20 Constructing Social Reality

1 01:29:33:25 >> You brown-eyed people are not to play with the blue-eyed people on the playground because you are not...

2 01:29:39:13 >> ZIMBARDO: Why did these schoolchildren turn against their classmates because of the color of their eyes?

3 01:29:44:09 >> What happened, John?

4 01:29:45:25 >> Russell called me names, and I hit him -- hit him in the gut.

5 01:29:53:23 >> ZIMBARDO: How does Madison Avenue get us to say, "Yes, I'll buy it"?

6 01:29:58:22 "Constructing Social Reality," this time on Discovering Psychology.

7 01:30:33:17 (Wagner's "Wedding March" playing) >> ZIMBARDO: Cult organizations, such as the Unification Church, change reality to suit the situation.

8 01:30:47:24 And cult behavior results from the power a situation has over an individual's thoughts and actions.

9 01:30:56:02 No one knows this better than former Moon cult member, Steven Hassan.

10 01:31:00:20 Hassan is now a nationally-recognized cult counselor and expert on the altered realities destructive cults create to imprison their members.

11 01:31:10:09 >> The average public person looks at cult members and says, "Ah, there's something wrong with them."

12 01:31:15:28 They're stupid, they come from a bad family, they're weak, they're looking for something."

13 01:31:21:15 And it's mexperience that most of the people are very intelligent, educated, idealistic, ambitious, and they're just caught at a vulnerable moment in their life.

14 01:31:34:11 >> ZIMBARDO: Cults are not just religious.
According to Hassan, whole countries can employ destructive cult-like behavior.

Cults come in a variety of shapes and sizes and forms.

And essentially people are not allowed to be themselves in a mind-control group.

They're cloned in the image of the leader.

Their own individual interests, talents, and abilities are minimized.

And people are taught to think the right way, feel the right way, act the right way, dress the right way, and its effects undermine a person's ability to act independently.

ZIMBARDO: Cults employ several tactics to recruit and keep members: suggestive questioning, hypnosis, even sleep deprivation are used to make the person vulnerable, isolated, and eventually receptive to their message.

If you ask me a question, I can probably give you an answer.

Have you read *Dianetics* yet?

Yes, I have.

Oh, you've read the book.

Yes.

Okay.

Hey, you have no right to film in here, okay?

ZIMBARDO: One of the methods is thought-stopping.

Thought-stopping is a behavior-modification technique in which you're taught to shut down any critical thought.

Used by destructive cults, as in the case of the Moonies, the group that I was involved with, I was told that any negative thought about Moon -- the doctrine or the group -- was Satan trying to invade my mind.

So as a good Moonie, I would start chanting or pray whenever a doubt came into my consciousness.
So I would say, "Crush Satan, Crush Satan."

Glory to heaven, peace on earth.

Glory to heaven, peace on earth."

But by doing this technique, essentially I was shutting down any possibility for reality testing and independent thought.

Essentially human beings adapt.

We are very social beings.

And if you control the environment long enough for the person, you can cave them in; you can cave in their ability to think critically.

>> ZIMBARDO: Last time, we learned about the power of the situation in controlling social behavior.

But now it's time to add a second lesson of social psychology: that the situation matters not only in terms of its objective reality, but also in terms of the way it's perceived, understood, and interpreted by the people inside it.

It's this subjective view of reality that forms a foundation for much social behavior.

Psychologists refer to this ability to create subjective realities as the power of cognitive control: the power of people's beliefs to give different meanings to the situations in which they find themselves.

These beliefs can exert a guiding force over social behavior, at times overriding the objective facts of the situation.

So whenever you want to understand some unusual or unexpected social behavior of other people, ask yourself first, what their situation is, and second, whether their perception of that situation might be different from yours.

In fact, it's remarkable how small a difference among people can trigger prejudice and how hard it is to stop prejudice once it takes hold.

>> How do you think black people got here?

>> ZIMBARDO: In no time at all, we can create a totally new
construction of reality to define those we dislike and fear because they are different.

49 01:35:05:21 A provocative demonstration of the nature of prejudice took place not in a psychologist's laboratory, but at a school in Riceville, Iowa.

50 01:35:14:23 >> Would you like to try this?

51 01:35:15:23 >> Yeah!

52 01:35:17:12 >> Sounds like fun, doesn't it.

53 01:35:18:13 >> No.

54 01:35:20:09 >> ZIMBARDO: After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, Jane Elliot, a third-grade teacher, decided to teach her class just what it means to experience arbitrary discrimination.

55 01:35:34:10 Elliot divided her class into two groups: the inferior brown-eyed people and the superior blue-eyed people.

56 01:35:40:24 >> I mean the blue-eyed people are the better people in this room.

57 01:35:46:08 >> Uh-uh.

58 01:35:47:14 >> Oh, yes, they are.

59 01:35:49:29 Blue-eyed people are smarter than brown-eyed people.

60 01:35:54:26 >> My dad isn't, but I have...

61 01:35:56:24 >> Is your dad brown-eyed?

62 01:35:58:17 >> Yeah.

63 01:35:59:11 >> One day, you came to school and you told us that he kicked you.

64 01:36:03:02 >> He did.

65 01:36:04:01 >> Do you think a blue-eyed father would kick his son?

66 01:36:08:04 >> My daddy would.

67 01:36:10:12 >> My dad's blue-eyed, he's never kicked me.
Greg's dad is blue-eyed, he's never kicked him.

John's dad is blue-eyed, he's never kicked him.

What color eyes did George Washington have?

Blue.

Blue, blue.

This is a fact.

Blue-eyed people are better than brown-eyed people.

You brown-eyed people are not to play with the blue-eyed people on the playground because you are not as good as blue-eyed people.

The brown-eyed people in this room today are going to wear collars so that we can tell from a distance what color your eyes are.

So the blue-eyed people each come up and get a collar.

You can choose someone to put this collar on.

It seemed like when we were down on the bottom, everything bad was happening to us.

The way they treated you, you felt like you didn't even want to try to do anything.

It seemed like Mrs. Elliot was taking our best friends away from us.

What happened at recess?

Were two of you boys fighting?

Yeah.

Russell and John were.

What happened, John?

Russell called me names and I hit him.

I hit him in the gut.
What did he call you?
>> Brown eyes.

Did you call him brown eyes?
>> They always call us that.

Yeah, all the blue eyes call us that.
>> He said, "Come here, brown eyes."

Then they were calling us blue eyes.
>> I wasn’t.

Sandy and Donna were, yeah.

What's wrong with being called brown eyes?
>> It means that we're stupider.

Well, not that but...

Oh, that's just the same way that other people call black people niggers.

Is that the reason you hit him, John?

Did it help?

Did it stop him?

Did it make you feel better inside?

Did it make you feel better inside?

I watched what had been marvelous, cooperative, wonderful, thoughtful children turn into nasty, vicious, discriminating little third-graders in the space of 15 minutes.

I think I learned more from the superior children than I did...

from the children who were considered superior than I did from the children who were considered inferior, because their personalities changed even more than the others did.

Oh, I made it!
And this is my husband.

>> ZIMBARDO: 15 years later, a reunion brought together the former members of Mrs. Elliot's class.

>> How are you?

>> Oh, I'm just fine.

All right, now... Raymond, why?

I want to know why you were so eager to discriminate against the rest of these kids.

At the end of the day, I thought, "The miserable little Nazi."

(laughter) Really, I just... I couldn't stand you.

>> It felt tremendously evil.

You could... all your inhibitions were gone.

And no matter if they were my friends or not, any pent-up hostilities or aggressions that these kids had ever caused you, you had a chance to get it all out.

I felt like I was a king, like I ruled them brown eyes.

Like I was better than them, happy.

>> Boy, that day, after we went home, whoo!

Talk about hating somebody, it was there.

>> You hated me?

>> Yes, what you were putting us through.

Nobody likes to be looked down upon.

Nobody likes to be hated, teased, or discriminated against.

And it just bottles up inside of you.

You just get so mad.

>> ZIMBARDO: In this classroom demonstration, Jane Elliot and her students revealed just how easy it is to alter objective reality and substitute an arbitrary alternative
conception of the world.

133 01:40:41:17 No matter how superficial the differences between people may be, once those differences become indicators of superiority versus inferiority, of acceptance versus rejection, of worthiness versus worthlessness, they become institutionalized.

134 01:40:58:18 Rules are made, norms are created, and expectations are formed about how people of different status ought to behave.

135 01:41:07:24 Fortunately, however, positive expectations can change a person's perception of a situation just as dramatically as negative expectations.

136 01:41:18:12 Psychologists call this the Pygmalion Effect after the George Bernard Shaw play of the same name, in which even an uneducated ragamuffin can be transformed into a proper society lady.

137 01:41:32:11 In an experiment conducted at an elementary school like this one, psychologist Robert Rosenthal and school principal Lenore Jacobson took the Pygmalion Effect one step further.

138 01:41:44:17 >> What we wanted to show was the extent to which teachers' expectations could actually affect pupils' intellectual performance -- for example, their IQ scores.

139 01:41:54:20 So what we did was we tested everybody in the school with a test that pretended to be a test that would predict academic blooming, the so-called Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition.

140 01:42:06:09 And allegedly, on the basis of that test -- but not really -- we gave each of the teachers in the school the names of a handful of children in her classroom that would get smart in the academic year ahead.

141 01:42:20:00 These kids' names were taken out of a hat; we chose them by means of a table of random numbers.

142 01:42:26:18 The children themselves did not know in any direct way that teachers were holding certain expectations for them.

143 01:42:34:16 Teachers were told not to tell the kids.

144 01:42:36:23 And, of course, we didn't tell the children either, so the children never knew.
Six times something that's close to 32.

>> Five?

>> Good, six times five.

>> And then when we tested the children a year later, we found that those kids who'd been alleged to their teachers to be showing, or going to show, intellectual gain in fact showed greater intellectual gains than did the children of whom we'd said nothing in particular.

So the kids actually got smarter when they were expected to get smarter by their teachers.

We've come to feel that there are really four factors that operate in the mediation or communication of these self-fulfilling prophecies, especially in the classroom but not only in the classroom.

So what are these four things that teachers tend to do differently to kids for whom they have more favorable expectations?

The first factor is the climate factor.

Teachers tend to create a warmer climate for those children for whom they have more favorable expectations.

They're just nicer to them both in terms of the things they say and also in the nonverbal channels of communication.

The other very important factor is the so-called input factor.

That one probably won't surprise anyone.

Teachers teach more material to those kids for whom they have more favorable expectations.

After all, if you think a kid is dumb and can't learn, you're not going to put yourself out to try to teach him very much.

Two other factors, though, make a difference.

One is the response-opportunity factor.

That is, kids get more of a chance to respond if the teachers expect more of them.
They call on them more often.

When they do call on them, they let them talk longer.

And they help and shape with them the answers that the kids speak out, kind of working together to put the response out.

The last is feedback.

The feedback factor works in this way.

As you might expect, if more is expected of a kid, the kid is praised more, positively reinforced more for getting a good answer out; but interestingly enough, is given more differentiated feedback when they get the wrong answer.

One of the ways in which you can sometimes tell a little bit that the teacher does not have very high expectations for a kid is that the teacher is willing to accept a low-quality response or won't really clarify what would have been a good-quality response.

Maybe because he or she feels, "Well, what's the use?

The kid's not smart enough to profit from this additional clarification."

So those are the four factors: climate, input, response-opportunity, and feedback.

>> ZIMBARDO: In Jane Elliot's demonstration in Iowa, the children who were supposed to be inferior performed poorly because of the negative expectations of the teacher and the tensions created by prejudice.

While in Rosenthal and Jacobson's experiment, the children who were supposed to be superior got the support they needed to excel.

In both cases, the subjective reality became self-fulfilling, overriding the objective facts of the situation.

No matter how it happens, information about how good or bad we are and the ways in which we are treated can change the way we see ourselves and the way we behave.

Elliot Aronson of the University of California at Santa Cruz, teamed up with Alex Gonzalez of Fresno State to see if they
could change the way students saw themselves and their classmates.

>> The next problem is eight times 26.

>> ZIMBARDO: Instead of acting as competitors vying against each other for the teacher's attention -- some winning, but most losing -- students can be taught to see themselves as part of a learning team.

>> Ben?

>> 201?

>> ZIMBARDO: Cooperation, not competition, is the foundation of what Aronson calls the Jigsaw Classroom.

>> Basically, what we wanted to do was set up a structure where instead of competing with each other, kids would be cooperating with each other.

Kids would be interdependent.

Kids would be needing each other in order to do well.

>> Make sure that you understand the part that you're going to have to give in your jigsaw group.

Everyone is ready?

>> Yes.

>> Please go to your expert groups.

>> ZIMBARDO: Using the Jigsaw Method during a lesson on Native Americans, the teacher divides the class into several groups known as expert groups.

>> Each expert group was given one portion of the day's lesson.

So, for example, one expert group dealt with shamans or medicine men, another with the religion of the Indians, another with the chiefs of the tribe.

And each one of the expert groups studied that one particular aspect of the lesson.

>> There was one person in each tribe who was even more
important than the chief.

194 01:47:44:02 He was the shaman.

195 01:47:45:08 >> The students learned their individual part, which is similar to everyone else's in the group.

196 01:47:50:19 They learn it.

197 01:47:51:26 They rehearse it.

198 01:47:53:19 They know it to the point where they can teach it to other kids.

199 01:47:56:22 >> Everybody brought gifts, and they threw them into the fire.

200 01:47:59:06 They danced around the fire louder and louder and faster and faster till all the gifts had been burned.

201 01:48:05:23 >> Now that our expert groups have finished studying the information, we're going to break up into our jigsaw groups.

202 01:48:09:26 Break into your jigsaw groups.

203 01:48:12:15 >> In the jigsaw group, what you have is a coming together of the students from the different expert groups that present their own material to the group as a whole.

204 01:48:23:20 No one individual in the jigsaw group can learn the entire lesson without depending on the other members of the group.

205 01:48:30:18 In the process, what happens is each one of the students teaches the other members of the group his or her part.

206 01:48:38:11 And in the end, they learn the entire lesson in that manner.

207 01:48:42:25 >> Indians did dances for special occasions -- when a child was born, after a wedding.

208 01:48:50:23 >> Kids who were scared, inarticulate, and looked as if they were stupid were now behaving in an intelligent, clear, articulate way.

209 01:49:01:06 As they developed more self- respect, they began to perform better and better.

210 01:49:05:28 As they performed better and better, the other kids began to
treat them with still more respect and their performance improved still more.

>> ZIMBARDO: By focusing on these three experiments in the classroom, we've shown how the situation matters not only because of its objective characteristics, but also because of the ways it's perceived and interpreted by the people in it.

It's this subjective view of reality that provides the basis of much social behavior.

And nowhere is subjective reality more skillfully manipulated than on television.

>> § With love that shines as time goes by. § Remember it just the way it was on Kodacolor VR films.

The sharpest, brightest, most dazzling line of color-print films Kodak has ever made.

>> § Aren't you hungry for Burger King now? § >> § We make excitement. § >> § To feel the way that you do § It's all right... § >> ZIMBARDO: There are many more professionals using strategies of influence than there are psychologists studying them.

Their goal is very simple.

They want us to say, "Yes.

Yes, I want it.

Yes, I need it.

Yes, I want to be the right kind of person.

Yes, I'll buy it."

>> This is the place, Jordan Marsh.

>> ZIMBARDO: Psychologist Robert Cialdini of Arizona State University spent three years examining the universal principles and tactics of these influence professionals from the inside as a sales trainee, fund-raiser, and advertising copywriter.

>> One of the universal principles I found is the principle of
reciprocation, which suggests that we are obligated to give back to others the form of behavior that they have given to us.

So if someone does us a favor, we're significantly more likely to say yes when they ask for a favor in return.

That's why the Hare Krishna -- for example -- society in the airport will come up to you and give you something before they ask for a donation.

It can be a flower or a book, whatever.

>> And this bottle will be produced only two or three times a decade.

>> A second principle that we can talk about is the principle of scarcity.

The idea that things that are rare, that are scarce, that are diminishing in their availability to us are more attractive.

We want them more.

As a consequence, many merchandisers will use strategies in which they'll give us time deadlines or availability limits on a product they want to sell.

And because we can't have it after a certain time, we want it more, and we go out and buy it.

Another principle we can talk about is the principle of authority.

This is the idea that we're much more willing to follow the lead of someone who is a legitimately-constituted expert or an authority.

>> It's reinforced for me.

>> And me.

>> Hey, maybe it was made for both of us.

>> Must be magic.

>> Now that's who this shoe was made for.

( laughter ) >> Another principle we can talk about is the...
principle of commitment.

01:52:12:13 The idea that once we've made a stand, once we've taken a position on an issue, we're much more willing to say yes to any request that is consistent with that commitment.

01:52:24:10 So very often, individuals will try to get us to make a small commitment that is consistent with the direction they want us to go.

01:52:32:24 For example, a study was done in Toronto that showed if you can get people to agree to wear a little lapel pin that says "Support your United Way," two weeks later they will be twice as likely to give a donation to the United Way when the solicitors come and canvass the neighborhood.

01:52:52:01 Another principle we can talk about is the principle of liking.

01:52:55:12 People are much more willing to say yes to a request to someone they know and like.

01:53:00:13 Of course, the classic example of this is the Tupperware party, where they have arranged so that we are saying yes not to a stranger across a counter; we're saying yes to a friend or a relative who's invited us there and we know will be getting a cut of everything we buy.

01:53:20:19 >> And I'd really like to thank you all for coming.

01:53:22:08 You've really made a special evening for me.

01:53:24:02 >> A final principle we can talk about is the principle of consensus.

01:53:28:22 The idea that we're much more willing to say yes to a request if we have information that a lot of people around us are saying yes to that request.

01:53:39:25 So people can give us evidence: this is the largest-selling, the fastest-growing product.

01:53:47:04 And we're much more willing to say, "Yes, this is something for me," because everybody around us is doing so.

01:53:53:08 >> The brown-eyed people in this room today are going to wear collars.

01:53:55:25 >> ZIMBARDO: A great deal of research like Robert
Cialdini's has been undertaken to see just how easy it is for us to behave in conforming, prejudiced, or competitive ways.

By understanding more about the psychological processes by which these effects can be produced, social psychologists also hope to develop new strategies that may help us become more independent, more tolerant, and more cooperative.

In our next program, we'll explore what happens when someone's view of reality differs totally from that of everyone else; when cognitive controls weaken and psychotic hallucinations take over; when the joy of living gives way to deep fears and dark depression, and psychiatrists and clinical psychologists are called into action.

Until next time, I'm Philip Zimbardo.

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