

Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition

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 my experience 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.

- 15 01:31:37:06 According to Hassan, whole countries can employ destructive cult-like behavior.
- 16 01:31:43:03 >> Cults come in a variety of shapes and sizes and forms.
- 17 01:31:47:20 And essentially people are not allowed to be themselves in a mind-control group.
- 18 01:31:53:21 They're cloned in the image of the leader.
- 19 01:31:56:19 Their own individual interests, talents, and abilities are minimized.
- 20 01:32:03:28 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.
- 21 01:32:18:10 >> 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.
- 22 01:32:31:29 >> If you ask me a question, I can probably give you an answer.
- 23 01:32:33:21 >> Have you read *Dianetics* yet?
- 24 01:32:34:29 >> Yes, I have.
- 25 01:32:36:01 >> Oh, you've read the book.
- 26 01:32:36:27 >> Yes.
- 27 01:32:37:17 >> Okay.
- 28 01:32:38:08 >> Hey, you have no right to film in here, okay?
- 29 01:32:40:01 >> ZIMBARDO: One of the methods is thought-stopping.
- 30 01:32:42:25 >> Thought-stopping is a behavior-modification technique in which you're taught to shut down any critical thought.
- 31 01:32:52:02 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.
- 32 01:33:05:21 So as a good Moonie, I would start chanting or pray whenever a doubt came into my consciousness.

- 33 01:33:13:02 So I would say, "Crush Satan, Crush Satan.
- 34 01:33:15:19 Glory to heaven, peace on earth.
- 35 01:33:16:19 Glory to heaven, peace on earth."
- 36 01:33:18:27 But by doing this technique, essentially I was shutting down any possibility for reality testing and independent thought.
- 37 01:33:28:15 Essentially human beings adapt.
- 38 01:33:31:13 We are very social beings.
- 39 01:33:33:11 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.
- 40 01:33:45:19 >> ZIMBARDO: Last time, we learned about the power of the situation in controlling social behavior.
- 41 01:33:50:10 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.
- 42 01:34:03:21 It's this subjective view of reality that forms a foundation for much social behavior.
- 43 01:34:09:14 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.
- 44 01:34:22:23 These beliefs can exert a guiding force over social behavior, at times overriding the objective facts of the situation.
- 45 01:34:31:11 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.
- 46 01:34:46:04 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.
- 47 01:34:53:22 >> How do you think black people got here?
- 48 01:34:55:27 >> 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.

- 68 01:36:12:11 Greg's dad is blue-eyed, he's never kicked him.
- 69 01:36:15:10 John's dad is blue-eyed, he's never kicked him.
- 70 01:36:19:03 What color eyes did George Washington have?
- 71 01:36:22:23 >> Blue.
- 72 01:36:24:23 >> Blue, blue.
- 73 01:36:30:14 This is a fact.
- 74 01:36:33:02 Blue-eyed people are better than brown-eyed people.
- 75 01:36:38:15 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.
- 76 01:36:46:18 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.
- 77 01:36:54:04 So the blue-eyed people each come up and get a collar.
- 78 01:36:56:28 You can choose someone to put this collar on.
- 79 01:37:00:14 >> It seemed like when we were down on the bottom, everything bad was happening to us.
- 80 01:37:06:02 >> The way they treated you, you felt like you didn't even want to try to do anything.
- 81 01:37:11:24 It seemed like Mrs. Elliot was taking our best friends away from us.
- 82 01:37:23:28 >> What happened at recess?
- 83 01:37:25:02 Were two of you boys fighting?
- 84 01:37:26:17 >> Yeah.
- 85 01:37:27:21 >> Russell and John were.
- 86 01:37:29:24 >> What happened, John?
- 87 01:37:31:07 >> Russell called me names and I hit him.
- 88 01:37:35:22 I hit him in the gut.

- 89 01:37:37:26 >> What did he call you?
- 90 01:37:40:11 >> Brown eyes.
- 91 01:37:43:01 >> Did you call him brown eyes?
- 92 01:37:45:15 >> They always call us that.
- 93 01:37:47:10 >> Yeah, all the blue eyes call us that.
- 94 01:37:52:06 >> He said, "Come here, brown eyes."
- 95 01:37:55:03 >> Then they were calling us blue eyes.
- 96 01:37:57:10 >> I wasn't.
- 97 01:37:58:24 Sandy and Donna were, yeah.
- 98 01:38:02:04 >> What's wrong with being called brown eyes?
- 99 01:38:05:17 >> It means that we're stupider.
- 100 01:38:07:21 Well, not that but...
- 101 01:38:09:16 >> Oh, that's just the same way that other people call black people niggers.
- 102 01:38:16:27 >> Is that the reason you hit him, John?
- 103 01:38:20:02 Did it help?
- 104 01:38:22:08 Did it stop him?
- 105 01:38:25:21 Did it make you feel better inside?
- 106 01:38:30:05 Did it make you feel better inside?
- 107 01:38:33:13 I watched what had been marvelous, cooperative, wonderful, thoughtful children turn into nasty, vicious, discriminating little third- graders in the space of 15 minutes.
- 108 01:38:52:22 I think I learned more from the superior children than I did...
- 109 01:38:56:14 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.
- 110 01:39:05:07 >> Oh, I made it!

- 111 01:39:08:11 And this is my husband.
- 112 01:39:10:08 >> ZIMBARDO: 15 years later, a reunion brought together the former members of Mrs. Elliot's class.
- 113 01:39:16:22 >> How are you?
- 114 01:39:17:17 >> Oh, I'm just fine.
- 115 01:39:20:07 All right, now... Raymond, why?
- 116 01:39:23:10 I want to know why you were so eager to discriminate against the rest of these kids.
- 117 01:39:29:22 At the end of the day, I thought, "The miserable little Nazi."
- 118 01:39:32:25 (*laughter*) Really, I just... I couldn't stand you.
- 119 01:39:37:12 >> It felt tremendously evil.
- 120 01:39:40:25 You could... all your inhibitions were gone.
- 121 01:39:43:29 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.
- 122 01:39:54:06 I felt like I was a king, like I ruled them brown eyes.
- 123 01:40:00:01 Like I was better than them, happy.
- 124 01:40:03:18 >> Boy, that day, after we went home, whoo!
- 125 01:40:06:07 Talk about hating somebody, it was there.
- 126 01:40:10:10 >> You hated me?
- 127 01:40:11:10 >> Yes, what you were putting us through.
- 128 01:40:14:11 Nobody likes to be looked down upon.
- 129 01:40:16:16 Nobody likes to be hated, teased, or discriminated against.
- 130 01:40:21:29 And it just bottles up inside of you.
- 131 01:40:24:22 You just get so mad.
- 132 01:40:28:27 >> 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.

- 145 01:42:43:06 >> Six times something that's close to 32.
- 146 01:42:47:05 >> Five?
- 147 01:42:47:29 >> Good, six times five.
- 148 01:42:49:17 >> 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.
- 149 01:43:06:18 So the kids actually got smarter when they were expected to get smarter by their teachers.
- 150 01:43:13:27 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.
- 151 01:43:25:18 So what are these four things that teachers tend to do differently to kids for whom they have more favorable expectations?
- 152 01:43:32:25 The first factor is the climate factor.
- 153 01:43:35:07 Teachers tend to create a warmer climate for those children for whom they have more favorable expectations.
- 154 01:43:41:24 They're just nicer to them both in terms of the things they say and also in the nonverbal channels of communication.
- 155 01:43:50:04 The other very important factor is the so-called input factor.
- 156 01:43:55:05 That one probably won't surprise anyone.
- 157 01:43:58:09 Teachers teach more material to those kids for whom they have more favorable expectations.
- 158 01:44:03:22 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.
- 159 01:44:09:00 Two other factors, though, make a difference.
- 160 01:44:11:10 One is the response-opportunity factor.
- 161 01:44:13:10 That is, kids get more of a chance to respond if the teachers expect more of them.

- 162 01:44:18:08 They call on them more often.
- 163 01:44:19:23 When they do call on them, they let them talk longer.
- 164 01:44:23:05 And they help and shape with them the answers that the kids speak out, kind of working together to put the response out.
- 165 01:44:36:15 The last is feedback.
- 166 01:44:39:01 The feedback factor works in this way.
- 167 01:44:41:26 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.
- 168 01:44:57:13 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.
- 169 01:45:13:15 Maybe because he or she feels, "Well, what's the use?
- 170 01:45:16:18 The kid's not smart enough to profit from this additional clarification."
- 171 01:45:21:01 So those are the four factors: climate, input, response-opportunity, and feedback.
- 172 01:45:30:02 >> 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.
- 173 01:45:40:28 While in Rosenthal and Jacobson's experiment, the children who were supposed to be superior got the support they needed to excel.
- 174 01:45:48:13 In both cases, the subjective reality became self-fulfilling, overriding the objective facts of the situation.
- 175 01:45:57:09 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.
- 176 01:46:08:09 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.
- 177 01:46:20:15 >> The next problem is eight times 26.
- 178 01:46:22:19 >> 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.
- 179 01:46:33:00 >> Ben?
- 180 01:46:34:11 >> 201?
- 181 01:46:35:22 >> ZIMBARDO: Cooperation, not competition, is the foundation of what Aronson calls the Jigsaw Classroom.
- 182 01:46:43:11 >> 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.
- 183 01:46:53:15 Kids would be interdependent.
- 184 01:46:55:01 Kids would be needing each other in order to do well.
- 185 01:46:59:12 >> Make sure that you understand the part that you're going to have to give in your jigsaw group.
- 186 01:47:03:08 Everyone is ready?
- 187 01:47:04:04 >> Yes.
- 188 01:47:04:27 >> Please go to your expert groups.
- 189 01:47:07:20 >> ZIMBARDO: Using the Jigsaw Method during a lesson on Native Americans, the teacher divides the class into several groups known as expert groups.
- 190 01:47:17:21 >> Each expert group was given one portion of the day's lesson.
- 191 01:47:21:29 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.
- 192 01:47:34:12 And each one of the expert groups studied that one particular aspect of the lesson.
- 193 01:47:39:08 >> 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.

- 211 01:49:15:07 >> 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.
- 212 01:49:28:13 It's this subjective view of reality that provides the basis of much social behavior.
- 213 01:49:34:28 And nowhere is subjective reality more skillfully manipulated than on television.
- 214 01:49:41:07 >> § With love that shines as time goes by. § *Remember it just the way it was on Kodacolor VR films .*
- 215 01:49:51:25 *The sharpest, brightest, most dazzling line of color-print films Kodak has ever made .*
- 216 01:49:57:08 >> § 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.
- 217 01:50:12:13 Their goal is very simple.
- 218 01:50:14:00 They want us to say, "Yes.
- 219 01:50:15:25 Yes, I want it.
- 220 01:50:17:14 Yes, I need it.
- 221 01:50:18:24 Yes, I want to be the right kind of person.
- 222 01:50:21:12 Yes, I'll buy it."
- 223 01:50:22:28 >> *This is the place, Jordan Marsh .*
- 224 01:50:27:02 >> 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.
- 225 01:50:44:12 >> 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.

- 226 01:50:55:13 So if someone does us a favor, we're significantly more likely to say yes when they ask for a favor in return.
- 227 01:51:01:26 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.
- 228 01:51:09:04 It can be a flower or a book, whatever.
- 229 01:51:11:18 >> And this bottle will be produced only two or three times a decade.
- 230 01:51:15:13 >> A second principle that we can talk about is the principle of scarcity.
- 231 01:51:19:19 The idea that things that are rare, that are scarce, that are diminishing in their availability to us are more attractive.
- 232 01:51:28:07 We want them more.
- 233 01:51:29:29 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.
- 234 01:51:41:19 And because we can't have it after a certain time, we want it more, and we go out and buy it.
- 235 01:51:46:16 Another principle we can talk about is the principle of authority.
- 236 01:51:49:12 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.
- 237 01:51:57:29 >> It's reinforced for me.
- 238 01:51:59:08 >> And me.
- 239 01:52:00:22 >> Hey, maybe it was made for both of us.
- 240 01:52:03:15 >> Must be magic.
- 241 01:52:05:05 >> Now that's who this shoe was made for.
- 242 01:52:07:22 (*laughter*) >> Another principle we can talk about is the

principle of commitment.

- 243 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.
- 244 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.
- 245 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.
- 246 01:52:52:01 Another principle we can talk about is the principle of liking.
- 247 01:52:55:12 People are much more willing to say yes to a request to someone they know and like.
- 248 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.
- 249 01:53:20:19 >> And I'd really like to thank you all for coming.
- 250 01:53:22:08 You've really made a special evening for me.
- 251 01:53:24:02 >> A final principle we can talk about is the principle of consensus.
- 252 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.
- 253 01:53:39:25 So people can give us evidence: this is the largest-selling, the fastest-growing product.
- 254 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.
- 255 01:53:53:08 >> The brown-eyed people in this room today are going to wear collars.
- 256 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.

- 257 01:54:06:29 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.
- 258 01:54:21:29 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.
- 259 01:54:47:08 Until next time, I'm Philip Zimbardo.
- 260 01:54:52:02 [Captioned by The Caption Center WGBH Educational Foundation]
- 261 01:55:27:24 >> *Funding for this program is provided by Annenberg/CPB to advance excellent teaching .*