

Social Perception: Knowing Others

Social Perception—process through which people seek to know and understand others.

1. Nonverbal Communication
2. Attribution
3. Impression Formation and Impression Management

Nonverbal Communication— we try to understand other person's current feelings, moods and emotions - how they are feeling right now. Communication between individuals that relies on an unspoken language is called nonverbal communication which has certain nonverbal cues of facial expressions, eye contact, and body language

- Basic channels
 - Facial expressions—"The face is the image of soul."
 - Reveal current moods/feelings and six different basic emotions are represented clearly, and from a very early age, on the human face: sadness, joy, anger, fear, disgust and surprise.
 - Studies showed that different facial expressions are related with physiological activity for instance facial expression of fear is related with high blood pressure and

short periods between breaths, while facial expression of happiness are associated with lower heart rate and longer periods between breaths.

- Facial expressions are universal across cultures as people living in separated geographical areas do seem to show similar facial expression in similar emotion provoking situations, and these can be readily and accurately recognized by persons from outside their own cultural groups.
 - Although human beings all over the world show highly similar facial expressions, different cultures have contrasting rules about when and how various emotions should be expressed (these rules are known as **display rules**) e.g. in Asian cultures it is considered rude to show direct disagreement with or disapproval of other's person opinion whereas it is the opposite case in European culture.
 - Eye contact- ancient poets often described the eyes as "windows to the soul" and we often learn about others feelings from their eyes.
 - Indicates positive feelings if high level of **gazing** (maintaining the eye contact and detaching it on and off basis) are there meaning that the other person has some liking and friendliness motive.
 - If the gazing is continuous no matter how awkward you feel and regardless of what you do to avoid that contact then it **staring**; which is often interpreted as a sign of hostility and anger.
 - Body language (gestures, posture, movements)-reveals emotional states, cultural emblems and provide us with useful information about others.
 - Large numbers of movements-especially ones in which one part (touching, rubbing, scratching) - suggests emotional
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arousal. The greater the frequency of this behavior the greater the level of arousal or nervousness.

- Larger patterns of movements, involving the whole body can also be informative. Such phrases as “he adopted a threatening posture” and ‘she greeted her with open arms” suggests that different body orientations or postures can indicate contrasting emotional reactions.
- Persons involved in ballet dances display varied postures in accordance to the role they are playing.
- Several gestures fall in the categories of cultural emblems e.g. in several cultures holding one’s hand with the thumb pointing up is a sign of “ok”. Similarly, seizing one’s nose between the thumb and index finger is a sign of displeasure or disgust. Every culture or human societies have several gestures for variety of greetings, departures, insults, and the descriptions of many different physical states.
- Touching–(the most intimate non verbal cue) suggests affection, sexual interest, dominance, caring, aggression.
 - The meaning or message conveyed by this type of cue is dependent on several factors relating to who does the touching (a friend or a stranger; a member of your own or other gender); the nature of the physical contact (brief or prolonged, gentle or rough, what part of the body is touched); and the context in which it takes place (a business or social setting, a doctor’s office).

Individuals differ in terms of their emotional expressiveness– the extent to which they show outward display of emotion. Women are more expressive as compared to men.

Society also demands emotional expressiveness according to different roles e.g. doctors who show emotional expressiveness are considered more caring.

Emotional expressiveness is also related with psychologically adjustment as people who show more are considered to be good communicator and better adjusted in their relations.

Recognizing Deception: The Role of Nonverbal Cues

Although facial expressions provide useful information but they can be misleading if proper understanding is not there. Several important clues have been introduced upon which one can judge whether the meaning of expression is true or not.

- **Micro-expressions**—fleeting facial expressions lasting only a few tenths of a second can be a marker of deception.
 - So watch one's face very carefully as they say it and if their one expression quickly turns over by the other expression, it may mean their intent to deceive you.
 - **Inter-channel discrepancies** (nonverbal cues are inconsistent) as it is difficult to control all the nonverbal channels at once.
 - So if the discrepancies are there between the nonverbal cues then it reveals high level of deception in turns.
 - **Eye contact** (blink more when they are lying, unusually low or high eye contact when bluffing and tends to puts pressure)
 - **Paralanguage**— nonverbal aspect of peoples speech i.e. high pitch of voice when lie and tend to speak more slowly and with less frequency they also engage in more sentence repairs—starting a sentence , interruption it, and then starts again.
 - Lies are less complex, less related to the self, and more negative.
 - **Exaggerated facial expressions** (overly broad smile or exaggerated sadness)
 - **Attribution-process**: are inferences that people make about the causes of events and behavior. People make attributions in order to
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understand their experiences. Attributions strongly influence the way people interact with others.

Types of Attributions

Researchers classify attributions along two dimensions: internal vs. external and stable vs. unstable. By combining these two dimensions of attributes, researchers can classify a particular attribution as being internal-stable, internal-unstable, external-stable, or external-unstable.

1. Internal vs. External

Attribution theory proposes that the attributions people make about events and behavior can be classed as either internal or external. In an **internal**, or dispositional, **attribution**, people infer that an event or a person's behavior is due to personal factors such as traits, abilities, or feelings. In an **external**, or situational, **attribution**, people infer that a person's behavior is due to situational factors.

Example:

Maria's car breaks down on the freeway. If she believes the breakdown happened because of her ignorance about cars, she is making an internal attribution. If she believes that the breakdown happened because her car is old, she is making an external attribution.

2. Stable vs. Unstable

Researchers also distinguish between stable and unstable attributions. When people make a **stable attribution**, they infer that an event or behavior is due to stable, unchanging factors. When making an **unstable attribution**, they infer that an event or behavior is due to unstable, temporary factors.

Example:

Lee gets a D on his sociology term paper. If he attributes the grade to the fact that he always has bad luck, he is making a stable attribution. If he attributes the grade to the fact that he didn't have much time to study that week, he is making an unstable attribution.

Attribution Biases

When people make an attribution, they are guessing about the causes of events or behaviors. These guesses are often wrong. People have systematic biases, which lead them to make incorrect attributions. These biases include the fundamental attribution error, the self-serving bias, and the just world hypothesis.

1-The Fundamental Attribution Error

The **fundamental attribution error** is the tendency to attribute other people's behavior to internal factors such as personality traits, abilities, and feelings. The fundamental attribution error is also called the correspondence bias, because it is assumed that other people's behavior corresponds to their personal attributes. When explaining their own behavior, on the other hand, people tend to attribute it to situational factors.

Example:

Alexis falls asleep in class. Sean attributes her behavior to laziness. When he fell asleep in class last week, however, he attributed his own behavior to the all-nighter he pulled finishing a term paper.

2-The Self-Serving Bias

The **self-serving bias** is the tendency to attribute successes to internal factors and failures to situational factors. This bias tends to increase as time passes after an event. Therefore, the further in the past an event is, the more likely people are to congratulate themselves for successes and to blame the situation for failures.

Example:

Chad wins a poetry competition but fails to get the poem published in a magazine he sent it to. He attributes his success in the competition to his talent. He attributes his failure to get it published to bad luck.

3-The Just World Hypothesis

The **just world hypothesis** refers to the need to believe that the world is fair and that people get what they deserve. The just world hypothesis gives people a sense of security and helps them to find meaning in difficult circumstances.

People are less generous about other people than about themselves. Other people's successes tend to be attributed to situational factors and their failures to internal factors.

Example:

Chad's friend Diana does manage to get a poem published in a magazine. However, she did not receive a prize in a poetry competition she entered. Chad attributes Diana's publication success to good luck and her failure to her underdeveloped writing abilities.

Unfortunately, the just world hypothesis also leads to a tendency to blame the victim. When something tragic or terrible happens to someone, people often reassure themselves by deciding that the person must have done something to provoke or cause the event.

Example:

Anthony gets into a car wreck. His friends believe that Anthony must have been driving drunk.

Cultural Influences on Attribution Style

Research suggests that cultural values and norms affect the way people make attributions. In particular, differences in attribution style exist between individualist and collectivist cultures. People in individualist cultures place a high value on uniqueness and independence, believe in the importance of individual goals, and define themselves in terms of personal attributes. People in collectivist cultures, on the other hand, place a high value on conformity and interdependence, believe in the importance of group goals, and define themselves in terms of their membership in groups. North American and Western European cultures tend to be

individualistic, while Asian, Latin American, and African cultures tend to be collectivist.

People in collectivist cultures tend to be less susceptible to the fundamental attribution error than people in individualist cultures. People from collectivist cultures are more likely to believe that a person's behavior is due to situational demands rather than to personal attributes. People from collectivist cultures are also less susceptible to the self-serving bias.

The Self-Effacing Bias

Research suggests that people who are from a collectivist culture, such as the Japanese culture, tend to have a **self-effacing bias** when making attributions. That is, they tend to attribute their successes to situational factors rather than to personal attributes, and, when they fail, they blame themselves for not trying hard enough.

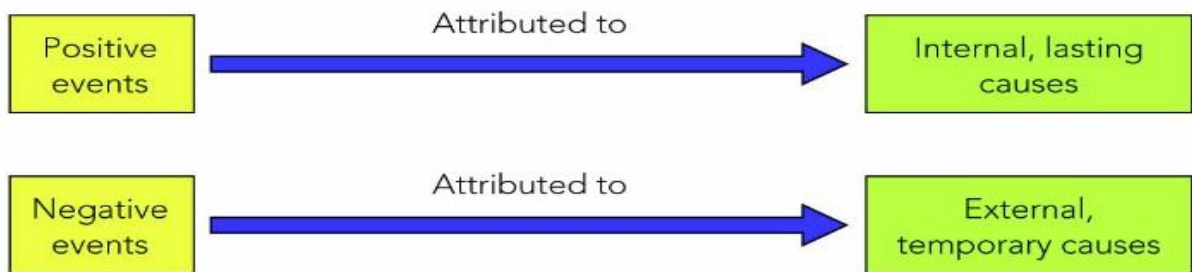
Applications of Attribution Theory

Attribution and Depression

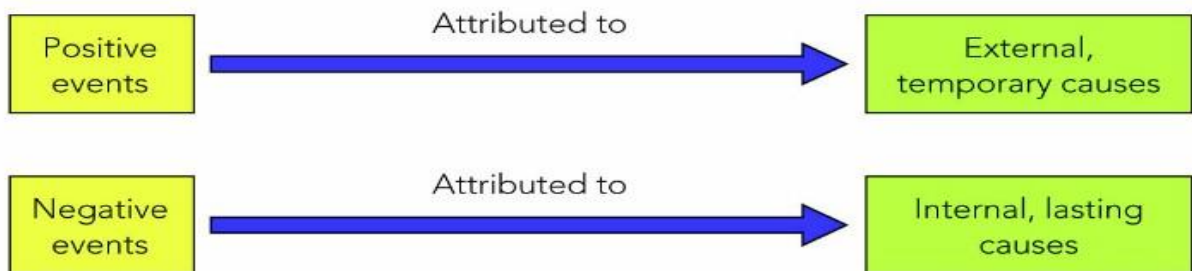
- Depressed persons often show a self-defeating pattern of attributions, which is the opposite of the self-serving bias.
 - Attribute negative outcomes to stable, internal causes
 - Attribute positive outcomes to temporary, external causes



Nondepressed (Normal) Persons



Depressed Persons



Attribution in Workplaces

- Attributions affect how people perceive **sexual harassment**.
 - Men are more likely than women are to attribute blame to the victim.
 - Changing men's attributions regarding sexual harassment may help to prevent it.

Impression Formation

People form impressions, or vague ideas, about other people through the process of **person perception**.

The Influence of Physical Appearance

Physical appearance has a strong effect on how people are perceived by others. Two aspects of physical appearance are particularly important: attractiveness and baby-faced features.

1-Attractiveness

Research shows that people judge attractive-looking people as having positive personality traits, such as sociability, friendliness, poise,

warmth, and good adjustment. There is, however, little actual correlation between personality traits and physical attractiveness. People also tend to think that attractive-looking people are more competent. Because of this bias, attractive people tend to get better jobs and higher salaries.

2-Baby-Faced Features

People's attractiveness does not have much influence on judgments about their honesty. Instead, people tend to be judged as honest if they have baby-faced features, such as large eyes and rounded chins. Baby-faced people are often judged as being passive, helpless, and naïve. However, no correlation exists between being baby-faced and actually having these personality traits.

Evolutionary theorists believe the qualities attributed to baby-faced people reflect an evolved tendency to see babies as helpless and needing nurture. Such a tendency may have given human ancestors a survival advantage, since the babies of people who provided good nurturing were more likely to live on to reproduce.

Cognitive Schemas

When people meet, they form impressions of each other based on their **cognitive schemas**. People use cognitive schemas to organize information about the world. Cognitive schemas help to access information quickly and easily.

Social schemas are mental models that represent and categorize social events and people. For example, certain social schemas tell people what it means to be a spectator at a baseball game. There are also social schemas for categories of people, such as yuppie or geek. These social schemas affect how people perceive events and others. Once a social schema is activated, it may be difficult to adjust a perception of a person or event.

- A Cognitive Perspective
 - How do people combine diverse information about others into a unified impression of them?
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- People form impressions by averaging available information.
 - What kind of information do people focus on when meeting others for the first time?
 - People focus first on information about others' traits, values, and principles.
 - Other Aspects of Impression Formation
 - First impressions involve two major components:
 - Concrete examples of behaviors consistent with a given trait (exemplars of the trait)
 - Mental summaries abstracted from repeated observations of others (abstractions)
 - Motives influence the kind of impressions people form of others.
 - **Impression Management (Self-Presentation)–efforts to produce favorable first impressions on others**
 - Research indicates that it does have positive effects.
 - Tactics of impression management
 - Self-enhancement–boost one's appeal to others
 - Boost physical appearance, boast about abilities
 - Other-enhancement–induce positive moods in others
 - Use flattery, express liking, agree with their views
 - If overused, tactics can boomerang (**slime effect** can occur).
 - The role of high cognitive load
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•In most situations, it can interfere with people's efforts to give others a favorable impression of them.

- First impressions on the run: Speed dating

•People are given seven minutes to impress potential dates.

• Research indicates that generally people appear to form initial judgments about others in about one or two minutes.