Social Beliefs & Judgments

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Purdue University
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Heider-Simmel Tape

• We are inclined to explain behavior so much, that we even infer motives to animated objects, without prompting.
• We see complex interpersonal information with emotions.
Why and How We Explain Others’ Behavior

- Attribution Theory
  - Dispositional vs. situational attributions
  - Actor-Observer differences
  - Inferring traits
    • Implicit personality theories

Kelly’s Principles of Covariation

- Consensus
  - Does everybody do this behavior?

- Distinctiveness
  - Does s/he only do this behavior when in this particular situation (or with this particular person)?

- Consistency
  - Does s/he always do this sort of thing?
Kelly’s Two Basic Principles of Attribution

- **Discounting**
  - If we can only think of a single cause, we are more certain that is the reason for the behavior.
  - If other causes are cognitively available, we *discount* the likelihood of each.

- **Augmenting**
  - If alongside a facilitory factor there is also an inhibitory factor, the likelihood that we assign causality to the facilitory factor is *augmented*.

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The Fundamental Attribution Error

![Fundamental Attribution Error-ex. 1](image.png)

(Data from Jones & Harris, 1967.)
The Fundamental Attribution Error

• Why do we make this error?
  – Perspective and situational awareness
  – Cultural differences
  – Mental effort (Gilbert)
• How fundamental is this error?
• Why we study attribution errors

Actor-Observer Differences

• Actors more likely to make situational attributions, whereas observers are more likely to make dispositional attributions.
• Why?
  – Perspective & Information Availability
    • Figure-ground biases
  – Ego-centricity (self as causal)
  – Self-serving
Weiner’s Theory of Attributions for Success & Failure

Joan/John succeeds/fails. How much do we reward him/her?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stable</th>
<th>Unstable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ease/Difficulty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Judging Others

- Thinking without awareness
  - Priming: effects judgments and behavior
  - Nass computer experiments
- Controlled versus Automatic Thinking
- Heuristics
  - Representative heuristic
    - Linda
  - The availability heuristic
    - More ks as 1st or 3rd letter?
    - Transportability: easy to see = more likely to occur
      - Reports on crime: estimates of crime rates
  - Counterfactual thinking
    - Imagining worse: feel better
    - Imagining better: prepares us
Representativeness Heuristic

• Linda:
  – 31, single, outspoken, very bright.
  – Majored in philosophy.
  – Deeply concerned with discrimination and other social issues.
  – Participated in anti-nuclear demonstrations
• Which is more likely?
  – A) Linda is a bank teller.
  – B) Linda is a bank teller and active in the feminist movement.
• Representativeness overwhelms logic.

Judging Others

• Illusory thinking
  – Illusory correlation
    • We see connections in our observations that are really random
  – Illusion of control
    • We think we have control over things that are actually random
  – Usually perceive lack of control over negative events, but not positive.
    • But see, self-handicapping (Jones & Berglas, 1978)
• Mood and judgment
  – Positive mood→heuristic thinking
  – Negative mood→systematic thinking
### Expectations & Attributions

#### Evaluations when Expecting "Warm"/"Cold" Person

Evaluations of the Guest Speaker by Students Expecting Either a "Warm" or "Cold" Person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Warm</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerate</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humane</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Data from Kelley, 1950.*