Chapter 13
Impression formation and Attribution theory

Friends agree that person is:
- Industrious, intelligent, practical, warm, determined, cautious, skillful
- Rate overall impression of person
  - Very favorable (1) – Very unfavorable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Do you think this person is likable?
  - Very likable (1) – Very unlikable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Y or N? Does this trait describe the individual?
  - Generous Wise Good-natured
  - Reliable Happy Important

Social Psychology
- Study of the ways in which thoughts, feelings, perceptions, motives, and behavior are influenced by interactions with other people
- How we interpret the behavior of others
- How we form impressions of others
- How we form attitudes toward others/objects
- How others influence our own behavior
- How we establish relationships with others
- Social cognition: use of cognitive processes to understand others and ourselves

Friends agree that person is:
- Envious, stubborn, critical, fun-loving, irritating, artistic, clever, helpful
- Rate overall impression of person
  - Very favorable (1) – Very unfavorable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Do you think this person is likable?
  - Very likable (1) – Very unlikable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Y or N? Does this trait describe the individual?
  - Generous Wise Good-natured
  - Reliable Happy Important

Friends agree that person is:
- Sensible, careful, cold, smart, skillful, productive, determined
- Rate overall impression of person
  - Very favorable (1) – Very unfavorable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Do you think this person is likable?
  - Very likable (1) – Very unlikable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Y or N? Does this trait describe the individual?
  - Generous Wise Good-natured
  - Reliable Happy Important

Friends agree that person is:
- Warm, cooperative, reckless, witty, active, spiteful, inflexible, judgmental
- Rate overall impression of person
  - Very favorable (1) – Very unfavorable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Do you think this person is likable?
  - Very likable (1) – Very unlikable (7)
  - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- Y or N? Does this trait describe the individual?
  - Generous Wise Good-natured
  - Reliable Happy Important
**Impression formation**

- Did a single word change overall impression?
- Did change in order of positive / negative traits change overall impression?

1. Industrious, intelligent, practical, **warm**, determined, cautious, skillful
2. **Envious, stubborn, critical**, fun-loving, **irritating**, artistic, clever, helpful
3. Sensible, careful, **cold**, smart, skillful, productive, determined
4. Warm, cooperative, **reckless**, witty, active, **spiteful, inflexible, judgmental**

**Person perception**

- First Impressions
  - Serial position curve effects (primacy & recency)
  - Anchor and adjustment heuristic
- Bottom up (features)
  - Physical appearance
- Top down (schema)
  - Social schema – influence of knowledge
  - Infer elements that may not have been present

**What happened to cause this event?**

- Woman spills her coffee at a restaurant
- You get an "A" on the exam
- A student takes a semester off from school
- You get pulled over by a cop for speeding
- A Mom hits the bottom of child in the mall
- Someone cuts you off on the highway
- Student drops food tray in Burwell
- You miss class
- You pull an all-nighter before a paper is due
- President is caught plagiarizing his speeches

**Attribution**

- How people make sense about their own and others' behavior
  - Inferences of cause and effect
  - Try identify factors that give rise to outcomes
- Why do this?
  - Make predictions about the future
  - Process automatic and/or deliberate
  - "Covariation model of attention"
    - Do they always do this in this situation?
    - Do others do this in this situation?
    - Do they do they do this in other situations?

**Attribution theory**

- Explain event by attributing behavior to:
  - Internal attribution:
    - **Disposition** or personality
    - Behavior is due to person’s stable characteristics
    - Can predict future behaviors
  - External attribution:
    - **Situation** or environment
    - Behavior is due to outside forces
    - Says little about future behaviors

**Attribution bias**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good behavior</th>
<th>Bad behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong> Disposition Situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong> Situation Disposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biases in attribution

- Actor-Observer bias
  - Own behavior – external
  - Others behavior - internal
- Fundamental attribution error: Others’ behavior
  - Overestimate internal factors
  - Underestimate external situational factors
- Self-serving bias: Own behavior
  - Success = internal
  - Failure = external
- Adaptive value vs. incorrect conclusions

Jones & Nisbett (1970s)

- Write 4 essays
  - Why do you/best friend like the person you date?
  - Why did you/best friend choose your major?
- DV: code for internal/external attribution
- Results:
  - Self: more situational attributes (external)
  - Best friend: more dispositional attributions (internal)
- Conclusions:
  - Use “it depends” more in reference to self
  - Actor-Observer bias

Jones & Harris (1967)

- Fundamental attribution error
  - Essay evaluation of either Pro or Anti-Castro
  - Author chose/forced to take a side
  - Guess author’s true attitude
  - People tend to attribute action to internal factor

Festinger & Carlsmith (1959)

- Cognitive dissonance
  - Behavior/belief at odds with self-concept; inconsistency
  - Try to reduce it when possible
- Act in a way that contradicts true feeling/attitude
- IV: Paid $1 or $20 to lie (or no lie condition)
- DV: How enjoyable was the study
- Justification of effort
- Results…

Interpretation of actor-observer difference

- Motivation
  - Cognitive dissonance
  - Behavior/belief at odds with self-concept; inconsistency
  - Try to reduce it when possible
- Festinger & Carlsmith (1959)
  - Act in a way that contradicts true feeling/attitude
  - IV: Paid $1 or $20 to lie (or no lie condition)
  - DV: How enjoyable was the study
  - Justification of effort
- Results…

Interpretation of actor-observer difference

- Cognitive interpretation
  - Know ourselves better than know others
  - Know only one situation for others
  - Less dispositional attributions when know person better (best friend)
- Perceptual interpretation
  - Different perspectives
  - Can’t see what actor is responding to
  - Can’t observe own behavior

Jones & Nisbett (1970s)

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Above-average effect (Harter, 1990)

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- College Board: 1 million HS students
  - 70%: said above average on leadership
  - 100%: above average for getting along with others
  - 60% said above average in athletics
- People judge themselves as above-average on favorable characteristics
- Why?
  - Memory is selective
  - Protect self-image of themselves and others

Thought paper

- Why do we make attribution errors?
- Can you think of a recent example of this type of error in your own life?
- Relate your example to the terms:
  - Fundamental attribution error
  - Actor-observer effect
  - Self-serving bias

Social Psychology

Chapter 13
Stereotypes and prejudice

Stereotypes

- Beliefs held about traits and behaviors that belong to a particular group and its members
- Most common: gender, race, age

Prejudice

- Negative stereotype that leads people to negatively evaluate group members
- Emphasis on difference between groups

Discrimination

- Prejudiced beliefs lead to behaviors

Sources of stereotypes and prejudice

- Schemas or heuristics
  - Organize and reduce amount of information
- Social learning
  - Conformity to a social norm
  - Media
- Social and economic conflict
  - Social categorization
  - Scapegoating or blaming the innocent
- Dissimilarity and social distance
  - Blue-eyed vs. Brown-eyed example

Thought paper

- Blue-eyed / Brown-eyed movie:
  - What did you learn about stereotypes and prejudice from the movie?
  - What other comments, thoughts, or questions do you have about the movie?
Effect of stereotypes and prejudice

- Self-fulfilling prophecies
  - Beliefs cause the expected behavior
  - Snyder, et al. (1977): phone study
- Stereotype threat
  - Expectation IQ test performance affects final score
  - Activation of negative stereotype
- Automatic activation of stereotype

Stereotype activation on action

- Behavior can be triggered automatically
- Wegner’s white bear study
- Social behavior affected by unconscious thoughts
  - Bargh, Chen, & Burrows (1996)
    - Unscramble sentences about rudeness: interrupt faster
    - Flash words about aging: walk slower
    - Flash negative stereotypes about African Americans: fictional character evaluated as more aggressive
- Are our thoughts and behaviors under our control?

Combating prejudice

- Education
  - Possibly the least effective tool
  - People usually avoid or discount information
- New role models
  - Discussion forums
- Repeated positive exposure
  - Intergroup cooperation
- Legislation
  - Speak up against discriminatory behavior
  - Examine your own beliefs – be aware!
  - Control requires awareness and motivation

Thought paper

- What are the conclusions of Keating’s research?
- How are the conclusions different for children and adults?
- What does it tell us about attitude formation, persuasion, and leadership?

Social influence

- How does others’ behavior or presence change behavior?
- Social facilitation: increase performance
  - Triplett (1890’s): bicycle racers faster against others vs. clock
  - Chicks peck faster in groups vs. alone
  - Rats learn mazes faster in groups
- Social interference: Hinder performance
### Bystander effect
- Kitty Genovese: 1964
- How do people interpret situation?
  - Ambiguity
  - Fundamental attribution error
  - Diffusion of responsibility
- Bystander effect
  - The cost of helping others
  - The benefit of helping others

### Deindividuation
- If you could be invisible for a day, what would you do?
  - Feel less accountable for behavior when in a group
    - Loose sense of individuality?
  - Large groups: Increases chances of socially unacceptable behavior
    - “Crowd mentality”

### Altruism
- Darley & Batson (1973)
- Summary of students prepare for recorded talk.
  - For half, topic is story of good behavior.
  - For half, topic is joke.
  - Students realize that
  - They want to leave building to meet talk.
  - Believed they were ahead of time, on time, or behind schedule.
  - By test they were ahead of schedule, on schedule, or behind schedule.

  - Ahead of schedule: 63%
  - On schedule: 45%
  - Behind schedule: 10%

### Asch’s Line Judgment Study
- Subject participates in a group of confederates
- Confederates give correct answers on first few trials
- Then all give same wrong answer

### Conformity: social pressure
- Asch’s Results
  - Do not yield to majority: 75%
  - Do so yielded on more than half of trials: 50%
  - Do not conform: 25%
  - Trials on which subject yielded to majority: 37%

*Comparative function: Look to others for information about reality and we conform if unsure about our own judgment*

### Conformity
- Look to others for behavior and attitudes
- Go along with group even when know they are wrong
- Why?
  - Cognitive: Want to be right
  - More likely to conform if unsure
  - Ally effect: no conformity if 1 other has their answer
  - Motivational: Want to be liked
  - Fear ostracism from the group
  - Avoid rejection
Power of authority: Milgram (1963)

- Recruited for study of “memory”
- White-coated experimenter: “examine effect of punishment on learning”
- Run subjects in pairs: “learner” and “teacher”
- Learner was confederate
- Teacher watches:
  - learner get strapped to chair
  - electrodes attached to wrist

Teacher administered punishment when learner was incorrect (slight to severe shock)
- Increase punishment with each error
- If object to continuing: “You must go on.”
- How far do the participants go in obeying experimenter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volt</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Grunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Shout in pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Refuse to continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Screams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>No answer, heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330+</td>
<td>Silence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milgram’s quote

“I observed a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20min he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching nervous collapse. He constantly pulled on his ear lobe and twisted his hands. At one point he pushed his fist into his forehead and muttered “Oh God, lets stop it”. And yet he continued to respond to every word of the experimenter, and obeyed to the end.”

Milgram’s study of obedience

- Why did 65% of the participants in the study deliver the highest level shock?!

Thought paper

- If you were to design a similar study, what variables would you change? Why?
### Factors: Tendency to Obey

- **High status of authority figure, prestige of Yale, for science**
- **Belief among subordinates that the source of the authority will be responsible for their actions – not them**
- **Absence of a clear-cut point for switching to disobedience**
  - The gradual nature of many obedience situations (mild consequences at first – and only later are there harmful effects)

### Conformity

#### Milgram’s Obedience Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>% Showing Obedience</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial study</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-prestige setting</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, learner together</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, learner learner</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, &amp; apart</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonperpetrator in charge</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True confederate actor</td>
<td>10%</td>
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### Obedience

- Ethics of Milgram’s research?
  - Participants misled and were severely distressed
  - Don’t think Milgram’s reasearch is “real”?
  - McDonald’s story: “Police” phone in to strip-search employee

### Conformity

- **Strong tendency to obey direct commands**
- **Conclusion: Behavior not just due to personality – due to situation too**

### Attitudes

- Positive or negative beliefs
  - Role in perception and interpretation
  - Can affect behavior
- 3 components
  - Cognitive
    - What know/believe about object of attitude
  - Affective
    - The feelings the object produces
  - Behavioral
    - A predisposition to act in a certain way toward the object

### How are attitudes formed?

- Exposure and repetition
  - Zajonc (1968)
    - Study photos 1x or up to 25x
    - More times shown -> more liked person
  - Conditioning
    - Classical conditioning: initial foundation
    - Operant conditioning: influenced by rewards and punishments
  - Observational learning
    - Influenced by others – especially peers

### How to change attitudes?

- Elaboration likelihood model:
  - 2 routes to persuasion
    - Central
      - Controlled processing
      - Stable and long-lasting
    - Peripheral
      - Automatic processing
      - More influenced by cues or mere exposure
      - More influenced by source characteristics
Polarization of attitudes

Before group discussion

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Group 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Against</td>
<td>For</td>
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<td>Strength of opinion (a)</td>
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After group discussion

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