Lecture 5 – Interaction

All information, assignments, articles and hand-outs will be posted to course website. Visit it regularly!

http://www.lucs.lu.se/education/extf76/

Group identity and competition

The Robber’s Cave experiment shows how competition between groups can be driven by resource needs. It also shows that group antagonism does not simply disappear when the resource conflict is removed. The researchers had to introduce a new common threat to unite the boys.

Deindividuation and the Prison Experiment

The Stanford Prison Experiment highlights how strangely people can behave given a group setting. In particular the following have been considered to play a role for the outcome of the experiment:

➔ Situational factors
  o Participants in the experiment were all drawn from the same population. Personality characteristics controlled for and randomly assigned to the prison/guard conditions.
  o Still, presence of driving individuals among the guards – “John Wayne” – might suggest that the power of the situation has been over interpreted in the past.

➔ Rituals
  o Rituals are highly stylised, repeated interactions which activate schemas and stereotypes.
  o Undergoing rituals helps us assume identities and can highlight what norms we are operating under.

➔ Deindividuation
  o The process of losing one’s individuality. This was the central lesson and ‘take-home’ message from the experiment.
  o Anonymity, size of group and reductions in self-awareness are all factors increasing the probability of deindividuated states in individuals.
  o Zimbardo theorised that deindividuation leads to more norm-violating behaviour.
  o Other experiments show that deindivuation likely heightens an individual’s sensitivity to group norms – hence the context matters for what behaviour one assumes. Example: nurse-context versus KKK-context.

Herding & Crowds

Herding occurs when individuals align their beliefs and behaviour to that of a group. It can usually be characterised as following public information rather than private information.

➔ Emotional contagion is one mechanism for herding, and occurs through the transmission of emotions and moods between people. This can affect not only moods and affective states by also group performance and perceived quality of interaction.
➔ Herding occurs in many settings such as between operators in financial markets.
Social decision making

Aggregating opinions can provide individuals with better foundations for their decisions than their own estimates. (Galton and the oxes). Polling even a small number of opinions can improve one’s estimates. This requires that the persons asked have relevant knowledge about the domain (asking people at county fair about oxes is probably a good idea, asking random people in a modern city centre is likely less).

- Perceived expertise, confidence, past performance and quality of arguments determine if and when we look to others when making decisions.
- Asking for advice can be perilous because of the social rules of advice asking. This can be thought of as forming a small, temporary group dedicated towards solving a problem. This can make disregarding (bad) advice difficult. Studies show that people will follow advice from known novices. Advice seeking can be used to diffuse responsibility about a choice.

References


