

Personality

What makes us who we are?

Psych 305A: Lecture 19

Cognitive Approach

Toward the Acceptance of Mental States: The Cognitive Perspective

- After Skinner, focus shifted from the behavioral output of reward (dog sitting) to what goes on *between* the environmental trigger (bell) and reward (steak)
- Social Learning
 1. Observe behaviors of others being rewarded
 2. Use your MIND to connect the two
 3. Decide to behave similarly

Social Learning Perspective

- Observational learning (modeling)
 - Acquire a behavior by watching someone else do it and observing the consequences
- Bandura's "bobo" doll studies
 - 1. Children observed an adult model attack "Bobo", play quietly, or saw no model
 - 2. Children frustrated (toys taken away)
 - 3. Children given opportunity to attack "Bobo"
 - Those who watched model attack were more likely to attack
 - Those who saw no model were more aggressive than those who saw a non-aggressive model

Social Learning Perspective

- Extension of basic conditioning principles
 - Observational learning (modeling)
 - Observed (vs. experienced) consequences
 - Expectancies / Incentives (vs. deterrents)
 - Anticipated (vs. experienced) consequences
- Examples
 - Altruism in young children
 - Video games and violence
 - Shaming prison sentences

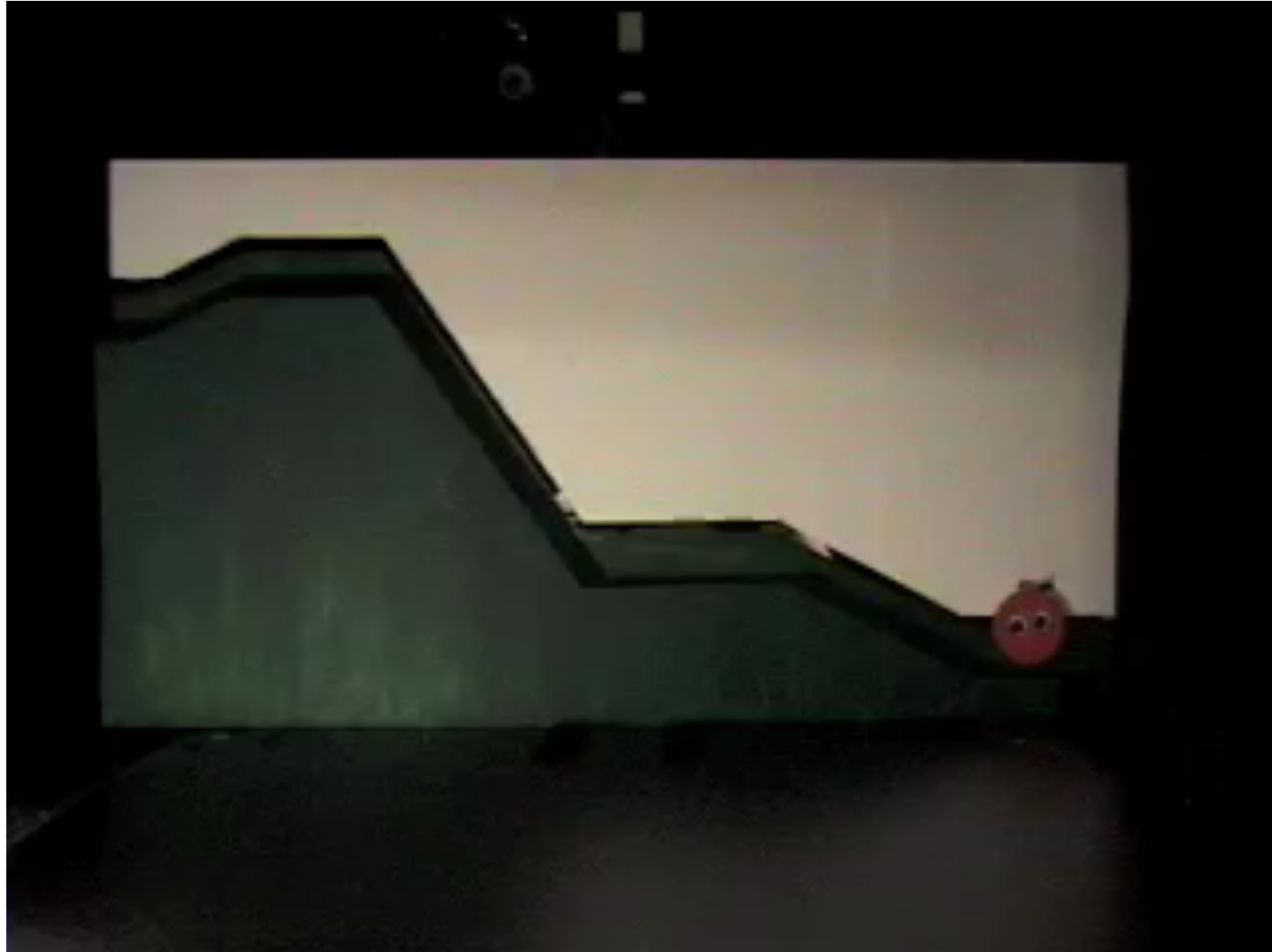
“Roots of altruism seen in babies:
Toddlers eager to help out, even with
no prospect of reward”
-MSNBC

Is altruism innate, or learned?

- Evidence for early emergence of pro-social behavior
- Cross-species evidence
 - Warneken & Tomasello, 2006, *Science*

Is altruism innate?

- Did the toddlers and chimps expect reward?
- Is this evidence for innate altruism?
- Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom (*Nature*, 2007)
 - At 3 months, babies prefer helpers to hinderers
 - Learn about social helping very early on?







Roots of altruism?

- **Innate morality or...**
 - **Direct reinforcement**
 - **Play**
 - **Past reinforcement for similar behaviors**
 - **Observational learning (parent)**
 - **Vicarious reinforcement (older sibling)**
 - **No direct reward, but incentives and expectancies**
 - **Anticipated consequences**

Violent Media

- Exposure to violent TV and video games:
 - Increases aggressive behavior, thoughts, and feelings
 - Increases physiological arousal
 - Decreases pro-social behaviors (e.g., helping)

Violent Media

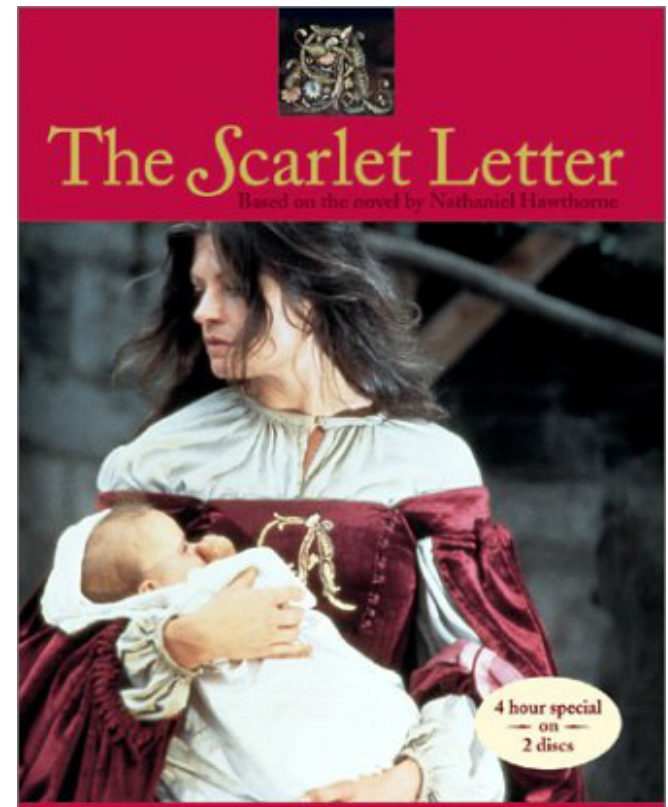
- Why does violent media increase aggression?
 - Classical Conditioning
 - Video games are fun to play, pleasurable feelings associated with violence
 - Operant conditioning
 - Video game player is directly rewarded for being violent (e.g., accumulate points)
 - Observational learning
 - “Role models” (e.g., movie stars) rewarded for violence

Media Violence

- Which films lead to violence?
 - Gratuitous, realistic violence (Van Damme, Steven Seagal, Jet Li)
 - Old Westerns don't
 - Minimally violent
 - Horror films don't
 - Violence seems fake, observers can discount it

Shaming Prison Sentences

- Date back to the Old Testament
- Common in 17th century Puritanical society (e.g., the scarlet “A”)
- Revival of shame punishments started in the late 1980s



Shaming Prison Sentences

- Men convicted of soliciting prostitutes are identified in newspapers, radio shows, and billboards
- A man living in Houston was sentenced to stand in front of a store each day for a week carrying a sign that reads: “I stole from this store. Don’t be a thief or this could happen to you.”
- An Ohio judge ordered a man convicted of harassing his ex-wife to let her spit in his face
- In Memphis, Tennessee Judge Joe Brown likes to escort burglary victims to the thieves’ homes and invite them to take whatever they want
- Do you think these sentences deter crime?

Shaming Prison Sentences

- Shaming sentences may deter crime through:
 - Observational learning: observe someone else punished for antisocial act
 - Expectancies of punishment: imagine self on billboard
- “If humiliation is a punishment for a crime then people will avoid committing crimes. You get deterrence because others see what happens. Why don’t we give shame a chance.”
Judge Williams
- “If you shock ‘em, maybe they’ll say, ‘Hey, it’s not worth the risk.’ This forces you to face up to what you did.” Judge Poe

Shaming Prison Sentences

- But, shaming sentences actually may backfire and cause more crime
 - Shaming offenders will only make them feel bad about themselves, which may increase the likelihood that they will commit further crimes
 - -Prof. June Tangney
 - “The goal should be to rehabilitate offenders into society, not embarrass them. Added humiliation may accentuate the very root of their behavior.”
 - American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

The problem with shame

- Motivates escape, hiding, avoidance
- Leads to blaming others, aggression
- More adaptive to feel **guilt** in response to failure
 - Guilt promotes reparation, apology, confession
 - In guilt the focus is on what you **did**, not who you **are**

What about Public Shaming?

- Internet ‘walls of shame’
 - Pet mistreatment
 - Vancouver Stanley Cup riots
- Is shaming more effective when the shamers are part of your community, or your peers?
- Public Goods Dilemma Study
 - Threat of shame increases cooperation

Early Cognitive Perspective

- More complex version of social learning theory
- Led to two fundamental shifts in how we think about personality
 - Our personality reflects how we process information about ourselves, others, and the world
 - How we process information reflects our mental representations of ourselves, other people, and the world
- Mental representations work as filters or lens through which we experience reality
 - Personal constructs, schemas, scripts

Personal Construct Theory

George Kelly



- Overarching perceptions shape interpretation of reality → personality
- If your cognitive take on the world determines your personality, you can change who you are by changing the way you see the world
- Post-Modern before post-modernism

George Kelly and Personality Change

- “We take the stand that there are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world. No one needs to paint himself into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be the victim of his biography. We call this philosophical position constructive alternativism.”

George Kelly (1955). "A Theory of personality."

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Social Cognition and Personality

Modern Cognitive Perspective: People have different cognitions, which shape personality



Cognitions (beliefs, attitudes, values, self/other schemas) constitute the *information* that guides people's behavior

Next Class

- Wrap up Cognitive Approach
- Begin Emotions & Personality
 - Read Chapter 13