

Social Psychology

Attribution Theory



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- ▣ Addresses how people make judgments about the causes of behavior.

Explaining Behavior

- ▣ Internal attributions
 - A.k.a. Dispositional attributions
 - i.e. The teacher was late to class because she is unorganized.
- ▣ External attributions
 - A.k.a. situational attributions
 - i.e. The teacher was late to class because she was stuck in traffic.

Biases in Attributions

- Fundamental attribution error
 - Tendency to give more weight to internal causes and less weight to external causes of other people's behavior.
- Actor-Observer effect
 - When you are the ACTOR you tend to attribute your own behavior to external causes.
 - When you are the OBSERVER you tend to attribute others' behavior to internal causes.
- Self serving bias
 - Tendency to attribute personal failure to external factors, while attributing personal success to internal factors.

More Biases in Attribution

- Self serving bias
 - Tendency to attribute personal failure to external factors, while attributing personal success to internal factors.

Attribution Errors: Practice

- Masa's roommate comes home from class complaining that she locked her keys in her car. Masa tells her that if she were more organized this wouldn't have happened.
- Susan is upset with her Calculus grade and believes that the instructor had it in for her. When she retakes the course and receives an "A" she believes that it is because she is such a hard-worker.

More Practice

- Becky is studying in the library and notices that one of her classmates seems to be having a hard time with the material. Becky understands that this is a difficult class and offers to help her classmate study.
- Dave is stuck in traffic and shows up 20 minutes late to chemistry lab. The next day his lab partner comes in late to class. Dave is annoyed by this and thinks that she is lazy and inconsiderate.

The Power of the situation

- Stanford Prison Experiment by Phillip Zimbardo
- Slide show on:
 - <http://www.prisonexp.org/>

COMPLIANCE

- "The process of giving into a demand, request, or proposal of another."
- How do we exert social influence over others, in order to get them to do what we want?

Techniques for gaining compliance:

- Tactics based on liking
 - Ingratiation: causing others to like us
 - Self-enhancing: making ourselves look appealing
 - Other-enhancing: flattering the target person, agreeing with them, showing interest

Techniques for gaining compliance:

- Tactics based on commitment
 - Foot-in-the-door: gaining compliance to a small request and then following up with a larger request
 - Lowball: luring you into a commitment and then changing the terms

Techniques for gaining compliance:

- Tactics based on Reciprocity
 - Door-in-the-face: gaining compliance to a small request by first asking for a large request that will be rejected
 - That's-not-all: offering a small extra incentive

Techniques for gaining compliance:

- Tactics based on scarcity
 - Playing Hard to Get: creating an impression that this is very hard to find or in demand
 - Fast Approaching Deadline: a “deadline” is established for compliance.

Deindividuation

- Social loafing
 - when behavior is not monitored, performance goes down
 - e.g., group projects
- Deindividuation
 - sense of reduced accountability and shifted attention away from the self that occurs in groups
 - responsible for riots, lynchings, gang rapes, and other group violence

Following Others' Examples – Conformity

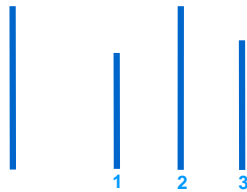
- Adopting attitudes or behaviors of others because of pressure to do so
 - the pressure can be real or imagined
- 2 general reasons for conformity
 - informational influence
 - other people can provide useful and crucial information
 - normative influence
 - desire to be accepted as part of a group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

Asch's Experiments on Conformity

- When?
 - 1951
- Previous research had shown
 - people will conform to others' judgments more often when the evidence is ambiguous
- Asch set out to prove that people will not conform when evidence is clear-cut or unambiguous
 - his question - will people still conform when group is clearly wrong?

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

Asch's Experiments on conformity

- Variations to test informational influence hypothesis
 - had subject come late
 - confederates voted out loud, but subjects wrote their vote down
- Results
 - conformity dropped significantly
- Suggests that the original subjects conformed due to normative influences, not informational

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

Obedience

- Giving into the social pressure from an authority figure
- Stanley Milgram's "shocking" studies (1965-1974)
 - Psychiatrists estimated that fewer than 4% of subjects would administer 300mv and less than 0.1% would continue to the 450mv level.
 - On average, subjects did not refuse until the 300mv level and 2/3 continues up to 450mv!
 - Conditions that influenced obedience

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 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

Shock Level	Switch Labels and Voltage Levels	Shock Level	Switch Labels and Voltage Levels
1	15	17	255
2	30	18	270
3	45	19	285
4	60	20	300
5	75	21	315
6	90	22	330
7	105	23	345
8	120	24	360
9	135	25	375
10	150	26	390
11	165	27	405
12	180	28	420
13	195	29	435
14	210	30	450
15	225		
16	240		

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

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

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?

Experimental Variations

