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EECS 372

Social Psychology: Attitudes

General Idea: In social psychology, there is a large amount of information available about how attitudes form, how they can change, and how they influence behavior. Attitudes can be very complex and define most aspects of one's life. This project will focus on two kinds of attitudes, surface and embedded, and two aspects of attitudes, resistance to change and influence on behavior.

Learning Potential: Surface attitudes don't matter much in the grand scheme of things. Surface attitudes are for things like your favorite food or movie, how you feel about a book or a piece of music, etc. These attitudes are easy to change through reexamination or persuasion, they don't have a large effect on your daily life, they won't make or break relationships, and overall, they aren't very important. Embedded attitudes are just the opposite. They are with you all your life, and very rarely can be changed, such as religious views, political views, etc. There are studies that show that some of these are even hereditary. They have the potential to define our behavior, which means we will tend to interact positively with people who have similar attitudes, and not always positive with people who have different attitudes. When two people with opposing attitudes interact, they're interaction can result in one or more of three options for each person. They can either feel stronger about the attitude they had before, develop a surface attitude that coincides with the embedded attitude of the other person, or change their embedded attitude, which is rare, but can happen, and leads to dramatic changes in that person's behavior. In general, people spend more time with others who share their attitudes, which can lead to strengthening their own attitudes, and avoid spending time with, or just spend less time with, people of opposing attitudes. If someone interacts with a person who has an extremely strong attitude, they could either grow in their attitude, or move towards the opposite attitude.

Implementation: There will be two viewing modes for this model, different only to show the difference between surface and embedded models. The behavior of the turtles will be the same always. Each tick, they will wander, flocking towards turtles with similar embedded attitudes, and sometimes avoiding turtles with strong opposite embedded attitudes. When they come into contact with a turtle, both will analyze each other. For surface attitudes, either one turtle will change the attitude of the other(s), or they will remain unchanged. For embedded attitudes,

turtles will follow the rules given at the end of the Learning Potential section. For surface attitudes, the attitude will be represented by the shape of the turtle, color is random, and size is uniform. The shape will change randomly or if persuaded by another turtle. For embedded attitudes, shape is uniform, color indicates attitude, and size indicates strength of attitudes. Similar colors interact more easily than more dissimilar colors. If a turtles attitude strengthens, it gets bigger, and if it weakens, the turtle gets smaller. Changing attitudes can be monitored using color. If two turtles have a negative interaction, their colors will stay the same or move to be more dissimilar, and for a positive reaction, colors will stay the same or be more similar.

Rationale; This unit in PSYCH 204 was very interesting to me. It has to do with a social dynamic most people don't think about very much, at least not critically. It's interesting how our attitudes, and the attitudes of others, can influence our behavior, and vice versa. In this model, I expect turtles with similar colors to move in similar patterns, with the biggest ones at the center of the flock. Turtles of different colors will avoid the centers of other flocks, but interact freely with the other turtles in the flock. Certain turtles may change flocks or wander on their own for a while. If they are a minority, it's possible they will become overwhelmed by other turtles, and change their embedded attitude out of necessity.