Overview

• Social Perception
• What is an Attribution?
• Attribution Biases
• Consequences of Attribution
• History of Attribution
• Theories of Attribution

Social Perception

How people form impressions of & make inferences about other people.
Social Perception

1. Non-verbal Communication
   e.g., body and facial language
2. Impression Formation & Management
   How do we form initial social impressions?
   e.g., social categories, stereotypes, schemas & scripts
3. Attribution Theory
   How we form integrated (deeper) social impressions?

Non-verbal Communication

- To express emotion, attitudes, personality traits, & facilitate / modify verbal communication
- Facial expression of emotion
- Eye contact & gaze
- Body Language
- Emblems
- Personal Space / Touching

We are all Naïve Psychologists

Each of us is a "naive scientist" looking for explanations for how and why things happen.
What is Attribution?

An attribution is an explanation for the cause of a behavior, event, or action.

Attributions are People’s Explanations about the Causes of Behavior

“The causes of events always interest us more than the events themselves.”
- Cicero

“Happy is he who has been able to perceive the causes of things.”
- Virgil

Attributions Questions

• Why do people behave the way they do?
• What are people likely to do in the future?
Attribution Theories

- Fundamental Attribution Error
- Correspondent Inference Theory
- Kelley's Attribution Theory
- Weiner

Consequences of Attributions

1. Give order & predictability
2. Lead to behavior

Internal vs. External Attributions

2 main types of attribution (Heider, 1958)
- Internal – dispositional
- External – situational
Attribution Biases

Cognitive biases which effect attribution:
- Fundamental Attribution Error
- Actor-Observer Effect
- Cognitive Heuristics
  - Availability Heuristic
  - False-Consensus Effect
  - Counterfactual Thinking

Fundamental Attribution Error

Also known as:
- Correspondence bias
- Overattribution effect

Tendency to blame the person rather than the situation:
- Overestimation of dispositional (internal) causes
- Underestimation of situational (external) causes
Actor-Observer Effect

• Extension of Fundamental Attribution Error
• Tendency to attribute:
  – others’ behavior to dispositional factors
  – our own behavior to situational factors

Actor-Observer Effect
  – Prison Study

• Prison inmates and counselors were asked to explain why the inmates had committed their offences.
• Counselors cited enduring personal characteristics; prisoners cited referred to situational factors.
  (Saulnier & Perlman, 1981)

Actor-Observer Effect
  – Dear Abby Study

• Letters to a “Dear Abby” help column in a newspaper showed that people seeking advice explained the behavior of others more dispositionally than when explaining their own actions.
  (Schoeneman & Rubanowitz, 1984)
Actor-Observer Effect – College Roommates Study

- College roommates rated themselves and each other in terms of consistency in display of traits such as happiness, implusiveness, etc. Roommates were considered to be more consistent than self. (Krueger, 1998)

Fundamental Attribution Error – Success/Failure & Self/Other Extension

We tend to attribute:
- Personal success internally, other’s success externally
- Personal failure externally, other’s failure internally

Correspondent Inference Theory – 1 (Jones & Davis, 1965)

- Internal attribution is likely when we believe that the behavior was:
  - freely chosen,
  - intended,
  - had noncommon effects, and was
  - low in social desirability
Correspondent Inference Theory – 2  
(Jones & Davis, 1965)  
• An external attribution might be made if we believe the behavior is:  
  – Not freely chosen  
  – Unintended  
  – Has common effects  
  – Socially desirable

Kelley’s Covariation Theory (1967) - 1  
• Consensus?  
  What would others do?  
  (if low -> dispositional attribution)  
• Distinctiveness?  
  What about in other situations?  
  (if low -> dispositional attribution)  
• Consistency?  
  What about in this situation over time?  
  (if high -> dispositional attribution)

Kelley’s Covariation Theory (1967) - 2  
Kelley’s Attribution Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kelley’s Attribution Model</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Attribution</th>
<th>Distinctiveness</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person-Stable</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation-Stable</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-Unstable</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situation-Unstable</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attribution Model (Weiner, 1980s)

- Internal/Dispositional or External/Situational (Locus).
  - "I failed the exam because I'm stupid"
  - "I failed the exam because it was too hard"
- Stable or Unstable (Stability).
  - "I failed the exam because I'm stupid"
  - "I failed the exam because I didn't study"
- Global or Specific (Controllability).
  - "I failed the exam because I'm stupid"
  - "I failed the exam because psychology is a hard subject for me"

Fundamental Attribution Error as a Cultural Construction

- Westerners tend to see people as autonomous, motivated by internal forces, and responsible for their own actions.
- People in many non-Western cultures “collectivist” cultures emphasize relationship between individuals and their social surroundings.
- Miller (1984) found that with increasing age, Americans made more personal attributions than Indians
Overview of Lecture

• Affiliation
• Factors influencing Attraction
• Theories of Attraction
• Love Relationships
• Ending Relationships

Questions - true or false?

• People seek out the company of others, even strangers, in times of stress.
• Infants do not discriminate between faces considered attractive and unattractive in their culture.

• People who are physically attractive are happier and have higher self-esteem than those who are unattractive.
• When it comes to romantic relationships, opposites attract.
• After the honeymoon period, there is a consistent decline in levels of marital satisfaction.
Affiliation

- *Need for affiliation* - desire to establish & maintain many rewarding interpersonal relationships.
- seek optimum level of contact
- effects of maternal deprivation on monkeys (Harlow)

### Baby monkey’s preference for ‘mothers’ who differ in their softness and their capacity to nurse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of mother</th>
<th>Cloth nurse</th>
<th>Cloth dry</th>
<th>Wire nurse</th>
<th>Wire dry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily contact (hours)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 5 days</td>
<td>After 85 days</td>
<td>After 165 days</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- attachment behaviour in infants - learned or innate?
- infants need care & attention for socialisation to take place
- care does not have to come from parent e.g., Kibbutz children, children in day-care.
• stress increases/arouses need for affiliation.
  • e.g., Schacter (1958) - external threat triggers fear & motivates us to affiliate.
  • do people seek distraction or cognitive clarity (via social comparison)?
  • e.g., Sarnoff & Zimbardo (1961) - stress caused by embarrassment rather than fear -> no need to affiliate.

Attraction

• Why are some people attractive?

Proximity

• best predictor of a relationship is proximity or nearness.
• mere exposure effect - the more we're exposed to something, the more we like it.
• limited by initial dislike, overexposure

• familiarity - greater liking for a familiar stimulus.
  • e.g., Moreland & Beach (1992)
  • availability - interaction is easy & low cost
  • expectation of continued interaction
Reciprocity
• like those who like us
• prefer relationships that are psychologically balanced.
• gain-loss hypothesis - like people more if they initially dislike us & then later like us e.g., Aronson & Linder (1965).

The gain-loss hypothesis: Negative and positive feedback on liking for another person (Aronson & Linder, 1965)

Degree of liking

Order of feedback

Neg-Neg      Pos-Neg      Neg-Pos      Pos-Pos

Playing hard to get
• do we prefer others who are selective over those who are readily available?
• prefer those who are 'moderately' selective
• turned off by those who reject us
• Madey et al. (1996) attractiveness increases towards bar closing time for those not in a relationship.
• reactance???
Similarity
• like others who are similar to us.
• hearing attitudes similar to your own is reinforcing
• matching hypothesis - people are attracted to & form relationships with others who are similar to them in physical attractiveness.
• do opposites attract? - need complementarity (little supporting evidence)

John or Matt?

John: is 25 years old. He works as a telemarketer & rents a small apartment where he lives on his own. He does not currently have a girlfriend. John suffers from a number of allergies which limits the amount of time he can spend outdoors.

Matt: is a business executive who has recently celebrated his 26th birthday. He is happily married. He has recently returned from a week’s holiday in Fiji where his wife took him as a birthday surprise. In his spare time he enjoys playing sport & is skilled yachtsman.
Please rate the woman in the previous picture in terms of the following traits:

below average  1  2  3  4  5 above average

Intelligence
Happiness
Confidence
Friendliness
Success

Physical attractiveness/beauty
- faces near the ‘average’ & symmetrical faces seen as most attractive
- babies show a preference for faces considered attractive by adults.
- some cultural & historical differences in perception of beauty
• bias towards beauty - why?
• aesthetic rewards
• reflected ‘glory’
• “what-is-beautiful-is-good” stereotype - associate beauty with other ‘good’ things
• beautiful judged to be - intelligent, successful, happy, well-adjusted, socially skilled, confident, assertive (& vain)
• in reality, beauty not related to intelligence, personality adjustment or

• Costs of beauty
  – hard to interpret positive feedback
  – pressure to maintain appearance
  – little relationship between beauty in youth & satisfaction/adjustment in middle-age (Berscheid et al., 1972)

Evolutionary perspectives on attraction/mate selection
• gender differences in mate selection & sexual behaviour
• Triver (1972) - parental investment theory
• Buss (1994) - evolutionary perspective
• gender differences in jealousy
BUT - differences between sexes small compared to similarities
Theories of attraction

Balance theory
• prefer relationships that are psychologically balanced.
• motivated to restore balance in relationships
• attracted to similar others

Reinforcement theories
• reinforcement-affect model (Clare & Byrne, 1974) - based on principles of classical conditioning
• associate ‘attractive’ person with rewards & positive affect
Social exchange theory
• people are motivated to maximise benefits & minimise costs in their relationship with others.
• rewards - love, companionship, sex
• costs - effort, conflict, compromise, sacrifice

• comparison level (CL) - average, expected outcome in relationships
• comparison level for alternatives (Calt) - expectations of rewards in alternative situation (what could I get elsewhere?)
• investment - things put into relationship that can’t be recovered.

Equity theory
• people most satisfied with a relationship when the ratio between benefits & contributions is similar for both partners

\[
\text{Your benefits} = \frac{\text{Your contributions}}{\text{Partner’s contributions}} = \frac{\text{Partner’s benefits}}{\text{Partner’s contributions}}
\]
### Equity theory applied to two equitable and two inequitable relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PETER</th>
<th>OLIVIA</th>
<th>PETER</th>
<th>OLIVIA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="Equity_perceived" alt="Outputs" /></td>
<td><img src="Equity_not_perceived" alt="Inputs" /></td>
<td><img src="Equity_not_perceived" alt="Outputs" /></td>
<td><img src="Equity_perceived" alt="Inputs" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inputs or outputs are: ✶ Few ✶✶ Average ✶✶✶ Many

### Love relationships

- liking versus loving
- *passionate love* - intense, involves physiological arousal
- *companionate love* - caring & affection
- characterised by high levels of self-disclosure

### Sternberg’s (1988) triangle of love -

- based on combination of intimacy, passion & commitment
- *intimacy* (emotional component) - involves feelings of closeness
- *passion* (motivational component) - attraction, romance, sexual desire
- *commitment* (cognitive component) - decision to make long-term commitment
Sternberg’s (1988) triangle of love

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PASSION</th>
<th>COMMITMENT</th>
<th>INTIMACY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No love</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infatuation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty love</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatuous love</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic love</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consummate love</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Schacter’s 2-factor theory of emotion
  1. physical arousal
  2. cognitive appraisal (interpret arousal as love)
- Hatfield & Walster’s 3-factor theory of love
  1. cultural exposure
  2. physiological arousal
  3. presence of appropriate love object

Hatfield and Walster’s (1981) three-factor theory of romantic love

Cultural exposure

Physiological arousal

Appropriate love object

Romantic love
Problems with previous models
• misattribution of arousal & excitation transfer
• arousal not always associated with love
• how do we define an ‘appropriate love object’

Maintaining relationships
• role complementarity is important for relationship success
• role change can challenge a relationship (e.g., changing gender roles)
• companionate love lasts longer than passionate love
• satisfaction decreases over first 4 years of marriage, then levels out
• interdependent relationships show more endurance than independent ones

Ending relationships
• Four factors (Levinger, 1980)
  1. a new life seems the only alternative
  2. alternative partners available
  3. expectation that relationship will fail
  4. lack of commitment
• Once relationship has started to fail (Rusult & Zembrodt, 1983)
  1. loyalty
  2. neglect
  3. voice behaviour
  4. exit behaviour

• Relationship dissolution model (Duck, 1988, 1992) - 4 phases
  1. Intrapsychic phase
  2. Dyadic phase
  3. Social phase
  4. Grave-dressing phase
• *loneliness* - discrepancy between desired & actual social contact
  • quality vs. quantity of contact
  • occurs during times of transition & disruption (e.g., moving, divorce)
  • unattached lonelier than attached
  • widowed, divorced lonelier than never married
  • 18-30 year olds - loneliest group

Conclusions

• People seek out the company of others, even strangers, in times of stress - TRUE
• Infants do not discriminate between faces considered attractive and unattractive in their culture - FALSE

• People who are physically attractive are happier and have higher self-esteem than those who are unattractive - FALSE
• When it comes to romantic relationships, opposites attract - FALSE
• After the honeymoon period, there is a consistent decline in levels of marital satisfaction - TRUE