

## Ch. 2 Person Perception, Forming Impressions of Others

### I. Impression Formation

- The process through which we develop our beliefs and evaluations of other people.

#### A. Solomon Asch (1946)

- Viewed impression formation from a Gestaltist Perspective.
- Dominant Metaphor: People as Consistency Seekers.
- Our perceptions of Others are more than the sum of information (Traits) we know about others.
- Individual Traits are evaluated in relation to other known Traits, and develop an overall picture where all the traits fit together consistently.

## Impression Formation Demo

- You have been randomly assigned to 4 groups based on your Codename. Write you number on your data sheet
- 1 Group at a time you will be shown briefly a set of traits describing a person.
- After reading the traits please rate them on a a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = negative, 7 = positive) for each of the 6 dimensions listed on your data sheet: Generosity, Good-naturedness, Popularity, Happiness, Sociability, and Altruism
- When it is not your turn, keep your eyes closed and please don't peek.

### Group 1

Intelligent      Skillful      Industrious

Warm      Determined      Practical

Cautious

Please rate the Person Now

Group 2

Intelligent Skillful Industrious

Cold Determined Practical

Cautious

Please rate the Person Now

Group 3

Intelligent Skillful Industrious

Polite Determined Practical

Cautious

Please rate the Person Now

## Group 4

Intelligent      Skillful      Industrious

Blunt            Determined      Practical

Cautious

Please rate the Person Now

### Results

	# Below 4	# Above 4
Group 1 – Warm	1	9
Group 2 – Cold	8	0
Group 3 – Polite	5	7
Group 4 – Blunt	7	6

Class data from 1/25/06

## A. Asch Cont.

### - Central vs. Peripheral Traits

-Central traits have a stronger impact on our impressions than Peripheral Traits.

-Warm vs. Cold is more central than Polite vs. Blunt

### -The Study

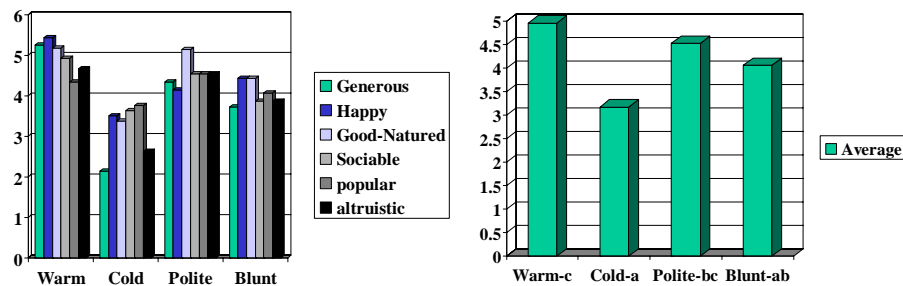
Participants were given a set of traits describing a new person.

The list included either Warm, Cold, Polite, or Blunt

List = Intelligent, Skillful, Industrious, X, Determined, Practical, Cautious

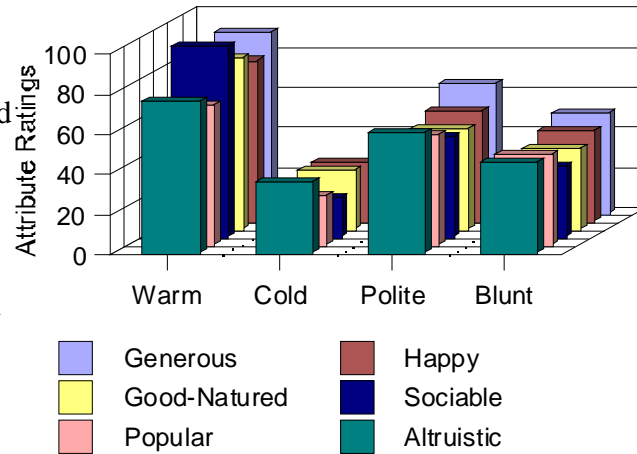
- Participants rated the Generosity, Happiness, good-naturedness, sociability, popularity, and altruism (among others) of the new person.

## Impression Formation Class Data



- Warm Condition rated high on these traits
- Cold Condition rated low on these traits.
- The discrepancy in rating between the Polite vs. Blunt ratings was much smaller.

## Asch 1946



- Harold Kelly (1950) - replicated these results, and found that central traits not only affect not only our ratings of others, but also influences our behavior. (described in book p. 36)

## B. Impression Formation as Cognitive Algebra

- Based on the notion that people are rational thinkers.

### 1. Additive vs. Averaged Impressions

- Is our impression of an individual based on the sum of the values of known traits (Additive) or is it based on an average (sum of value of the traits divided by the number of known traits).

### Implications

- if additive,

Including your weakly positive traits along with strongly positive traits = more positive evaluation

e.g., Kind (+1) + Intelligent (+1) + Loyal (+1) = +3

Kind (+1) + Intelligent (+1) + Loyal (+1) + Organized (+.5) = +3.5

-if it is averaged

Including weakly positive traits reduces your overall evaluation.

e.g., Kind (+1) + Intelligent (+1) + Loyal (+1) / 3 = +1

Kind (+1) + Intelligent (+1) + Loyal (+1) + Organized (+.5) / 4 = +.875

- Research supports the Averaging Model (A Weighted Averaging Model).

2. **Negativity Bias** - Negative traits affect our impressions more than positive traits.

- Negative traits are given stronger weighting than positive traits.

- Evaluations of a person described as having a strongly positive trait and strongly negative trait are not viewed neutrally. Rather they are viewed as rather negative.

- Averaging predicts

Intelligent (+1) + Cold (-1) / 2 = 0

- Weighted Average predicts

Intelligent (+1 x 1) + Cold (-1 x 2) / 3 = -.3333

3. **Positivity Bias** - Generally we evaluate people we know positively.

- Result of averaging across a large body of information

- Most of our social interactions are positive (due to situational norms).

- We self limit our interactions; avoid interactions with negative people.

- When we expect positive interactions with people we tend to attend to positive behaviors and traits, and remember these positive aspects later.

## II. Attribution Theory

### A. Definitions

1. Attribution = the inferences we make about the causes of other peoples behavior
2. Types of potential causes
  - a. Internal = the person caused the behavior
    - Dispositional – Behavior reflects personality  
Likely to happen again
    - Intentional – Behavior was chosen
    - Unintentional – Behavior was not chosen (e.g., accidental)
  - b. External = the situation caused the behavior

### B. Kelly's Covariation Model

- The attribution process = search for information about what a behavior co-occurs (covaries) with:
  - a. Beh. Co-occurs with the Situation = External Attribution
  - b. Beh. Co-occurs with the the Person = Internal Attribution
- Dominating Metaphor: Views people as Naive Scientists - analyze the world in a rational manner

## 1. Covariation Information

- a) **Consensus Information:** Do other people behave this way in this situation?
- b) **Consistency Information:** Is the person's behavior consistent across time in this situation?
- c) **Distinctiveness Information:** Is the person's behavior unique to this situation?

## 1. Covariation Information cont.

Low Consensus, Low Distinctiveness, and  
High Consistency

= Internal Attributions

High Consensus, High Distinctiveness, and  
High Consistency

= External (Situational) Attributions

## 2. Person x Situation Examples

Beh = Cursing - = no cursing + = cursing	Situation					
	Class		Play		Space	
	Room	Ground	Ship	d1	d2	
Stan	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kyle	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cartman	+	+	+	+	+	+

- Low Consensus, Low Distinctiveness, High Consistency  
*Consensus*  
*Low Consensus*  
*Consistency*  
*High*  
*Distinctiveness Low*

## 2. Person x Situation Examples

Beh = Cursing - = no cursing + = cursing	Situation					
	Class		Play		Space	
	Room	Ground	Ship	d1	d2	
Stan	-	-	-	-	+	+
Kyle	-	-	-	-	+	+
Cartman	-	-	-	+	+	+

- High Consensus, High Distinctiveness, High Consistency  
*Beh. of interest*  
*Consensus - High*  
*Consistency - High*  
*Distinctiveness - High* } external

### 3. Final Comments

- When any of these is missing, we are less confident about making internal attributions.
- This process will help identify what is internal (caused by the person), but it does not tell us what internal factors caused the behavior. (Dispositions vs. Other motives)

### C. Theory of Correspondent Inference (Jones and Davis)

- Attempts to explain how we can use an individual's behavior to infer information about their personality (a correspondent inference) and rule out behaviors that are not reflective of one's personality (a non-correspondent inference).

## C. Theory of Correspondent Inference (Jones and Davis)

- **Correspondent Inference** = behavior reflects dispositions and intentions
  - Behavior corresponds with intentions
- **Noncorrespondent Inference** = behaviors are unintentional or external

## 1. Correspondence Information

- a) Whether or not behaviors are **Freely Chosen** (or intended):
  - Based on Knowledge and Ability
  - Did you knowingly do it (or reasonably know what the outcome would be)
  - Did you have the ability to do it (or prevent it).
    - e.g., are the video taped confessions of hostages, believable?

# 1. Correspondence Information

## 2) Motives with **Noncommon Effects**:

Outcomes that only have one likely cause (motive / behavior) are very diagnostic (Jones & Davis)

When there are multiple likely causes for the behavior then we become less confident.

Accused Pleads Guilty; we agree

- Few likely causes besides guilt

Accused Pleads Innocent; we don't know what to do.

- May plead innocent because they are innocent
- May plead innocent to avoid punishment

# 1. Correspondence Information

## 3) Socially Desirability of Behavior

- Behavior low in social desirability is more diagnostic than highly socially desirable Beh.
- This is really an extension of the analysis of noncommon effects.
  - Social desirability serves as another potential cause for behavior.
- Beh. = Mr. X kicks your dog
  - Infer the Mr. X is a dog hating jerk
- Beh. = Mr. X pets your dog
  - Mr. X may or may not really like dogs.

## 1. Correspondence Information

- Freely chosen behavior + non common effects + not clearly socially desirable = tells us about an individual's personality (correspondent inference).
- if any of these is missing, we will be less certain about our judgments and more likely to make noncorrespondent attributions for behavior