

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.

A. Asch Cont.

- Central vs. Peripheral Traits

-Central traits are 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.

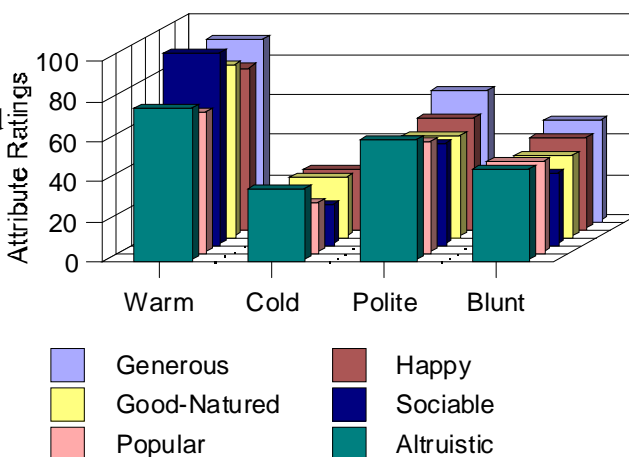
The list included either Warm, Cold, Polite, or Blunt

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.

- 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 it is additive, then it is good to tell people about your really good traits and other traits that are good but not as strongly positive.

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

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

- if it is averaged, then it is bad to included less positive traits. It 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 is result of enduring traits and likely to happen again
- Intentional – Behavior does not reflect personality, but was intentional
- Unintentional – Behavior was not intentional (e.g., accidental)

b. External = the situation caused the behavior

B. Kelly's Covariation Model

- Explains the attribution process as a search for information about what a particular behavior is correlated (covaries) with:
 - a. Beh. Correlated with the Situation = External Attribution
 - b. Beh. Correlated with the the Person = Internal Attribution
- Dominating Metaphor: Views people as naive scientists who analyze the world in a rational manner

1. Covariation Information

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

1. Covariation Informatin 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	Situation					
	Class		Play		Space	
- = no cursing	Room	Ground	Ship			
+ = cursing	d1	d2	d1	d2	d1	d2
Stan	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kyle	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cartman	+	+	+	+	+	+

- Low Consensus, Low Distinctiveness, High Consistency

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- High Consensus, High Distinctiveness, High Consistency

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
- **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 with non common effects, which is not clearly socially desirable will be interpreted as telling us about an individual's personality.
- if any of these is missing, we will be less certain about our judgments and more likely to make noncorrespondent attributions for behavior

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 reasoning.
- We don't always do this

- 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

- Usually we have to make quick judgments (within a second or two), we do not have time to make rational/accurate attributions

- We don't always do this, especially when:

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.

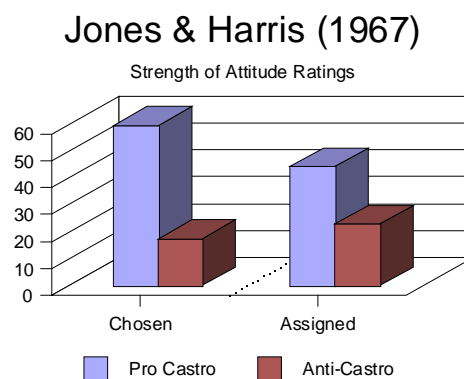
- Sometimes we don't like the implications of the inferences we "should" make, so we don't make them.

B) The Correspondent Bias / Fundamental Attribution Error

1. The tendency to make internal-dispositional attributions about other people's behavior, even when situational causes are clearly present.
2. Jones & Harris (1967)
 - Participants read Pro-Castro essays and heard speeches that were written by political science students.
 - Participants were told that students were either assigned to write on these topics or they had chosen them.

Jones & Harris (1967) cont.

- Participants then rated how much the speech writer was either Pro- or Anti-Castro
- The Assigned condition rating were similar to the Chosen condition.
- People failed to take the situational information into account.



C) The Actor Observer Bias

1) What is it?

A limitation on CB/FAE

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

C) The Actor Observer Bias

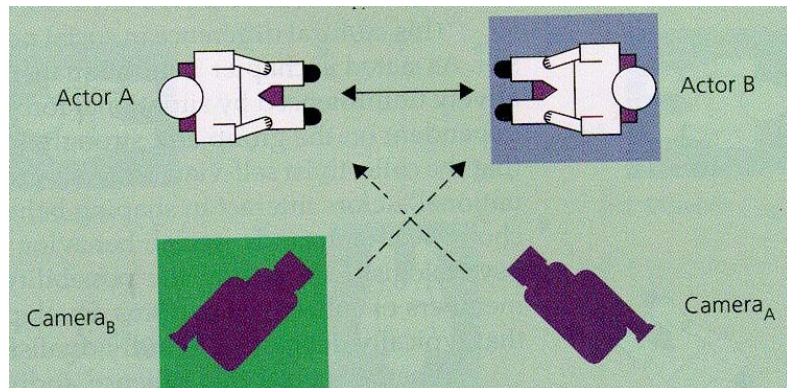
2) Why does it occur

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

b) continued

- Storms (1973)

- 2 participants are assigned to be actors and have a conversation on predetermined topic



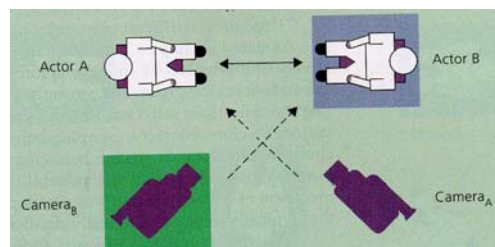
b) continued

Afterward, actors rate the amount of causal influence they each had over the conversation.

-with respect to figure:

Actor A : $AB > AA$

Actor B: $AA > AB$

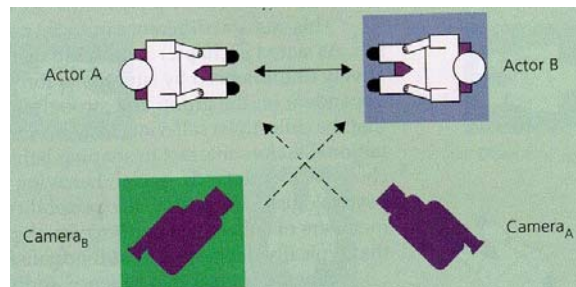


b) continued

Next, 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 consistent with their observer's ratings

Actor A : AA > AB

Actor B : AB > AA



D. The Self Serving Bias

1) What ?

- A limitation on the Actor-Observer Bias.
- 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 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.

2) Why ?

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

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.

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

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

- 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).

Social Skills: Group loyalty, Cooperation, Contributing to the group w/o expecting rewards, Public modesty about abilities, Deference to Status, Rewarding Deference to Status

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

Attributional Bias & Individualism

-FAE is commonly demonstrated

-Western tradition of divine free will & Aristotelian Dispositionism. Therefore behavior is intentional and actor is personally responsible.

-SSB is commonly demonstrated

- Cultural focus: Competition & Individual Achievement = Self-esteem & Public Prestige Result in esteem maintenance and impression management strategies

Attributional Bias & Collectivism

-Lower Levels of FAE

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

-Reversed Self-Serving bias: Other-Serving Bias: Tend to make internal attributions for failures and external attributions for success.

– Taking individual credit for success would interfere with cooperative orientation