

## How do we explain the behavior of others and our own?

- ☞ HAPPY couples, explain both negative and positive events in such a way that distress would be LESSENERD; UNHAPPY couples explain them in very negative ways

*Misattributions* – men attribute friendly behavior of women as a sign of sexual interest = sexual harassment cases

## ATTRIBUTION THEORY

- ☞ Tries to analyze how we explain people's behavior; whether we attribute it to DISPOSITIONAL or SITUATIONAL factors

## INFERRING TRAITS

- ☞ We often infer that other people's intentions and dispositions correspond to their actions.

EX: experiments where actors were asked to play the role of a nice person; observers then concluded that they were really a nice person even after being informed about the task the actors were given

## *Theory of correspondent inferences*

- ☞ What we observe from other people, we presume to be their internal dispositions, especially when the behavior is UNUSUAL – this sometimes leads us to UNDERESTIMATE situational factors influencing a person's behavior

EX: sarcastic behavior is attributed to internal disposition MORE when a person is sarcastic during a job interview than when the person has been involved in a vehicular accident

- ☞ When an actor is not bound by any sort of constraint in his behavior (he has a choice) observers attribute his actions as revealing his motives or personality

## COMMONSENSE ATTRIBUTIONS

1. *Consistency* – is this how a particular person usually behaves
2. *Distinctiveness* – is the behavior specific to a particular situation
3. *Consensus* – do other people behave in this particular manner also

- ☞ These three factors influence whether we would attribute behavior to situation or the person

## INFORMATION INTEGRATION

- ☞ We also weigh information about other people depending on which is more IMPORTANT or RELAVANT to us

*Fundamental Attribution Error (or correspondence bias)*– the tendency for observers to underestimate situational influences and overestimate dispositional influences upon other’s behavior

- ☞ When are quick to judge that people are what we see them to be – we do not take into account other situational factors that might have led them to behave in such a way

EX: a student’s poor performance in school usually attributed to lack of intelligence or motivation – WHAT ABOUT TEACHER AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES???

EX: game show hosts as being really knowledgeable – KRIS AQUINO

- ☞ Also works in conjunction with our SELF-SERVING TENDENCIES

Ex: men think that a woman (accomplice) really likes them, even if told she was ordered to be positive

**Implication in judicial controversies:** you are to blame for you could have done otherwise OR I was a victim of the situation

## PERSPECTIVE AND SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

*Actor-Observer Effect* – the difference in the way we explain our behavior, DEPENDING on whether we are the ACTOR or OBSERVER

- ☞ When we ACT, the ENVIRONMENT commands our ATTENTION
- ☞ When we OBSERVE another person, that person PREOCCUPIES our attention;

the ENVIRONMENT becomes INVISIBLE

**Implications on confession videotapes:** these videos usually show only the confessor, which yields a 100% conviction rate (it seems genuine); but focus on the interrogator, it seems coerced

*Perspectives Change with time* – as the image of the person gradually fades in our memory, we slowly begin to look at situational forces acting on the person which could have been responsible for the person's behavior

**Implications of Perceptual Perspectives:** it serves as a catalyst for interpersonal misunderstandings; but as relationships prosper and people get to know each other better, there should be a gradual merging of actor observer orientations.

*Self-awareness* – when our attention focuses upon ourselves, we attribute more responsibility to ourselves; their attributions are like that of observers

- ☞ The less that we are able to view people's behavior in context, the more likely we are to attribute them to personality (disposition)

#### CULTURE DIFFERENCE

- ☞ Individualists place more weight on the person, thereby facilitating their tendency to attribute more to disposition; while the opposite is more probable within a collectivist society

#### **WHY THEN ARE WE STILL SUSCEPTIBLE TO A SOCIAL PHENOMENON THAT WE ALREADY KNOW OF???**

- ☞ it is easier to attribute to disposition than to analyze a whole social context and attribute to situation
- ☞ it is also our dispositions that has placed us in the situation we are in

How erroneous is the Fundamental Attribution Error?

- ☞ Experiments have shown that people's attributions predict their attitudes towards the poor and unemployed

## WHY WE STUDY ATTRIBUTION ERRORS

- ☞ We'd first have to keep in mind that our modes of thought are generally adaptive
- ☞ Being made aware of our own errors in perception should IDEALLY, make us more rational and in touch with reality
- ☞ It should lessen our *misattributing tendencies*, ergo lessening interpersonal conflicts and misunderstandings

## CONSTRUCTING INTERPRETATIONS AND MEMORIES

*"We respond not to reality as it is but to reality as we construe it"*

## PERCEIVING AND INTERPRETING EVENTS

- ☞ Because social perceptions are very much in the eye of the beholder, even a simple stimulus may strike two people differently
- ☞ Social information is subject to MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS, therefore, our PRECONCEPTIONS about it MATTER because it affects how we would interpret information
- ☞ We readily ACCEPT evidence that SUPPORT our belief, but are quick to DISREGARD the CONTRARY – *confirmation bias* IN RELATION to our *self-serving tendencies*
- ☞ We are MORE CRITICAL of information that are against our beliefs or stand – we usually DO NOT criticize our own facts and beliefs

EX: in judging who won a debate, people who already had their choice among presidential candidates, both believed their candidates won the same debate – FUNNY

BELIEF PERSEVERANCE - persistence of one's initial conceptions even when contrary evidence is being given – more of the perseverance of WHY OUR BELIEFS MIGHT BE TRUE

- ☞ It is surprisingly difficult to demolish a falsehood, once the person conjures up a rationale for it
- ☞ The experiments show that the MORE we EXAMINE our THOERIES and explain how they might be true, the more we become CLOSED to INFORMATION that challenges our beliefs
- ☞ We become prisoners of our own thought patterns

\*\*\**Overcoming belief perseverance* – explaining **any alternative** outcome, not just the opposite, eliminates belief perseverance ~ DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

## CONSTRUCTING MEMORIES

- ☞ We do not recall past experience from our memory as accurately as we might think – it requires BACKWARD REASONING
- ☞ Our current feelings and expectations affect how we reconstruct our memories
- ☞ We can easily REVISE our MEMORIES to suit our current knowledge

### 1. RECONSTRUCTING PAST ATTITUDES

- ☞ People whose attitude has changed, insist that they have always felt the same way
- ☞ It's not really that we do not fully know how we used to feel, it's just that our CURRENT feelings INFLUENCE our RECALL of the past

\*\*\*parents always say that “this generation is going nuts” because they recall their youth as being more in line with their current values

### 2. RECONSTRUCTING PAST BEHAVIOR

- ☞ Just as we modify our recall of past attitudes, we also err in reconstructing our past behavior

### 3. RECONSTRUCTING OUR EXPERIENCES

- ☞ We have a tendency to construct memories we recall with great confidence but sometimes with little accuracy

*Misinformation Effect* – incorporating misinformation into one's memory of the event, after witnessing an event and receiving misleading information about it

EX: participants in the Loftus experiment gave higher estimates to the speed of the vehicles shown in the film when they were asked: “How fast were the cars going when they SMASHED into each other” than when the word SMASHED was replaced with a milder verb: HIT – *they also recalled seeing BROKEN GLASS, when there wasn't any in the film*

\*\*\*the influence of suggestive questioning and semantics during the interrogation of

sexually abused children – *leading questions*

*Memories constructed from suggestion as from actual experience*

- ☞ Our MEMORIES are bits and pieces of IMAGES; in recall, we try to combine these bits and pieces to make a CONVINCING STORYLINE.

EX: students who spent time talking with someone, and afterwards were told that the person liked them, recalled more positive behavior of the person; while student who were told that the person disliked them, recalled negative behavior of the person!!!

*Priming* – activating particular associations in memory

- ☞ Even psychiatrists and psychologists are not immune  
\*\*\*interaction between cognitive psychology and social psychology

### JUDGING OTHERS

INTUITION – immediately knowing something without the need for reasoning or analysis

*Right brain* – non-logical part of brain

### THE POWERS OF INTUITION

- ☞ Evidence of it comes from studies of the unconscious mind and other automatic process in our brains (minds) that we are unaware of

Consider the following:

1. *schemas*
2. *emotional reactions* – they happen instantaneous with the stimulus, BEFORE we get the chance to actually ANALYZE

EX: our ancestors fear of sounds coming from the bush, or the dark

3. *expertise*
4. *prosopagnosia* – people who have sustained damage to a part of the brain involved in face recognition, show changes in their vital signs when shown pictures of their loved one's – *unconscious recognition*
5. *the effects of subliminal stimuli*

- ☞ these mechanisms, taken as whole frees our cognitive resources to be able to attend to more important matters, or multiple tasks at the same time

## LIMITS OF OUR INTUITION

1. the effects of subliminal stimuli are not that strong
2. hindsight judgments (i-knew-it-all-along)
3. our capacity for illusion: perceptual misinterpretations (thinking we heard someone call our name or “malik-mata”), fantasies, and constructed beliefs
4. fabrication of explanations: *split brain patients*; nonverbal = right

\*\*\*social psychologists attempt to demonstrate how our social cognitive mechanisms are flawed is not an attempt to prove that all our beliefs are counterfeit; it’s helpful to know and be more cautious!

## JUDGEMENTAL OVERCONFIDENCE

*Overconfidence Phenomenon* – the tendency to be more confident than correct – to overestimate the accuracy of one’s beliefs

**People become overconfident because:** They do not seek information that might disprove their belief

*confirmation bias* – the tendency to search information that confirms one’s preconceptions; helps to keep our self-images stable

## REMEDIES FOR OVERCONFIDENCE

1. prompt for a feedback
2. think of reasons why judgments might be wrong

\*\*\*overconfidence can cost us, BUT REALISTIC self-confidence is ADAPTIVE

- ☞ be careful of other people’s dogmatic statements

EX: Americans can defend their argument well which makes them sound right because they’re more verbose than anything else

REPRESENTATIVENESS HEURISTIC – the strategy of judging the likelihood of things by how well they represent, or match particular prototypes; *schemas*

*Heuristics* – simple efficient thinking strategies; like *schemas*

*Base-rate Fallacy* – the tendency to ignore or underuse base-rate information (information that describes most people) and instead to be influenced by distinctive features of the case being judged; the opposite of overgeneralizations

*Anecdotal information* – information that is not based on empirical evidence or subject to objective inquiry

☞ very persuasive

EX: marketing strategy; i know someone who...

\*\*\*people are slow to deduce particular instances form a general truth but are remarkably quick to infer general truth from a vivid instance

AVAILABILITY HEURISTICS – the strategy of judging based on only what is available in memory

- ☞ if instances of something come readily to mind, we presume it to be commonplace
- ☞ it is sometimes useful; the fact that it is readily in our memory, SUGGESTS that is has already been experienced, learnt, etc...

EX: because people see more new footages of plane crashes, they assume that it is more dangerous to fly than it is to drive

COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING – the process of mentally simulating what might have been

- ☞ occurs when we can easily picture an alternative outcome
- ☞ the direction of which (+ or --) is determined by the proximity to higher or lower cutoffs

\*\*\*our cognitive mechanisms are efficient and adaptive, yet error-prone

ILLUSORY THINKING

*Illusory correlation* – perception of a relationship (or a stronger one) where none exists

EX: pagan beliefs in rain gods and other goddesses

- ☞ when we think a correlation exists, we recall confirming instances – *confirmation bias*

*Illusion of Control* – perception of uncontrollable events as subject to one's control or as more controllable than they are

EX: pagan rituals; witchcraft; GAMBLING

*Regression towards the average* – the statistical tendency for extreme scores or extreme behavior to return toward one's average

- ☞ when we feel low at times, we will eventually return to our “normal state”; NO NEED TO WORRY
- ☞ there is wisdom to common knowledge that when things are going so bad, it will become better, or that when things are too good, something bad will happen;
- ☞ exceptional performance tends to regress to normal

#### MOOD AND JUDGEMENT

- ☞ happy people make better, more positive judgments, remember more positive events, etc...
- ☞ mood also affects how we perceive events (our current relationships, status in life, etc...)

*“we don't attribute our changing perceptions to our mood shifts. Rather, the world really seems different”*

#### SELF-FULFILLING BELIEFS

- ☞ our social beliefs matter because they have effects. They influence how we feel and act, and thereby generates a life of its own  
*self-fulfilling prophecy* ~ generates its own reality

#### GETTING FROM OTHERS WHAT WE EXPECT

- ☞ we sometimes become extra nice to people we expect to be negative, which induces them to be nice in return
- ☞ hostility almost always get hostility in return

*behavioral confirmation* – a type of self-fulfilling prophecy whereby people's social expectations lead them to act in ways that cause others to confirm their expectations

☞ when someone loves and admires us, it helps us become more the person they imagine us to be