

III. Attributional Biases

A) Bias? What Bias?

- The preceding models and processes are examples of how we should and sometimes do make attributional decisions.
- They paint a picture of a Rational, Thorough, Scientific reasoner
- We don't always do this, especially when:
 - 1) There is a limited amount of information available
 - e.g. Kelly's model assumes that we have a lot of information about a lot of people and a lot of situations.
 - 2) We have a limited amount of time
 - More often than not, we have to make very rapid judgements (within a second or two), we do not have time to go through the correspondent and non-common effects process.
 - 3) We have a limited amount of energy
 - Sometimes we are too tired or too busy (multitasking) to go through the effortful rational process
 - 4) Our personal interests interfere with being rational.
 - Sometime we don't like the implications of the inferences we "should" make, so we don't make them.

B) The Correspondent Bias / Fundamental Attribution Error

1) What?

- The tendency to make internal-dispositional attributions about other people's behavior, even when situation causes are clearly present.

2) Why?

a) Perceptual Salience of Behavior

-Heider "Behavior engulfing the field..."

- Behavior grabs our attention and we don't notice the situation

- MacArthur & Post (1977), On the move, in the spotlight

- Participants watched a video of 2 people having a conversation.

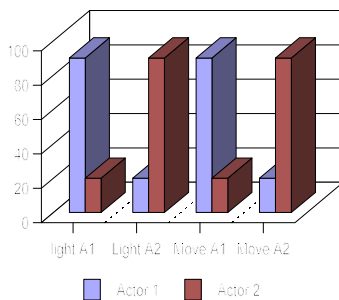
- Manipulated the salience of each person

- spotlight

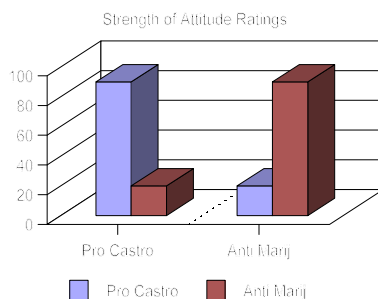
- moved a lot

- The salient actor was viewed as more causal

MacArthur & Post (1977)



Jones & Harris (1967)



b) Insufficiently Weight Situational Causes

-e.g. Jones & Harris (1967)

- Participants read essays and heard speeches that were written by political science students. (either Pro Castro, or Anti-Marijuana)

- Participants were told that the political science students were assigned to write on these topics for a class, and did not choose their essay topics.

- Participants then rated how much the speech writer was either pro-Castro, or Anti-Marijuana.

- People failed to take the situational information into account.

c) Cognitive Inertia Heuristic (Dispositional Beliefs + Insufficient weighting)

- We start by assuming that behavior is dispositional
- Don't adequately search for or notice situational causes
- And insufficiently weight situational causes

C) The Actor Observer Bias

1) What?

- Attributions about self behavior = external attributions
- Attributions about other's behavior = internal-dispositional attributions

2) Why?

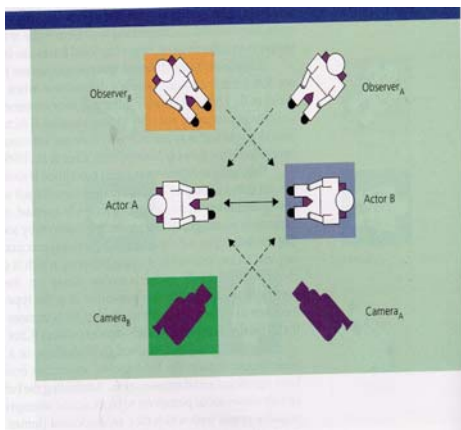
a. We have more cross situational (high distinctiveness) and cross temporal (low consistency) information.

- I can think of lots of times when I didn't do X.

b. Our own beh. is not the focus of our attention. The situation is.

- we are freed from perceptual salience effects
- Storms (1973)

- 2 actors have a conversation



- 1 observer is paired with each actor, and positioned so they see what their respective actors see.

- Afterward, observers make the same attributions of causal influence as their paired actor.

-with respect to figure:

$$O_a = A_b$$

$$O_b = A_a$$

- When actors viewed a video of the conversation taken from the perspective of the other actor. The actors made attributions of their own behavior that were more like observer paired with the opposite actor.

$$A_b = O_b \quad \& \quad A_a = O_a$$

D. The Self Serving Bias

1) What ?

- Internal Attributions for Positive Outcomes
 - I got an A because I am smart and studied hard.
- External Attributions for Negative Outcomes
 - I got an F because the teacher wrote a hard test

2) Why ?

a) Cognitive Explanation = Expectancy Confirmation = I expect positive outcomes and so assume that my efforts move me toward bringing them about.

-When positive outcomes occur, I assume that it is the result of my intentional efforts.

- When negative outcomes occur, I assume that something external acted to thwart my efforts.

b) Motivational Explanation =

-Self-Esteem Maintenance = I want to protect my view of myself.

-Self-Presentation Concerns = I want to protect the view that others hold of me

E. Cultural Variation

Individualistic Vs. Collectivist Cultures (P. 14, L&M)

- **Individualistic Cultures**: Rugged Individualism (e.g. U.S. , Western Europe). The critical task in life is to become self sufficient and independent of society and family.

1. Social Skills: Self promotion, being interesting, putting others at ease, having good conversation skills.

2. Distribution of Rewards for group effort: Reward are distributed equitably (each according to their inputs).

3. Attribution Biases:

-FAE is commonly demonstrated

-Western tradition of viewing humans as rational creations of god, with free will. Therefore behavior is intentional and actor is personally responsible. Aristotelian Thinking

-SSB is commonly demonstrated

- Cultural focus on competition and individual achievement as determinants of self-esteem and public prestige as well as expectations regarding positivity of outcomes result in esteem maintenance and impression management strategies, as well as expectancy disconfirmation effects.

- **Collectivist Cultures**: Group orientation is emphasized. The need of the group come before one's own needs (e.g. Asia, Africa, Central & South America, Pacific Islands). Identity is largely in terms of the group (family, village, organization).

1. Social Skills: Group loyalty, cooperation, contributing to the group w/o expecting rewards, public modesty about abilities, deference to higher status individuals, distribution of resources to low status individuals who defer.

2. Distribution of rewards for group effort: Equality (all get equal share). Group effort is rewarded not individual effort.

3. Attribution Biases:

-Lower Levels of FAE

-result of awareness of regular social constraints on behavior, so assumption of dispositionality is not made.

-Self-serving bias: Tend to make internal attributions for failures and external attributions for success.

Taking individual credit for success would interfere with cooperative orientation