



Social Psychology

Social Thinking:
Module 37



Class Objectives

- What is Social Psychology?
- What are Attributions?
- What is the Fundamental Attribution Error?
- What is Cognitive Dissonance?



What is Social Psychology?

- The scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to other people.
 - Social psychologists are especially interested in the ways that social situations influence behavior.



Social Thinking

- *Social cognition* is the area of social psychology that explores how people select, interpret, remember, and use social information.
 - Essentially, it is the way in which individuals think in social situations.



One important social cue is the face

- *Person perception* refers to the processes by which we use social stimuli to form impressions of others.
- Todorov and his colleagues (2005) examined the ways that perceptions of faces can influence political elections.



- The faces were of candidates in the 2000, 2002, and 2004 U.S. House and Senate elections.
 - Respondents' ratings accurately predicted the outcome for about 70 percent of the elections.
- Those faces gave away information about the candidates that was meaningful to the perceivers.
 - Including the degree of perceived competence

Our Thoughts About Others...and Ourselves.

According to the *Attribution Theory*, we usually attribute others' behavior either to their internal dispositions or to their external situations

Attributions are explanations for behaviors or events.

- **Internal attribution** (*dispositional attribution*): A description of the cause of a behavior as originating from within the person
- **External attribution** (*situational attribution*): A description of the cause of a behavior as coming from events or situations outside the person

Hmmm.... Do We Always Make the Right Attribution?

Other factors can influence our interpretation as well, and there are two important errors or mistakes we tend to make when assigning these attributes.

Fundamental Attribution Error

- The tendency to attribute other people's behavior to dispositional (internal) causes rather than to situational (external) causes.
- Example-
 - if Alice saw Bob trip over a rock and fall, Alice might consider Bob to be clumsy or careless (dispositional).
 - If Alice later tripped over the same rock herself, she would be more likely to blame the placement of the rock (situational)

When explaining others' behavior we often make the fundamental attribution error. But, when we explain *our own* behavior we tend to be sensitive to how it changes with situation.



Studies have shown that if we look at behavior from the point of view of the actor rather than the observer, we can better appreciate the situation.

Self-Serving Bias

- People's tendency to take credit for their successes but to blame others or the situation for their failures
- *Example*: A student who gets a good grade on an exam might say, "I got an A!" while a student who does poorly on an exam might say, "The teacher gave me an F!"



Did you get it?

Identify the attribution!



Fundamental Attribution Error
or Self-Serving Bias?

- When Jasmine reports that her wallet was stolen from her car, her roommate says, “Well, it serves you right! How could you be so stupid as to leave your wallet there!?”



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FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION
ERROR



Fundamental Attribution Error or
Self-Serving Bias?

- When Greg was able to avoid a car accident, he felt it was due to his excellent driving skills. When he did have an accident, he blamed it on the other driver’s reckless driving behavior.



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SELF-SERVING BIAS



Does Attitude Effect
behavior?





Attitudes are beliefs and feelings that predispose a person to respond in a particular way to objects, other people, and events.

If we *believe* a person is mean, we may *feel* dislike for the person and *act* unfriendly.

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Attitudes Affect Actions

- Attitudes can be changed by *central route persuasion*:
 - interested people focus on the arguments and respond with favorable thoughts.
 - This occurs when people are naturally analytical or interested in the issue.
- *Peripheral route persuasion*
 - people are influenced by incidental cues, such as a speaker's attractiveness.
 - People are influenced by celebrity endorsements and make snap judgments



Not only will people stand up for what they believe, they will also come to believe an idea they have supported

The Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon works by first getting a small 'yes' and then getting an even bigger 'yes.'



In the Korean War, Chinese communists solicited cooperation from US army prisoners by asking them to carry out small errands.

Once they had complied with small errands they were likely to comply to larger ones.

- Some made radio appeals or false confessions, others informed on fellow prisoners or divulged military secrets.
- When the war ended, 21 prisoners chose to stay with the captors and many soldiers returned home believing communism was good for Asia



Why do actions affect attitudes?

One explanation is that when our attitudes and actions are opposed, we experience tension. This is called *cognitive dissonance*.



Cognitive Dissonance

- An individual's psychological discomfort (*dissonance*) caused by conflicting ideas.
 - We feel uneasy when we notice an inconsistency between what we believe and what we do.
 - It is one of the most influential and extensively studied theories in social psychology, made famous by Leon Festinger

Cognitive Dissonance

- We can reduce cognitive dissonance by either changing our behavior to fit our attitudes or changing our attitudes to fit our behavior.
- You might feel guilty after you throw out your soda can but quickly relieve that guilt by deciding, "Recycling is not really that important."



Festinger infiltrated a group that was expecting the end of the world on Dec 21, 1954. When that prediction failed, the movement did not disintegrate, but grew instead.

By sharing cult beliefs with others, they gained acceptance and thus reduced their own dissonance

Module 38 Social Influence

- Class Objectives:
- Conformity and obedience
- Social facilitation
- Group Think



Answer the following question on a piece of paper...we'll get back to it later!

If you could do anything humanly possible with complete assurance that no one would know it was you and you wouldn't be held responsible, what would you do?

The Power of Social Influence

Conformity and Obedience

The greatest contribution of social psychology is its study of attitudes, beliefs, decisions, and actions and the way they are molded by social influence.



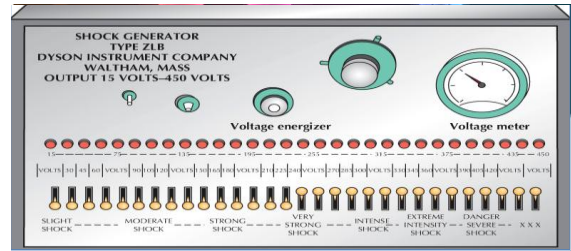
Conformity

- A change in a person's behavior to coincide more closely with a group standard.
- Normative social influence is the influence others have on us because we want them to like us.
- Informational social influence refers to the influence other people have on us because we want to be right.
 - As a result, we may conform because we have come to agree with the group.

Obedience

- This is behavior that complies with the explicit demands of the individual in authority.

- Stanley Milgram's work showed that ordinary people are willing to comply with the requests of others, especially if they see the others as legitimate authority figures



You are seated in front a shock generator whose 30 switches deliver varying levels of shock in 15-volt increments (15 Volts --- 450 Volts)

Every time the student gets a question wrong, you must deliver a shock. For each subsequent mistake, the shock voltage increases by 15 Volts. How much would you shock someone if an authority figure told you to?

What Would You Do?

- When this question was posed to psychology majors at Yale University – people predicted that only 1% of the population would go to the extreme
- What actually happened?



No one stopped before reaching 300 Volts!
 • The average maximum shock delivered was 360 Volts

Ultimately, about 65% of people went all the way to 450 Volts!

What Did Milgram Find?

- Obedience was highest when:
 - The person giving the orders was close at hand and was perceived to be a legitimate authority figure
 - The victim was depersonalized or at a distance, even in another room
 - There were no role models for defiance – no other subjects were seen disobeying the experimenter



Group Performance

When you work as part of a group is your performance better or worse than when you work alone?

THINK

Working in Groups

- *Social Facilitation*- An individual's performance improves because the presence of others creates arousal, which produces energy.
 - The presence of others improves performance on a simple or well-learned task.
 - The presence of others impairs performance on a complex or new task.

What you do well, you are likely to do even better in front of an audience... especially a friendly audience. What you normally find difficult may seem all but impossible when you are being watched.



SOCIAL LOAFING



Who's watching?

- **Social Loafing** refers to each person's tendency to exert less effort in a group because of reduced accountability for individual effort.
- The larger the group, the more likely it is that an individual can loaf without detection.

The presence of others can arouse people, can diminish their feelings of responsibility, or both.

What happens when you give all of your power over to the group?

Back to the question!

What did you write down? Did you write down something that you wouldn't have done if people knew it was you?



Deindividuation

- The process by which individuals lose their personal identity the sense of personal responsibility in the context of a group.
 - which may lead them to engage in behavior that they would not do in another context



Why do people riot after a favorite team wins a big game?

One explanation is that groups give us *anonymity*. When we are part of a group, we may act in an uninhibited way because we believe that no one will be able to identify us.



Groupthink

- This is a mode of thinking that occurs when the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides the realistic appraisal of alternatives.
- Many disasters have been fed by overconfidence, conformity, over-justification and group polarization.
 - The attack on Pearl Harbor
 - The escalation of the Vietnam War The Chernobyl reactor accident
 - Invasion of Iraq because of WMDs



Module 39 Social Relations

Objectives:

- What are Stereotypes?
- What is the Bystander Effect?



Social Relations

Social psychology teaches us how we relate to one another through prejudice, aggression, and conflict to attraction, and altruism and peacemaking.

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Prejudice

Prejudice is an unjustifiable (usually negative) attitude toward a group. Prejudice is often directed towards different cultural, ethnic, or gender groups.

Components of Prejudice

1. Beliefs (*stereotypes*)
2. Emotions (hostility, envy, fear)
3. Predisposition to act (to *discriminate*)



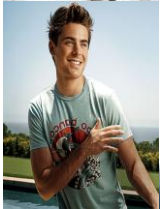
- A *stereotype* is a generalization about a group's characteristics that does not consider any variations from one individual to another.
- Stereotypes are a natural extension of the limits on human cognitive processing.

**STEREOTYPES
SAVE TIME**



Physical attractiveness is a powerful social cue.

- Attractive individuals are generally assumed to have a variety of positive characteristics, such as:
 - More socially skilled, friendly, likable, extraverted, and likely to achieve superior job performance.
- These positive expectations for physically attractive individuals have been referred to as the “*beautiful is good*” stereotype.



One way that stereotypes can influence individuals is through a phenomenon called *self-fulfilling prophecy*.

These expectations cause individuals to act in ways that serve to make the expectations come true



Stereotype threat is an individual's self-fulfilling fear of being judged based on a negative stereotype about his or her group.

In stereotype-relevant situations, the individual experiences anxiety about living “down” to expectations and consequently underperforms.



Stereotypes not only influence our views of others but also sometimes influence the feelings and performance of individuals in stereotyped groups

- Women compared to men on mathematical tasks
- African American compared to Whites on academic tests
- White males compared to African American males on athleticism



What would you do?

Social Behavior



In 1964, a young woman named Kitty Genovese was brutally murdered and raped in New York City. She was attacked at about 3 a.m. in a courtyard surrounded by apartment buildings. It took approximately 30 minutes to kill Genovese.

Thirty-eight neighbors watched the gory scene from their windows and heard Genovese's screams. No one helped or called the police.



The Bystander Effect

- The phenomenon in which the greater the number of people present, the less likely people are to help a person in distress.
 - When an emergency situation occurs, observers are more likely to take action if there are few or no other witnesses.
 - People will help 75% of the time when alone, but when another bystander is present, the figure drops to 50 percent



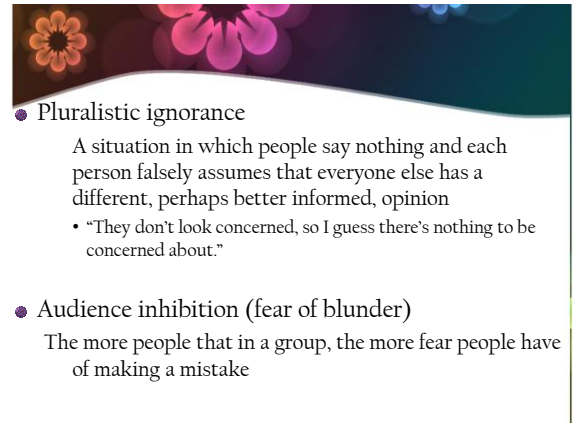
Our Actions Toward Others

Why are we less likely to act in a Group?



Diffusion of responsibility

- We tend to feel less responsibility for being helpful when other people are around because the others are equally able to act.
- In October 2009, in Richmond, California, a 15-year-old high school girl was raped and beaten by as many as 10 people outside a homecoming dance.
 - During the assault, more than 20 people watched—and no one called for help.



● Pluralistic ignorance

A situation in which people say nothing and each person falsely assumes that everyone else has a different, perhaps better informed, opinion

- “They don’t look concerned, so I guess there’s nothing to be concerned about.”

● Audience inhibition (fear of blunder)

The more people that in a group, the more fear people have of making a mistake



Next

- Sensation and Perception