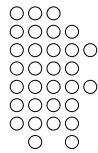


## Chapter 11

### Social Psychology



## Social Psychology



The branch of psychology that studies how people think, feel, and behave in social situations

## Social Cognition



The mental processes that people use to make sense out of their social environment

- Person perception
- Social categorization
- Implicit personality theory
- Attribution
- Attitudes
- Stereotypes

## Person Perception



- Your reactions are determined by your perceptions of others.
- Your goals determine the amount and kind of information you collect.
- You evaluate people partly in terms of how you expect them to behave (social norms).
- Your self-perception influences how you perceive others.

## Physical Attractiveness



- Implicit cultural message is “beautiful is good”
- Attractive people are perceived as more intelligent, happier, and better adjusted.
- Really no difference between attractive and less attractive people on these characteristics
- Attractive people are more likely to attribute other people’s approval of their accomplishments to looks rather than effort or talent.

## Attribution



- Process of inferring the causes of people’s behavior, including one’s own
- The explanation given for a particular behavior

## Attribution Bias

- Fundamental attribution error
- Actor-observer discrepancy
- Blaming the victim (just-world hypothesis)
- Self-serving bias
- Self-effacing bias

Table 12.1

### Some Common Attributional Biases

Bias	Description
Fundamental attribution error	We tend to explain the behavior of other people by attributing their behavior to internal, personal characteristics, while underestimating or ignoring the effects of external, situational factors.
Actor-observer discrepancy	When we are the actor, we tend to attribute our own behavior to external causes. When we are the observer of someone else's behavior, we tend to attribute their behavior to internal causes.
Blaming the victim	When we're unable to help the victims of misfortune, we tend to blame them for causing their own misfortune or for not taking steps to prevent or avoid it. Partly due to the <i>just-world hypothesis</i> .
Self-serving bias	We have a tendency to take credit for our successes by attributing them to internal, personal causes, along with a tendency to distance ourselves from our failures by attributing them to external, situational causes. Most common in individualistic cultures.
Self-effacing (or modesty) bias	We tend to blame ourselves for our failures, attributing them to internal, personal causes, while downplaying our successes by attributing them to external, situational causes. Most common in collectivistic cultures.

## Using Attitudes as Ways to “Justify” Injustice

- Just-world bias
  - a tendency to believe that life is fair, e.g., it would seem horrible to think that you can be a really good person and bad things could happen to you anyway
- Just-world bias leads to “blaming the victim”
  - we explain others' misfortunes as being their fault,
  - e.g., she deserved to be raped, what was she doing in that neighborhood anyway?

## Attitudes

### What is an attitude?

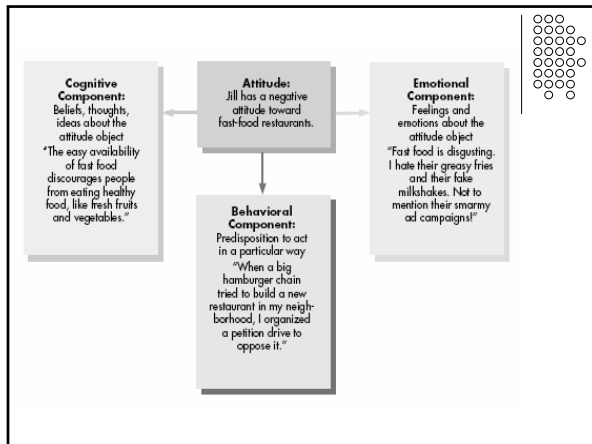
- Predisposition to evaluate some people, groups, or issues in a particular way
- Can be negative or positive
- Has three components
  - Cognitive—thoughts about given topic or situation
  - Affective—feelings or emotions about topic
  - Behavioral—your actions regarding the topic or situation

## Cognitive Dissonance

- Unpleasant state of psychological tension or arousal that occurs when two thoughts or perceptions are inconsistent
- Attitudes and behaviors are in conflict
  - it is uncomfortable for us
  - we seek ways to decrease discomfort caused by the inconsistency

## Dissonance-Reducing Mechanisms

- Avoiding dissonant information
  - we attend to information in support of our existing views, rather than information that doesn't support them
- Firming up an attitude to be consistent with an action
  - once we've made a choice to do something, lingering doubts about our actions would cause dissonance, so we are motivated to set them aside



## Prejudice

A negative attitude toward people who belong to a specific social group

## Stereotypes

What is a stereotype?

- A cluster of characteristics associated with all members of a specific group of people
- A belief held by members of one group about members of another group

## Social Categories

- In-group—the social group to which we belong
  - In-group bias—tendency to make favorable attributions for members of our in-group
  - Ethnocentrism is one type of in-group bias
- Out-group—the social group to which you do not belong
  - Out group homogeneity effect—tendency to see members of the out-group as more similar to each other

## Social Identity and Cooperation

Social identity theory

- states that when you're assigned to a group, you automatically think of that group as an in-group for you
- Sherif's Robbers Cave study
  - 11–12 year old boys at camp
  - boys were divided into 2 groups and kept separate from one another
  - each group took on characteristics of distinct social group, with leaders, rules, norms of behavior, and names

## Robbers Cave (Sherif)

Leaders proposed series of competitive interactions which led to 3 changes between groups and within groups

- within-group solidarity
- negative stereotyping of other group
- hostile between-group interactions

## Robbers Cave



### Overcoming the strong we/they effect

- establishment of superordinate goals
  - e.g., breakdown in camp water supply
- overcoming intergroup strife - research
  - stereotypes are diluted when people share individuating information

## Social Influence



How behavior is influenced by the social environment and the presence of other people

- Conformity
- Obedience
- Helping Behaviors

## Conformity



- Adopting attitudes or behaviors of others because of pressure to do so; the pressure can be real or imagined
- 2 general reasons for conformity
  - Informational social influence—other people can provide useful and crucial information
  - Normative social influence—desire to be accepted as part of a group leads to that group having an influence

## Asch's Experiments on Conformity

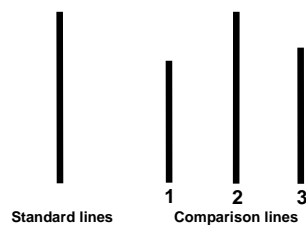


Previous research had shown people will conform to others' judgments more often when the evidence is ambiguous

## Asch's Experiments on Conformity



- All but 1 in group was confederate
- Seating was rigged
- Asked to rate which line matched a "standard" line
- Confederates were instructed to pick the wrong line 12/18 times



## Asch's Experiments on Conformity



- Results
  - Asch found that 75% participants conformed to at least one wrong choice
  - subjects gave wrong answer (conformed) on 37% of the critical trials
- Why did they conform to clearly wrong choices?
  - informational influence?
  - subjects reported having doubted their own perceptual abilities which led to their conformance – didn't report seeing the lines the way the confederates had

## Obedience

- Obedience
  - compliance of person is due to perceived authority of asker
  - request is perceived as a command
- Milgram interested in unquestioning obedience to orders



## Stanley Milgram's Studies

### Basic study procedure

- teacher and learner (learner always confederate)
- watch learner being strapped into chair
- learner expresses concern over his "heart condition"



## Stanley Milgram's Studies

- Teacher goes to another room with experimenter
- Shock generator panel – 15 to 450 volts, labels "slight shock" to "XXX"
- Asked to give higher shocks for every mistake learner makes



## Stanley Milgram's Studies

- Learner protests more and more as shock increases
- Experimenter continues to request obedience even if teacher balks

120 "Ugh! Hey this really hurts."

150 "Ugh! Experimenter! That's all. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart's starting to bother me now."

300 (agonized scream) "I absolutely refuse to answer any more. Get me out of here. You can't hold me here. Get me out."

330 (intense & prolonged agonized scream) "Let me out of here. Let me out of here. My heart's bothering me. Let me out, I tell you..."

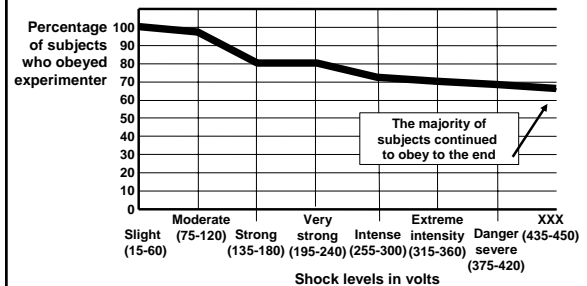


## Obedience

- How many people would go to the highest shock level?
- 65% of the subjects went to the end, even those that protested



## Obedience



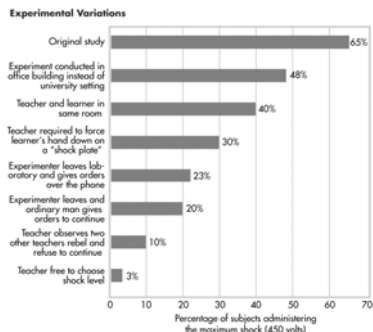
## Explanations for Milgram's Results

- Abnormal group of subjects?
  - numerous replications with variety of groups shows no support
- People in general are sadistic?
  - videotapes of Milgram's subjects show extreme distress

## Explanations for Milgram's Results

- Authority of Yale and value of science
- Experimenter self-assurance and acceptance of responsibility
- Proximity of learner and experimenter
- New situation and no model of how to behave

## Follow-Up Studies to Milgram



## Critiques of Milgram

- Although 84% later said they were glad to have participated and fewer than 2% said they were sorry, there are still ethical issues
- Do these experiments really help us understand real-world atrocities?

## Effects of a Nonconformist

- If everyone agrees, you are less likely to disagree.
- If one person disagrees, even if they give the wrong answer, you are more likely to express your nonconforming view.
- Asch tested this hypothesis
  - one confederate gave different answer from others
  - conformity dropped significantly

## Why Don't People Always Help Others in Need?

### Diffusion of responsibility

- presence of others leads to decreased help response
- we all think someone else will help, so we don't

## Why Don't People Always Help Others in Need?

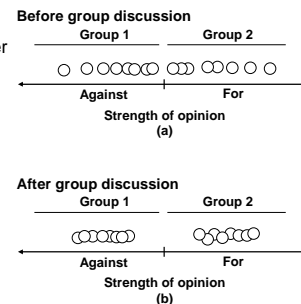


- Latane studies
  - Several scenarios designed to measure the help response
    - found that if you think you're the only one that can hear or help, you are more likely to do so
    - if there are others around, you will diffuse the responsibility to others
- Kitty Genovese incident

## Social Pressure in Group Decisions



- Group polarization
  - majority position stronger after a group discussion in which a minority is arguing against the majority point of view
- Why does this occur?
  - informational and normative influences



## Social Pressure in Group Decisions



### Groupthink

- group members try to maintain harmony and unanimity in group
- can lead to some better decisions and some worse decisions than individuals

## Individual and Groups



- Social Loafing—tendency to expend less effort on a task when it is a group effort
- Reduced when
  - Group is composed of people we know
  - We are members of a highly valued group
  - Task is meaningful
- Not as common in collectivist cultures

## Influence of Others' Requests —Compliance



### Sales techniques and cognitive dissonance

- four-walls technique
  - question customer in such a way that gets answers consistent with the idea that they need to own object
  - feeling of cognitive dissonance results if person chooses not to buy this thing that they "need"

## Sales Techniques and Cognitive Dissonance



### Foot-in-the-door technique

- ask for something small at first, then hit customer with larger request later
- small request has paved the way to compliance with the larger request
- cognitive dissonance results if person has already granted a request for one thing, then refuses to give the larger item

## The Reciprocity Norm and Compliance



We feel obliged to return favors, even those we did not want in the first place

- opposite of foot-in-the-door
- salesperson gives something to customer with idea that they will feel compelled to give something back (buying the product)
- even if person did not wish for favor in the first place

## Defense against Persuasion Techniques



- Sleep on it—don't act on something right away
- Play devil's advocate—think of all the reasons you shouldn't buy the product or comply with the request
- Pay attention to your gut feelings—if you feel pressured, you probably are