello and Welcome to 9.70/05!

Beginnings are important.

Each of us has her or his own habitual ways of entering situations (including courses of study). Some MIT undergraduates say that they enter each new classroom expecting another academically and professionally excellent adventure in an exciting and relevant subject area; others enter shyly, feeling slightly apprehensive, if not downright depressed and despairing; feeling vaguely embarrassed, guilty, or ashamed, with a deflated sense of self-esteem – not to mention a sense of self doubt regarding academic and professional choices made. What is your "entry style?"

Are you ready to have some fun while learning something of possibly lasting social-psychological value? Or has much of the fun gone out of classroom learning for you?

HANDOUTS

1 Syllabus
2 Preliminary Information Form and Benchmark Questionnaire
3 Working Groups (supporting text)
4 Human Systems: A Selection of Developmental Schemes (supporting text)
5 Timesheet
6 Study Group roster form

INTRODUCTION

We (1) introduce ourselves; (2) survey this document and (3) discuss what lies ahead in terms of the subject matter and our approach to it.

Who are we? What are we doing here? (Review Benchmark responses).
Everything that is said is said by someone.¹

After the plan of the term’s work has been described, we will take a short break to enable those who wish to avoid further involvement to leave unobtrusively.

When we reconvene, those returning will be presumed to be ready, willing and able to regard themselves and each other as prospective "serious students" of the subject before us.

INITIATING THE Collaborative Learning System STRUCTURE:
FORMING STUDY GROUPS

Enrolment will be limited to 48. If necessary, a non-stratified lottery will be used to reduce class size to that level. The class will next be divided randomly into Study Groups (see page 6). Groups of 6-7 students each will be optimal.

Group members meet together; introduce themselves to each other and decide where and when to hold their weekly 2-hour meetings.

phase 1 DIDACTIC ORIENTATION

unit 1.2
February 10
Theme: The Science of Social Psychology and Vice Versa I:
The Modern Scientific Approach:
Substantive, Procedural and Ethical Issues in
Experimental Social Psychological Research

FACILITATION: instructors

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

Note: All assignments should be done conscientiously and in the order as numbered. Don’t just "scan." Read closely. Strive for understanding. Does everything make sense? If not, seek clarification from groupmates, classmates and/or teaching staff before proceeding.

¹ This remark is owed to a friend and former MIT colleague, the distinguished Chilean neurophysiologist, Humberto Maturana, who often used it to introduce a line of scientific discourse. In a similar vein, the late Professor Hans-Lukas Teuber, founding head of what has become the MIT Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, used to cite what he called "The First Principle of Clear Statement" according to which, "it must always be clear who is addressing whom, on which subjects, in which context, and toward what end(s)." How do you understand our reference to these points here?
READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

1.2 – 1 this Syllabus

1.2 – 2 Aronson’s The Social Animal (hereafter SA):
   Front Matter (pp. I-xviii)
   Back Matter (pp. 453-548)
   Chapter 1: What is Social Psychology? (pp. 1-9)

VIEW by yourself or with others then DISCUSS in your study group:

1.2 – 3 S. Milgram, Obedience to Authority
   (videotape - viewing time 51 mins.)

READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

1.2 – 4 S. Milgram, (1974) The Perils of Obedience (summary of
   the experiment), Harper’s Magazine (year uncertain)
   on-line copy: http://home.swbell.net/revscat/perilsOfObedience.htm

1.2 – 5 Aronson’s The Social Animal:
   Chapter 9: Social Psychology as a Science (pp. 329-347)

1.2 – 6 Baumrind, D. (1964) “Some Thoughts on the Ethics of
   Research: After Reading Milgram’s ‘Behavioral study of
   obedience’”. American Psychologist, 19, 421-423

   to Baumrind”. American Psychologist, 19, 848-852

1.2 – 8 E. Aronson and D. Bridgeman (1979) Jigsaw Groups and the
   Desegregated Classroom: In Pursuit of Common Goals

THINK OVER by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

1.2 – 1 This Syllabus

Read carefully all the introductory parts up to and including the detailed syllabus for
this class session. Glance through the rest, trying to get some idea of what lies ahead.

1.2 – 2 Aronson’s The Social Animal

Front Matter (pp. I-xviii): Note the number of the author’s publications and the range of
his interests. Check out the dedication and the table of contents; read the author’s
Preface: "Why I Wrote this Book", and Acknowledgments. Reflect on the meaning to you of the epigram that Aronson borrows from Aristotle’s Politics.

Back Matter (pp. 453-548): Check out the Glossary (pp. 453-461) How many of the terms do you recognize? Which can you already define? Start getting familiar with the meanings of those technical terms/concepts. Browse through References (pp. 443-495) and the Indexes (pp. 531-548). Are you beginning to get some sense of the territory to be covered?

Chapter 1 begins with illustrative examples of the issues that scientific social psychologists are concerned with. The author defines social psychology as "the study of social influence," and introduces us to what he calls his "first law," that "people who do crazy things are not necessarily crazy."

This "law" is intended to help you to learn to adopt a scientifically credible approach to understanding human behavior in social contexts. It cautions us against the tendency to commit what social psychologists call "the fundamental attribution error" (more about that later). The same caution applies to the problem of understanding other people’s behavior when you observe them doing or saying things that appear "stupid," "irresponsible," "hateful," "mean," "insensitive," "bad," "cruel," "vile" etc. It also applies, of course, in situations where people are observed making statements or engaging in actions that might be described as "brilliant," "responsible," "loving," "kind," "sympathetic," "good," etc. By stressing the importance of "Aronson’s first law" to the beginning student of our subject, we aim to emphasize that social psychology takes persons in contexts as its preferred units of analysis and is wary of attempts to attribute the "root causes" of behavior to presumably fixed inherent attributes of particular individuals. Accordingly, please try to distinguish "dispositional" explanations (from "situational" explanations which focus on "persons-in-contexts."

1.2 – 3 videotape Obedience to Authority

In this original film Milgram documents the actual participants in a session of the famous experiment. In unit 2.2 we will return to a consideration of the experimental details. For present purposes we want to focus on the study as a rather extreme but not atypical example of experimental social psychological studies based on a version of the modern scientific laboratory model that requires the experimenters to engage in deception of the experimental subjects and fail to obtain fully informed consent of participants.

1.2 – 4 The Perils of Obedience

This text (which appeared in Harper’s Magazine – year is not certain) is abridged and adapted from Obedience to Authority by Stanley Milgram, 1974. In it, Milgram summarizes the essential features of the experiment, and revises his original article Behavioral Study of Obedience, which was published in The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology in 1963.
By way of context: Adolph Eichmann’s main wartime job as a government bureaucrat in Nazi Germany during the 1940s was to organize and supervise the transport of European Jews to concentration, labor, and extermination camps where they were subsequently incarcerated, exploited and killed. Hannah Arendt’s 1964 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, published after Eichmann’s capture and trial in an Israeli court, depicts him as a psychologically man, who was a “joiner,” a conformist ... a leaf in the whirlwind of time” (p. 32). As his job shifted from forcing Jews from their homes to arranging for them to be killed, Arendt reports, “he was troubled but felt duty-bound to obey his superiors. In fact, he said that not following orders was the only thing that would have given him a bad conscience.” With considerable insight and detail, Arendt further explains how Germany’s leaders created social conditions in which "conscience as such had apparently got lost." There were individuals who resisted, she notes, but "their voices were never heard" (p. 103). In Arendt’s view, Eichmann’s decisive flaw was his "almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow’s point of view" (pp. 47–48). She concludes that the real "lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us (is) the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying banality of evil" (p. 252). It seemed to her that "in politics obedience and support are the same” (p. 279) and that "under conditions of terror most people will comply but some people will not.” Eichmann turns out not to be a “monster.” Is this a good or a bad thing in terms of its implications for the future?

It was in an attempt to inquire scientifically into such important questions that Stanley Milgram, then a young social psychology professor at Yale, undertook what has since become one of the most notorious, controversial and shocking of all laboratory-based social psychological experiments.

1.2 – 5 Aronson – Chapter 9
1.2 – 6 Baumrind on the Ethics of Research
1.2 – 7 Milgram’s Reply to Baumrind

Reflect on the questionable ethics of deception in social psychological experiments.

Does debriefing suffice as an ethical counterpoise to deception?
Do researchers have responsibility for how their findings are used?

After completing the foregoing assignments you should be able to define the following terms:

- experimental arrangements
- independent and dependent variables
- stimuli and responses
- causes and effects (correlation is not causation)
- technical issues in experimental design: the importance of random assignment
- control versus impact
- mundane and experimental realisms
- cover stories, confederates and lies

By the way: The judgment in Eichmann’s trial states that "the degree of responsibility
increases as we draw further away from the man who uses the fatal instrument with his own hands” (p. 247). In what sense could this be said about Milgram’s experiment?

1.2 – 8 Jigsaw Groups

As we proceed, we will organize ourselves into a collaborative learning system that enables us to pursue some common learning goals without resorting to deception.

This article describes something closely related. As you consider the approach, please look beyond the specific context of the article (i.e. recently racially desegregated classrooms at primary and secondary levels in the 1950s and 1960s) and consider the applicability of the model to other learning contexts, including post-secondary (e.g. MIT undergraduate) classrooms and, more particularly, to our present situation in 9.70.

Further information available on line at: http://www.jigsaw.org/

phase 1

DIDACTIC ORIENTATION

unit 1.3

February 17

Theme: The Science of Social Psychology and Vice Versa II: An Alternative Approach to Human Inquiry

FACILITATION: instructors

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

On Paradigms (a compendium of 3 documents authored or co-authored by S. L. Chorover)


THINK OVER by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

Introductory Notes:

Last week, you read a good explanation of what contemporary "scientific social psychology" looks like from the vantage point of a leading experimental social psychologist who has done a great deal of important field and laboratory research.

This week, we consider an alternative (complementary rather than contradictory) view. Action Research (AR) has emerged due to the difficulty of studying the behavior of people and groups via "arms length" observation (or formal experimentation), and it demonstrates empirically the possibility of conducting credible scientific inquiry in contexts where the only vantage point available to the researcher is within the system to be studied.

AR proceeds through several reiterative cycles of action, observation, feedback, and revised action. In other words, intervention (action) and assessment (formative evaluation) are intimately intertwined in a compositely unified reiterative process.

Participatory Action Research – one of the main foci of AR today – emphasizes the collaborative character of all human inquiry. PAR has emerged as a critique of "the standard model of social research" which insists on keeping "research" and "action" separate and distinct. PAR, by contrast, entails a project organization and development process in which members of the group(s) in which collaborative learning is to be facilitated participate in all phases of the work.

"Where is Science Going?"

Read the following passage carefully. Read it aloud, slowly. If necessary, repeat until some relevant social psychological implications occur to you.

"Let us get down to bedrock facts. the beginning of every act of knowing, and therefore the starting point of every science must be our own personal experiences. I am using the word, experience, here in its technical philosophical connotation, namely, our direct sensory perception of ... things. These are the immediate data of the act of knowing. They form the first and most real hook on which we fasten the thought-chain of science; because the material that furnishes, as it were, the building stones of science is received either directly through our own perception of things or indirectly, through the information of others, that is to say from former researchers and teachers and publications and so on. There
are no other sources of scientific knowledge." (Max Planck, (1933) Where is Science Going? Chapter 2. Is the External World Real? p 33.)

**Essential Issues:**

- What is science? What is a scientific paradigm?
- Science (scientific findings, theories, hypotheses, conclusions, etc. as human social products).
- Is there "a" scientific method?
- Science and scientific frameworks
- Paradigms (theories and practices): conceptual and material aspects of human inquiry
- Modern science and social life (what is "the social psychology of science and vice versa"?)
- Science as progress: e.g. "from speculation to experimentation"
- Scientific communities as human social systems
- Relations between science and society
- Relevance of social psychology to the problem of defining and dealing with human social problems.
- Critically examine the idea of "value free science."
- What are scientific truths? Compare and contrast objectivity and intersubjectivity?
- Resolved: science is whatever passes for credible knowledge of the world and its contents in any given human social group at a particular moment of time. Argue pro or con.

**The Systems Perspective**

What is "a system." What do we have when we have "an understanding" of something in "systems" terms?"

Here is a relevant "thought experiment":

Think of something about which you can say with some confidence that you "have an understanding of it as a system." Try to identify the component parts or constituents of your understanding of it. Do this before proceeding to the next paragraph!

Here is my own (S.L.Chorover) response. Please compare and contrast it with your own.

When I say that "I understand ______ as a system, I am making no claims to anything like complete or comprehensive knowledge of it. My understanding of the world and its contents is a notion that is and presumably must forever remain partial, incomplete and incurably perspectival – comprised of networks of relationships involving: things- or events- or objects- or persons- or observers-in-context.

My conception of the term "system" implies what psychologists refer to as a "gestalt" (a
whole); something discriminable as a set of interacting components "standing together" as a conceptually/materially compound and complex unity in a more or less distinctly "bounded" way; and having a more or less readily comprehensible relationship to things outside of and other than itself.

Beyond that, understanding a system means being able to contemplate it from at least three separate and distinct yet ultimately complementary perspectives – in terms of its (1) internal organization, (2) external relations and (3) the process by which it has come to be what it is."

Human brain is the particular system that I had in mind as I pondered the foregoing question, and the next question is whether you find my account of "systems understanding" to be in any way similar to or different from what you yourself came up with in your own example. If so, how? If not, why not?

How might a systems view apply to an understanding of the organization and development of the 9.70 collaborative learning system – especially in light of our "internal" vantage point? What do we know (what can we reasonably say) about (1) the constituents (individually/collectively) of the 9.70 system?; about their respective and collective composition, modes of organization and the sub-system level relations of parts, 2) about the nature and scope of its external relations, and 3) about its origins (growth, development, maturation ... etc.)

**The two Scientific Perspectives we Explore**

Here is a question to consider as we proceed: Do either, both or neither of the two scientific perspectives that we have been exploring offer a theoretically sensible, ethically appropriate and practically realistic scientific approach to the study of human mental activity and behavior in social contexts?

Think about it! And be prepared to discuss with groupmates and classmates.

Define and distinguish between "consensual validation" and "consensual disconfirmation." Consider the roles of both in the organization and development of scientific communities.

By now you should be able to identify, compare and contrast the noteworthy conceptual and material similarities and differences between the two paradigms – the two different scientific frameworks for defining and dealing with social psychological reality.
phase 2            COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

unit 2.1
February 24
Theme:          Clinical Application of the "Family Systems" Approach to
                Diagnosis and Treatment in a Case of Anorexia Nervosa

FACILITATION:   Study Group #1

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

Remember that assignments should be
done in the order as numbered

READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

  2.1 – 1 Human Systems: A Selection of Developmental Schemes
         handout # 4 (which you were given in the first class;

  2.1 – 2 Jackson, D. D., The Individual and the Larger Contexts

         in Context.

THINK OVER by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

Introductory Notes:

By hypothesis, families are comprehensible as human social systems in which the
thoughts, feelings and actions of all members are influenced by prevailing rules that
tend to be obeyed by all in the family. The rules create and maintain
social/psychological "homeostasis" (a more or less stable state of family system
equilibrium) in which the mental life and behavior of the membership reflects and
reinforces (shapes, directs, determines, preserves, engenders and drives) the ongoing
organization/development of the system as a whole.

Homeostasis is not (whether defined as "functional" or "dysfunctional" with respect to
certain standards or norms) a state of fixity. Rather it is a dynamic rule-governed
process involving an ongoing exchange of matter, energy and information – both
within the system, and externally between the system and surrounding systems (other
people, peers, friends and enemies, homes, neighborhoods, towns, linguistic
communities, schools, teams, gangs, socioeconomic classes, religious affiliations,
organizations, bioregions, etc.)
Such exchanges take place through interactions and relationships with consensual agreement to conform with certain core beliefs, values and practices.

Prevailing patterns of thought, feeling and behavior within the system are created and maintained, and sometimes changed. But one can know the range of thoughts, feelings and actions that are appropriate for each member of the system and behave accordingly without explicitly knowing the rules. Like the speaker of a natural human language who adheres to grammatical rules not "known" or explicitly articulated, members of families commonly maintain the prevailing "family homeostasis" without being able to state the rules that they are obeying.

Rules governing family homeostasis (like grammatical rules) are discernible through observation and analysis, and can be recognized as relevant and operative by family members when they are explicitly stated.

Notes On Assignments:

By way of background:
- 81% of American 10 year olds report fear of being fat
- An estimated 5-10 million American women and girls struggle with eating disorders. Some with tragically fatal outcome.

By means of a "role playing" exercise, we will explore in class a clinical application of the "family systems" approach to diagnosis and treatment of a potentially fatal case of self-starvation in which the "identified patient" is a teen-age girl. Using the transcript of an interview from the foregoing book Psychosomatic Families, we will "stage" an interview with the Kaplan family – Deborah, the youngest daughter, has been hospitalized with a serious eating disorder (anorexia nervosa). The family interview takes place around lunch, and we are thus able to observe the family’s interactions in the face of Deborah’s refusal to eat.

The interview is conducted "behind a one-way screen" by a family therapist/family systems researcher and various assistants. The demonstration helps us to understand the difference between a dispositional and a situational interpretation of human problems – when made by someone with "the power to define". The interview is both dramatic and instructive because of influential links between (1) the way problems are defined, and (2) the way they are (or are not) dealt with.

Can you think of any other situations in which the difference between systemic and reductionist definitions of problems was, is, or could be tantamount to the difference between life and death?
phase 2  COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

unit 2.2
March 3
Theme:  Conformity

FACILITATION:  Study Group #2

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.2 – 1  Aronson, SA: Chapter 2: Conformity (pp. 10-45)
2.2 – 2  Asch, S.E., Opinions and Social Pressure

VIEW by yourself or with others then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.2 – 3  The Wave
          (videotape-viewing time 44 mins.)

READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.2 – 4  Jones, S., You Will Do As Directed

REREAD

          (1.2 - 4)

VIEW by yourself or with others then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.2 – 6  Wiener, C., Scientists, Engineers and Public Controversies,
          Part 1: The Challenger Disaster
          (videotape – viewing time to be announced)

THINK OVER by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

Introductory Notes:

We are all members of many different human social groups. A primary social psychological presumption is that our patterns of membership – whether attained by choice, by chance, or by coercion – are powerfully influential in shaping our attitudes and behavior.

Make a list of as many of the systems that you belong to as you can in 5 minutes. Include family of origin and memberships in commonly recognized classes (e.g.
socioeconomic) and categories (e.g. male/female). Indicate cases in which your placement in a given social group reflects your own view of yourself and/or the views of you commonly held by socially influential others. In each case, indicate whether and if so to what extent your membership is due to

(a) chance (e.g. "accidents of birth"),
(b) personal choice, or
(c) social influence

As you will have found, the influential power of peer pressure is impressive. The classic case study is Solomon E. Asch’s "line length" experiment:

2.2 – 2 Opinions and Social Pressure

Variables that increased and decreased conformity in Asch’s experiment were group composition, unanimity, prior commitment, self esteem, cultural differences, task difficulty/complexity.

The deeper and more troubling questions about conformity and obedience to authority arise in everyday real world (e.g. school-life, work life) contexts. What is it like to be a high school student caught up in a popular classroom teacher’s effort to simulate life in a totalitarian society?

2.2 – 3 videotape The Wave

It is important here to remind you to monitor your own attitudes and take their influence into account: In the 1970s film, The Wave, you are not the young people being more or less unwittingly drawn by their teacher into an informal "experiment" in social influence. There are obvious differences between them and yourselves (e.g. in age, context, dress and deportment, background, etc). These differences might be the reason why you would want to refrain from identifying with them and their predicament.

Bear in mind that a group of more or less "normal" young people of varying "types" in a California high school in the early 1970’s underwent the experience depicted in the film. Please make a conscious effort to identify with them and their situations.

Only then will you be able to address the more important questions:
- Can you see yourself behaving as any of the students behaved?
- Is the story believable to you?
- Are the characters and contexts recognizably real?
- Which of the adults or students did you find it particularly easy (or hard) to identify or empathize with? Why?
- Does anything in the film remind you of anything that you have personally experienced?
- How do you deal with things like "peer pressures," "obedience to authority," etc.?

Two weeks ago, you read Aronson’s defense of deception in experimental social psychological research (in SA Chapter 9). Do the methods of the formally experimental
Asch and Milgram experiments and/or the less formally scientific “experiment” or exercise done by the classroom teacher in The Wave, bring up any troubling ethical issues for you?

2.2 – 5 The Perils of Obedience

We have been here before. (The Milgram Experiment) but this time we take a deeper look at how social influences induce conformity in various contexts. We have already seen how ready, willing and able people are to abjure their own responsibility and obey directions from “responsible” and ostensibly legitimate academic/professional authorities.

2.2 – 6 videotape Scientists, Engineers and Public Controversies

Aronson discusses the idea that we can understand the behavior of “uninvolved bystanders” as an instance of conformity (e.g. The Case of Kitty Genovese). What is it like for scientists in a situation in which their personal desires to be faithful in fulfilling scientific, technical and social responsibilities is directly contradicted by their corporate superiors enunciating the short term organizational (“bottom-line”) imperatives of the company? Lives are on the line. Consider the case of the Challenger Disaster, in which one of your own – your fellow MIT student, Ronald McNair – and six others perished.

Further Questions to Consider

What lessons regarding obedience to authority and conformity to peer pressures do you take away from your exposure to these readings and films?

What roles do rewards and punishments play in producing conformity?

What is groupthink?

After completing the foregoing assignments, you should be able to define, differentiate and use the following terms:

- compliance,
- obedience,
- identification
- assimilation
- internalization

Distinguish between and illustrate by example the characteristics of informationally "open" vs "closed" social systems. Can you apply any of these concepts to situations involving your own membership in a particular group or set of groups?

Class Work:

Responding positively to Social Influence: conformity, compliance, identification, empathy, internalization
Responding negatively:
deviance, reactance, rejection, negation, denial, disavowal, disaffection, isolation,
alienation, frustration, anger, aggression, destructiveness, violence, substance abuse,
psychopathology, sociopathy

**Formative Evaluation Notes:**

We are almost 1/3 of the way into the term and need to do some interim stock-taking:

How are you doing?

What is your initial impression of the material and the class as a whole?

How are you finding the homework assignments? Are you doing the work conscientiously?

Are you and your groupmates working well together?

How is the 9.70 collaborative learning system developing, in your view? Have you been able to notice – at the individual, study group and whole class levels – the emergence (or lack thereof) of any organizational and developmental issues or crises described in the handout on "stages and phases of development in human systems?" If so, please give some examples. If not, why not?

**phase 2**

**COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY**

**unit 2.3**

March 10

Themes:

- Mass Media and Communication;
- Education and Indoctrination;
- Propaganda and Persuasion
  - "the engineering of consent"
  - defining and enforcing norms
  - education and indoctrination;
  - self and society;
  - individuals living/workinggoing to school in fields and contexts
  - who is/am "I"?; who is/are "we"?
- allegiances, alliances;
- movements, coalitions, blocs

**FACILITATION:** Study Group #3
PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

READ by **yourself** then **DISCUSS** in your **study group**:

2.3 – 1 Aronson, SA: Chapter 3: Mass Communication, Propaganda, and Persuasion (pp 46-91)

VIEW by **yourself** or with others then **DISCUSS** in your **study group**:

2.3 – 2 S. Kilbourne, J., Killing Us Softly 3: Advertising’s Image of Women (videotape – viewing time 34 mins.)

For additional information, including a series of provocative discussion questions and a study guide, see:
http://www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/KillingUsSoftly3/studyguide/html

2.3 – 3 Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity (Part 1) (videotape – viewing time 43 mins.)

For additional information, including a series of provocative discussion questions and a study guide, see:
http://www.mediaed.org/videos/MediaGenderAndDiversity/ToughGuise/studyguide/html

THINK OVER by **yourself** then **DISCUSS** in your **study group**:

Introductory Notes:

In social systems of all kinds and sizes various means (mass media appeals, propaganda and persuasion) are developed for the purpose of encouraging conformity to prevailing mental and behavioral norms. Can you come up with some pertinent examples? After doing the assignments, you should be able to:

- define "mass communications;"
- identify some of the factors that may reinforce (or undermine) the perceived credibility of communications;
- understand how advertising and/or media appeals achieve "the engineering of consent;"
- define "emotional contagion;"
- compare and contrast: reason and passion; prosocial, asocial, and/or antisocial influences;
- understand why it is so difficult to distinguish between education and indoctrination;
- define and distinguish between the primacy effect and the recency effect.

By way of context, consider the following statistics:
- In 1983, 50 corporations controlled almost all of US news media; today there are
6 major media outlets.

- The average American adolescent watches 3-4 hours of TV daily; sees 20,000-40,000 commercials/yr.
- The average height/weight of American women is 5’4”/140 lbs.
- The average height/weight of the American woman model is 5’11”/117 lbs.
- 80% of American women report being dissatisfied with their appearance.
- Media corporations have spent $111.3 billion lobbying lawmakers and federal regulators since 1996.
- Between 1995-98, media companies (excluding telecoms) gave more than $30.9 million to candidates for federal political office and party committees.
- An estimated $2 billion is spent annually to target juvenile consumers.
- At 3 years of age, 1 American child in 5 is making specific requests for brand-name products.
- Channel One’s in-classroom broadcast, featuring 2 minutes of commercials for every 10 minutes of news is compulsory on 90% of school days in 80% of classrooms in 40% of US middle and high schools.
- Cigarette manufacturers spend over $9.57 billion/year (> $26.2 million/day) on advertising.
- Almost 500,000 children are estimated to have become regular smokers during 2002.
- Mass media comprise the main source of health-related information for a majority of adolescents.

2.3 – 2 video Killing Us Softly

This is the newest version of Kilbourne’s groundbreaking video. In it, she surveys the contemporary advertising landscape to critically examine how corporations and their advertisers use images of girls and women to sell their products. Deconstructing advertisements with the same kind of care and thought that goes into constructing them, Kilbourne sets mass media images of femininity against social reality and advertising fantasy against the actual experience of girls and women. One of Kilbourne’s underlying arguments is that advertising media – as the prime storyteller in American culture – have the capacity to both produce and affirm the very fictions about women’s desires and identity that advertisers themselves often claim to be innocently tapping into and reflecting back at the public. In keeping with the industry’s own self-stated mission to create the markets they pitch to, she argues that there is little that is natural, inevitable or innocent about the stories advertising tells us about women, that cultural standards of “femininity” are less given than made, and that in terms of sheer money, power and cultural presence, the maker that matters most is advertising itself.

2.3 – 3 video Tough Guise

While the social construction of femininity has been widely examined (e.g. see above) the dominant role of masculinity has until recently remained largely invisible. This is one of the first films to systematically examine the relationship between images of
popular culture and the social construction of masculine identities in the U.S. at the
dawn of the 21st century. It is argued here that the widespread violence in American
society – including the tragic school shootings in Littleton, Colorado, Jonesboro,
Arkansas, and elsewhere – is overwhelmingly a gendered phenomenon, and that any
attempt to understand violence therefore requires that we understand its relationship
to masculinity and manhood. The film contends that:
   a) masculinity is made, not given (as opposed to maleness, which is biological);
   b) media are the primary narrative, pedagogical force of our time;
   c) media images of manhood – across distinctions of race, ethnicity, and
      socioeconomic class – play a pivotal role in making, shaping and recycling specific
      attitudes about manhood;
   d) a sustained look at media images of manhood and violence reveals a widespread
      and disturbing equation of masculinity with pathological control and violence; and,
      finally that,
   e) looking critically at constructed ideals of manhood by definition diminishes the
      otherwise silent power these very images might wield in shaping our perceptions of
      ourselves, our institutions and each other.

Questions and Issues to Think About:

- What are "gender stereotypes."
- Do media depictions of men and women (girls and boys) help to establish and
  maintain gender stereotyping or do they merely reflect existing gender realities?
- How do media depictions of people influence your self-image as a woman or
  man?
- How do media images of people in situations (e.g. women and men; alone;
  together with others in decision making and action situations) relate to currently
  influential "theories of human nature"?
- What is "patriarchy?" "androgyny?"
- Define "masculine culture" "culture of honor"
- Compare and contrast: "chromosomal sex," "hormonal sex," anatomical sex,"
  "physiological sex," "sexual identity," "gender identity."
- Resolved: pornography reflects and reinforces the "objectification" of women
  (and men) in our society. Argue pro or con.

With particular respect to yourself, consider the following:

- Impact on you of televised news events and "docudramas"
- Impact on you of televised commercial messages
- Your susceptibilities to "Infotainment"
- How do you cope with the "information overload"? (your reactance and
  resistance to influence; desensitization (numbing); habituation (acquired
  unresponsiveness, turning off, tuning out) etc.
- Collect some examples of "persuasive" and "unpersuasive" newspaper/magazine
  adverts; identify the persuasion tactics at work in the ad (attractiveness,
  credibility, use of vivid images, appropriateness to context.
Over the course of a day (or week?) try to identify and take note of instances in which you encounter an effort by an individual or group to influence your thoughts, feelings and actions. Include "live" encounters with salesclerks and other strangers; with friends, families, groupmates, classmates, roommates, housemates, etc. In the case of media appeals, look for messages coming from as broad as possible variety of mass media sources (tv, radio, print, billboards, product packaging or labeling etc.). Take note also of corporate logos and discuss whether the attempts in question were successful and if so how and to what extent and if not why not.

**phase 2**  
**COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY**

**unit 2.4**  
March 17  
Themes:  
The Social Construction of Reality:  
- perception and evaluation;  
- the psychology of attribution;  
- the dynamics of social action (and inaction)  
- individuality/commonality cleavage and the systemic perspective of interdependence

**FACILITATION:**  
Study Group #4

**PREPARATION OVERVIEW:**

READ by **yourself** then DISCUSS in your **study group**:

2.4 – 1  Aronson, S.A: Chapter 4: Social Cognition (pp. 92-141)

2.4 – 2  Hardin, G. (1968) *The Tragedy of the Commons*  
with comment by Crowe, Beryl (1969) *The Tragedy of the Commons Revisited*  
on line at:  
http://www.constitution.org/cmt/tragcomm.htm

2.4 – 3  Macy, J.R., (1983) *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age* (excerpts)

THINK OVER by **yourself** then DISCUSS in your **study group**:

2.4 – 2 *The Tragedy of the Commons*

Hardin’s classic article poses some essential socio-psychological questions about attitudes toward ecological issues.
The crucial aspect for the social-psychological context is the cleavage between individuality and commonality. The "Tragedy" reflects the prevalent cultural perspective whereby the interests of the individual and the community are understood as opposed and contradictory. Self-interest is consequently identified with selfishness and greed. Arguably, the choice of herders (as one of the first occupations humans have taken) is rather inappropriate to illustrate a behavior that is characteristic of less ancient cultural patterns, and particularly typical for the current economy of cut-throat competition.

This relation between self-interest and selfishness presents a major conflict and may readily engender a feeling of abject despair for the human condition. This is particularly true when the "tragedy" is framed in the customary dualist (either/or) mode. Under these conditions, the two ethical alternatives that offer themselves are either utilitarianism or deontology. In other words, one will either accept to be selfish and greedy (because that is an inevitable consequence of pursuing and maximizing one’s utility), or will adopt a "disinterested moral obligation" regardless of self-interest (which is the definition of deontology).

However, from the systemic perspective, this counter-position of self- versus common-interest presents a dialectic tension in which the integrity of the individual system depends on its belonging to and interrelatedness with more inclusive systems. This dialectic tension does not imply a mutual exclusion or irreconcilability of individual and common (or communal) interests. Rather, the systemic interrelations entail an interconnectedness of interests. Giving and taking can be conceived of only as complementary processes in eco-systemic interaction of individuals with each other and with the surrounding environment (social and natural).

The systemic perspective is, however, not readily attained. Why not? Perhaps the main reason is that our cognitive capacity to reason is clearly impaired by our affective response to so much "bad news." Indeed, this is precisely the thesis presented in the following selection:

2.4 – 3 Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age

This important book, now sadly out of print, was written in 1983, in the midst of an escalating nuclear arms race between the US and USSR. In it Macy uses the fear of nuclear annihilation to show precisely how we deal with information that is threatening to our personal security. She offers an explanation of what has been called "the dynamics of inaction." Arguably, her thesis has contemporary relevance. Do you see it as applicable to current events? If so how? If not, why not?

Making Sense of the World:

Our attention is thus drawn to the question of how we choose to make sense of the world. And this is the essence of what Aronson means by "social cognition." Consider the following questions and issues:
What does it mean to say that rational thinkers are cognitive misers?
What are the effects of contexts on judgments, perception, attractiveness, reference points?
What is "priming"?
What is meant by "construct accessibility"?
What is impression formation?
Can you identify some common "impression management" techniques?
What effects follow from different ways of framing situations/decisions?

Aronson has quite a lot to say about "heuristics." Define and distinguish between:
- judgement heuristics
- representative instances
- availability heuristic
- attitude heuristic
- halo effects
- false consensus effects
- categories and stereotypes

Describe and discuss "the self-fulfilling nature of social expectations"
- What is meant by "reconstructive memory"? How does this relate to the questionable validity of "memories recovered from childhood?" to the reliability of eye witness testimony?
- Define "confirmation bias," "hindsight bias," "actor-observer bias," "self bias," "self-serving bias."
- Explain the fact that attitudes (as measured by responses to questionnaires) are generally not predictive of or highly correlated with observed behavior.
- What is "the fundamental attribution error"?

Note: In any given situation, people will behave in accordance with their social roles – acting differently in different situations. Perhaps one reason we attribute other people’s behavior to underlying personality traits is that we observe them in only a few situations and are actually observing how they play the stipulated role therein (e.g. teammate, classmate or teacher). Consider your own behavior. Are there respects in which you play different roles in different situations? Give some examples. How can you manage to do so while also remaining "yourself"? If all of your personas were to gather together in a room to discuss the kind of person you really are, would they all agree in their assessments of you? What would they be likely to say about you?

Formative Evaluation Note:

Midterm Formative and (Interim) Summative Evaluations Due
(Details of what they should contain, of format, exact deadline etc., will be determined in class.)
SPRING BREAK  March 24

phase 2  COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

unit 2.5  March 31
Themes:  Evaluation: "Us and Them":
         Justifying Ourselves and Judging Others
              (both as individuals and collectivities)
         Attributional Biases, Socialization and Self Justification

FACILITATION:  Study Group #5

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:
READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.5 – 1 Aronson, SA: Chapter 5: Self-Justification (pp 142-199)

2.5 – 2 Haney, C. et al., (1971) A Study of Prisoners and Guards in a
      Simulated Prison, Stanford University

2.5 – 3 The Stanford Prison Experiment, website
      on line at: http://www.prisonexp.org

2.5 – 4 Murray, Bridget, Film Criticized as Irresponsible Monitor on
      Psychology, website
      on line at: http://www.apa.org/monitor/mar02/filmcritic.html

2.5 – 5 Osherow, N., (1964), An Analysis of Jonestown
      on line at: http://www.guyanaca.com/features/jonestown.html

THINK OVER by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.5 – 2 A Study of Prisoners and Guards in a Simulated Prison

This is the original published report of a famous (infamous?) 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 The Stanford Prison Experiment website

presents a more graphic version of the actual experiment with links to related sites.
2.5 – 4 Film Criticized as Irresponsible website

In 2001, a group of German movie-makers, apparently seeking to capitalize on "the reality TV" aspect of the Stanford study, made a movie "adaptation" of it full of gratuitous sex and violence. In this website, Zimbardo responded to the distortions involved.

2.5 – 5 An Analysis of Jonestown

In November 1978, close to 1000 members of a settlement in Guyana, under the direction of the Reverend Jim Jones, fed a poison-laced drink to their children and 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 incredible. The media stories about the event and full-color pictures of the scene documented some of its horror. Here, a social psychologist endeavors to illuminate the causes and to explain the processes that led to the deaths. 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 in the article by Macy that you read 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
  - What is meant by "inadequate justification"?
  - 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. How (if at all) has your view of the issues been affected by what you have learned since then?

phase 2  
COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

unit 2.6
April 7
Themes:
"In our Genes?":
Biological Determinism as a Social Excuse
Aggression: What’s "human nature" got to do with it?
(Likewise poverty, racism crime and violence?)

FACILITATION:  
Study Group #6

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.6 – 1  Aronson, SA: Chapter 6: Human Aggression (pp. 200-239)


VIEW by yourself or with others then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.6 – 3  Your (study group’s) choice of a contemporary tv show that has a well-established reputation for extreme violence (e.g. action movies, wrestling, etc.). Prepare comments.
2.6 – 4 Sociobiology: Doing what comes naturally?
(videotape – viewing time 21 mins.)
READ by **yourself** then DISCUSS in your **study group**:

2.6 – 5 Sociobiology: Doing what comes naturally?
transcript of soundtrack

2.6 – 6 Chorover, S.L. (1979) *From Genesis to Genocide: The Meaning of Human Nature and the Power of Behavior Control*. MIT Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-10); Chapter 5 (pp. 77-109); Chapter 7 (pp. 135-174)

2.6 – 7 Sociobiology Study Group, *Biology as a Social Weapon*

**THINK OVER by **yourself** then DISCUSS in your **study group**:

**Introductory Notes:**

What determines (causes, creates, conditions, constrains) human behavior in social situations?

Is it nature or nurture? Is it "in our genes"? Or is it the product of the particulars of our lives, our social experiences? Each of us is influenced by the conceptual and material atmosphere created by the worldviews, valuesystems and lifestyles prevailing within the parental subsystems of our families and by the other social groups we belong to.

Why does it matter? In an effort to answer this question, we focus on the colossal human social problem of violence.

By way of context, consider the following statistics:
- the average young American sees 200,000 acts of violence (16,000 murders) on TV by age 18;
- 26% of girls in grades 9-12 report having experienced physical or sexual abuse or date-rape.
- 60% of reported rapes involve children under 18 years old;
- 21% of high-school males took a weapon to school in the last 12 months.

2.6 – 1 **SA: Human Aggression**

In Aronson’s view, how is aggression best defined?

Much aggression is due to frustration? What role does social learning play? Are we living in the midst of an epidemic of "domestic violence?" What chances do we have of reducing violence?
• Distinguish between hostile and instrumental aggression
• Define and evaluate the "catharsis" hypothesis
• Identify possible causes of aggression: neurochemical, biological, hormonal
• What’s wrong with testosterone?
• How do alcohol and other "recreational" drugs influence social propensities toward aggressiveness?
• What about the role of pain and discomfort?
• Of frustration and aggression?
• How influential is social learning? Can education help in reducing violence (strengthening alternative behaviors, learning to adopt different perspectives, building empathy toward others, etc.?)

2.6 – 2 Media Violence

The classic study of the influential effects of TV violence on the aggressive behavior of children, The Effects of Observing Violence by L. Berkowitz, was published in Scientific American in 1964. Since then, numerous authoritative inquiries have confirmed his basic findings and drawn additional attention to the problem. A well-documented recent example is the November 2001 report of the Committee on Public Education of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

2.6 – 3 Your (study group’s) choice of a contemporary tv show with extreme violence

As you prepare to watch the program, try to assume the identity of a human-like alien from the far-off planet Pacifica where people are accustomed to living in relatively violence-free societies. Pretend that you have just arrived on earth on a mission to learn about conditions of human life here and that, based on what you are about to see on tv, you must shortly transmit a preliminary report describing your observations and conclusions thus far relating to the behavior and "human nature" of earthlings and how they think and feel and act and why they behave the way they do. After watching the program, prepare some notes for your report.

But what about the often-heard argument being put forth currently (e.g. by various "sociobiologists" and "evolutionary psychologists") that the root causes of human violence are "in our genes"?

2.6 – 4, 5 Sociobiology – videotape and transcript

is a somewhat garish and extreme version of the argument.

2.6 – 6 From Genesis to Genocide
2.6 – 7 Biology as a Social Weapon

These two texts present a contrasting view.

What are we to believe about the root causes of social violence? What evidence is there that we are genetically pre-programmed to pursue the transgenerational survival of
our "selfish genes?"

From a social policy perspective, what differences does it make how we choose to answer such questions?

And where does the truth lie? By one contemporary formulation, truth is a relationship of correspondence between persons and statements and states of affairs. Thus when the state of affairs described by a particular statement or set of statements demonstrably corresponds to the state of affairs actually observed or observable by persons comparably situated in the pertinent context, we may say of the relevant statement that it is true.

It is easily confirmed by direct observation that human mental life is systematically related to behavior. Distinctions need to be made between (1) questions about the truth/falsity (correspondence/noncorrespondence) of propositions pertaining to persons, situations, states-of-affairs, etc., and (2) questions about our beliefs and values (right or wrong) being principal determinants of our actions.

Alas, we sometimes assert what we do not know and sometimes do not know what we assert. In any case, what we think and feel and say has consequences (exerts social influences).

For example, suppose we see people all around us behaving in greedy, aggressive, competitive, violent and self-seeking ways. Some would say that "it only goes to show" that we are greedy, aggressive, competitive, violent and self seeking "by nature." The latter is, of course, just one example of a more general "human nature" type of argument. (Recall "Aronson's first law").

What is "human nature"? In the course of living and learning, each of us develops our own "theory of human nature" – our own way of thinking about "what people are basically like", independent of the particulars of their lives and experiences. What is your "theory of human nature"? (Describe your view of what "people are really like" and why.)

What is usually meant by the phrase "you can’t change human nature?"

If the true nature of "human nature" is inferable from human behavior, and is inherently fixed and unchangeable, what conclusions follow about (e.g.) the prospects for reducing the deleterious social effects of so much greedy, aggressive, competitive, violent and self-seeking behavior?

What is "biological determinism?" Consider this week’s readings and videos: can you find in them a clear example of the use of a biological determinist ("that’s human nature") argument as a "social excuse"?

What are "self-fulfilling prophesies?" How do they work in the case of biological determinist arguments? Give some examples.
phase 2  COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

unit 2.7  
April 14  
Theme:  Overcoming Prejudice and Discrimination  
"You’ve Got to be Taught":  
Acquiring and Acting on Stereotypes

FACILITATION:  Study Group #1

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

READ by yourself  then  DISCUSS in your study group:

2.7 – 1  Aronson, SA: Chapter 7: Prejudice (pp. 240-287)

VIEW by yourself or with others  then  DISCUSS in your study group:

2.7 – 2  PBS "Frontline", A Class Divided  
(videotape – viewing time 54 mins.)

THINK OVER by yourself  then  DISCUSS in your study group:

Introductory Notes:

We have already encountered "The Tragedy of the Commons." Here we consider the social-psychological construction of prejudice and discrimination, and attempt to evaluate the role of fear, scarcity; socioeconomic inequality in promoting or combatting prejudice.

Picture yourself living and working (going to school) in a social context in which meaningful and powerful exchanges between and among human individuals and groups are marked by more or less pervasive and constant competition for scarce (finitely limited) human/ecological resources. What would you expect to be the situation with regard to the prevalence of inter-group prejudice and discrimination?

The old misgiving is that people, left to themselves, are prone to create conflict and chaos. By this way of thinking, unless there is a "ruler", or "rulers" of some kind to control and check them, people will revert into asocial behavior and violence. This view denies the possibility of individual responsibility as an inherent human trait, and it is essentially congruent with doctrines of Social Darwinism that have roots in ancient religious arguments that deny the possibility of free will.
More than a millennium ago, a monk named Pelagius pointed out how readily such doctrines can be used to justify and reinforce the predatory and licentious behavior of people.

A hundred years ago, Peter Kropotkin, argued that humans are naturally endowed with an inclination to mutual help and care, and emphasized the importance of solidarity, considerateness and cooperation in evolution. Mutuality and community best epitomize the eco-systemic interrelatedness and interdependency of the individual and his or her social and natural environment. Kropotkin demonstrated that authoritarian regulation results in reproduction of irresponsibility and asocial behavior, rather than promotion of individual responsibility. This argument has been repeatedly asserted, and, obviously, repeatedly forgotten (or suppressed). For us, however, the main theme remains that of "social possibility" rather than "biological determinism."

The formation of prejudice – like that of conformity, etc. – is best understood in terms of other issues and crises that normally arise during various phases or stages of organization/development in groups: (Cf. issues related to "Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing" – in handout Working Groups).

"Is there a "prejudiced personality"? Some experimental social psychologists have identified "the authoritarian personality" with persons who presumably are neurobiologically, psychologically and socioculturally inclined (e.g. mentally and behaviorally) to exhibit net positive tendencies toward conformity in hierarchically organized human social systems. One implication is that people can become socialized to accept without question the legitimacy of authoritarian relations between (for example) leaderships and memberships. We have already encountered instances of this in conformity to group norms (The Wave; Obedience to Authority/Milgram).

We have also noted that changing circumstances can result in changing attitudes: (e.g. segregated and integrated housing; the prejudice-reducing effects of meaningful equal-status contact across racial/ethnic/religious and other lines; jigsaw classroom) etc.)

A great deal of evidence suggest that powerful direct and vicarious effects can result from formally legislated or mandated social rearrangements. Yet the lineaments of prejudice remain. Why?

2.7 – 2 video A Class Divided

This video deals with what began in 1968 as an Iowa elementary school teacher’s idea for a classroom "experiment" intended to teach her all-white and relatively socioeconomically non-differentiated students a lesson about prejudice, using a seemingly trivial aspect of human diversity (eye color) as a basis for distinguishing between two groups. Some highly instructive extensions of the work into other institutional contexts are also described.
Questions To Consider:

- What is "prejudice?"
- What are "stereotypes?"
- Is there a "prejudiced" personality?
- Can prejudice be overcome?
- Prejudice and group stereotypes
- How does being the object of prejudice affect self-esteem?
- How do self-esteem relate to cognitive competency?
- How comparable in their social effects are racial and gender stereotypes?
- How are stereotypes related to "victim blaming"
- Prejudice and science (biased tests of intelligence, achievement, aptitudes etc.
- Subtle and not so subtle / hostile and benevolent prejudice
- What is meant by the idea that prejudice is a nonconscious aspect of ideology?
- What are some common social and psychological effects of stereotypes?
- Consider the role of media vis-a-vis representations of perpetrators and victims of prejudice.
- Relate what you have learned about relations between covert mental attitudes (cognitive and affective) and overt behavioral expressions to activities aimed at promoting and combating racism, sexism, ageism, etc.

phase 2  COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

unit 2.8
April 21
Theme: Dealing Constructively with Differences:
Unity and Diversity

FACILITATION: Study Group #2

PREPARATION OVERVIEW:

READ by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

2.8 – 1 Aronson, SA: Chapter 8: Liking, Loving, and Interpersonal Sensitivity (pp 288-327)

REREAD

2.8 – 2 E. Aronson and D. Bridgeman (1979) Jigsaw Groups and the Desegregated Classroom: In Pursuit of Common Goals (1.2 - 8)
THINK OVER by yourself then DISCUSS in your study group:

Questions To Consider:

Relate the foregoing to your experience with the 9.70 "collaborative learning system".

- What causes one person to like or dislike another? (Esp. the relevance of attitudes, default assumptions and contexts). What is the relevance to enhancement/diminution of meaningful and effective communication and collaboration among peers in task-oriented groups.
- What is the reward theory of attraction?
- How are we influenced by praise and criticism? by flattery;? by doing and asking or being asked for favors?
- How are we influenced by socioculturally defined "personal attributes" – e.g. competence, beauty, attractiveness (and their opposites).
- How are we influenced by the effect of perceived similarities and differences?
- How are our likes and dislikes of others influenced by the opinions of our peers?

What role does the differential attractiveness of children play in influencing parental and teacher attributions and treatments? Imagine being a teacher-in-training. A supervisor or colleague asks you to read a report giving you some details of a more or less serious instance of misbehavior on his or her part. Attached to the report is a photo of the alleged perpetrator (a 5-6 year-old child) and you are being asked, in effect, "what is to be done with this child?" You look at the photo and cannot help noticing at once that the child depicted appears to be (1) "very attractive" or (2) "extremely unattractive." Might there be a difference in your recommendation either way? Explain.

- What do "adolescents" value? ("young adults"; "mature persons"; "old folks"?
- What is "distance regulation" in social life (home-life and work-life)?
- How do similarities/differences in attitudes between members of "dating" couples relate to their "distance regulation" processes?
- Compare and contrast influences of power and intimacy in social relations.
- What is "love"? Compare/contrast platonic (companionate) and erotic (passionate) love.
- What do we find "attractive" in encounters with potential "significant others"?
- Consider relations between self-esteem (on the one hand) and liking and being liked (on the other).

Compare and contrast influences conducive to and militating against the following:

- interpersonal intimacy and disconnection; to increased and decreased self-awareness,
- an increased/decreased sense of inclusion/alienation.

What is the gain/loss theory (of attraction)?

What is meant by the imperative of communal life?"
"Us" and "them" – what’s love got to do with it?

Compare and contrast "prosocial" and "antisocial" ("asocial") acts (Who gets to do the defining?):

- love and intimacy
- influencing and being influenced by "intimacy" by "meaning" and by "power"
- compare and contrast the influence of lovers and friends and family members; by peers; by strangers; by superiors and by subordinates;
- gain/loss theory of attractiveness; influence of other aspects of self esteem on closeness and distance regulation in intimate relationships
- intimacy, authenticity and the comprehensibility, coherence, and clarity of communication
- means, ends, and distance regulation processes
- miscommunication and straight talk

Group Process Issues:

For effective communication it is important to have clear, concise, constructive and timely feedback.

phase 3 FINAL PROJECTS

unit 3.1
April 28
Tasks/Issues: Identifying and Organizing End-of-term Projects; Refining Evaluation Criteria
FACILITATION: TBA

phase 3 FINAL PROJECTS

unit 3.2
May 5
Tasks/Issues: Working on Projects; Production and Distribution of Evaluation Forms
FACILITATION: TBA
phase 3  FINAL PROJECTS

unit 3.3

May 12

Tasks / Issues:

- Presenting Final Projects (juried?)
- Completing Evaluations and Final Grading
- Collaborative Learning System Lifecycle CLOSURE

FACILITATION: TBA