

Unit 14: Social Psychology

1. Introduction

1. We are social animals.
2. We are moved to love and to hate, drastically.
3. We almost always care what others think or what others do or say.
4. **Social psychology** is the study of how we think about, influence, and relate to others.

2. Attributing behavior to persons or to situations

1. Fritz Heider came up with the **attribution theory** which says people measure others' behavior by either their internal disposition or the external situation that they're in.
 1. In other words, people behave due to their innate nature or because they're caught up in the situation.
 2. For example, a person may be quiet by nature, but in the right situation, may be very outgoing.
2. The **fundamental attribution error** is that we tend to overestimate a person's natural personality and underestimate the position that they're in.
 1. An experiment with a set-up "mean or friendly" girl showed that we see behavior as being determined by one's personality, not by the situation.
 2. When we view others, it's easy to fall into the fundamental attribution error trap. Studies show that when people have the situations reversed, they better see the situation from another's point-of-view.
3. How we interpret another's behavior has consequences—both good and/or bad.
 1. We must be cautious in interpreting another person's actions or inactions. Liberal or conservative views often serve as a lens through which people see the world.
 2. Politics comes into play when interpreting actions or inactions.

3. Attitudes and actions

1. **Attitudes** are feelings that drive us to respond to a situation, person, or event in a certain way. Our beliefs often influence feelings.
 1. How we feel about someone or something, right or wrong, impacts the way we react to it.
2. The **central route persuasion** is a change-of-attitude where people evaluate arguments and respond with favorable thoughts.
 1. Simply, this occurs when you weigh the evidence of something and make a rational decision.
3. The **peripheral route persuasion** is a change-of-attitude where people are influenced by quick cues and make quick judgments.
 1. Simply, this occurs when you make a quick decision based on initial factors without really thinking about it. You decide based on a snap judgment, emotion, what's cool, popular, sexy, etc.
4. What you hold as your attitude affects how you act.
 1. The **foot-in-the-door phenomenon** says that if a person goes along with small requests, he or she will go along with bigger requests.
 1. For instance, American prisoners in the Korean War were increasingly given rewards for "going along" with communist ideas. What started as something tiny grew to full-fledged agreement with socialism/communism.
 2. To get people to agree to a big lie, start with a small lie.
 3. What's more, once you go along, what you do starts to become what you believe. That's why many Korean War prisoners returned to the U.S. "brainwashed" and believing that socialism/communism was actually good for America.
 4. Some good news, the belief-follows-action phenomenon works not only for the bad, but for the good as well.
 2. The role that a person fills also affects his or her actions.
 1. People tend to behave in a manner that they think is appropriate for whatever role they are in.
 2. The most famous role-playing situation was the famous "**Zimbardo Prison Experiment**" done by Philip Zimbardo at Stanford in 1972.
 1. Zimbardo set up a fake prison in the basement at Stanford, then randomly assigned prisoners and guards.

2. They role-played. Guards were given clubs and uniforms and told to keep order. Prisoners were given humiliating robes.
 3. The effect—the “guards” assumed their roles and basically abused the “prisoners”. The experiment was called off after 6 days.
 4. The bottom line—we are what we do.
3. When our attitudes and our actions don’t match up, we feel tense. This is called “cognitive dissonance”. To fight this tension, the **cognitive dissonance theory** tries to bring our attitudes and our actions together to relieve tension.
 1. In essence, we rationalize our actions and we make excuses for what we do.
 2. We either change our attitudes to match our actions, or vice versa. Usually, it’s the attitude that’s changed rather than the behavior.
 3. The good news, changing one’s behavior can be relieving.
4. Conformity and obedience
 1. People mimic other people’s actions, as with looking up or yawning.
 2. The so-called “chameleon effect” says we reflect the characteristics of those whom we’re around.
 3. Taking on others’ feelings is called “mood linkage”—we’re happy around happy people, sad around depressed people.
 4. **Conformity** is changing your behavior or thinking to the group’s norm.
 1. Solomon Asch did a conformity study where he asked which line was the same length as another (the answer was obvious).
 2. However, others in the group were “in on the joke” and set up one person who was not.
 1. Those “in on it” chose the right answer a couple of times, then they purposely chose an obviously wrong answer.
 2. The one person who was not “in on the joke” eventually went over to the others’ wrong choice 1/3 of the time.
 3. Asch came up with conditions that strengthen conformity...
 1. Insecurity.
 2. Group must have 3+ people.
 3. The group is unanimous.
 4. Someone in the group is admired.
 5. No commitment has been made yet.
 6. Others watch one another.
 7. Your culture values social standards.
 4. The reasons that we conform are...
 1. To avoid being ostracized, which can be a serious punishment. Thus, we respond to the **normative social influence**, meaning, we adjust our behavior to that of the group’s.
 2. Other people can give us information. This **informational social influence** leads us to go along with the group lest we be “left out of the loop.”
 5. Robert Baron did an updated Asch experiment. His conclusion...
 1. If a person is unsure of their judgment, they’ll listen and conform to others.
 6. People in Western cultures, which value individualism, are less conforming than people in Eastern cultures.
 5. **Obedience** is obeying the directions of an authority figure (or someone perceived as an authority figure). The most famous/infamous obedience experiment was done by Asch’s student, Stanley Milgram. It’s usually just called the **Milgram Experiment** or the “Obedience to Authority Experiment.”
 1. Milgram had 3 groups of people...
 1. Experimenter—was the overall boss.
 2. Learner—was to answer word pair questions.
 3. Teacher—was to “teach” word pairs and give electric shocks for incorrect answers.
 2. The Experimenter and Learner were both “in on the joke”—they knew the shocking was fake. The Teacher was left out of the loop.
 1. The teacher would start at 15 volts, then after each wrong answer, go up a notch. The electrical dial went up to 450 volts.
 2. If the teacher got nervous about shocking the Learner, the Experimenter told the Teacher to continue.
 3. Milgram’s purpose was to see how far the Teacher would go (how obedient would the Teacher be)?
 3. The findings—most people (63%) went all the way to 450 volts.

4. The Milgram Experiment is often cited as ethically wrong. Namely, it put the Teacher under considerable stress (thinking he was torturing the Learner). And, the idea of "Informed Consent" was very questionable because the Experimenter, under false pretense, tried to talk the Teacher into continuing.
6. Lessons from conformity and obedience studies...
 1. People seem driven to get along and to follow instructions. We are social animals.
 2. The foot-in-the-door effect works, as in the Milgram experiment, the shock started small then worked up. Those who resisted usually did so early on.
 3. Ordinary people are capable of terrible things when just "following orders." For instance, the Holocaust of WWII.
 4. People will follow horrible orders even more so when someone else does the nasty work.
5. Group influence
 1. **Social facilitation** is the phenomenon of better performance while someone is watching. For instance, runners run faster when competing against people than against the clock.
 1. Having others watch arouses us (it wakes us up) to the task-at-hand.
 2. Sometimes though, having others around hinders our performance. This happens when we're doing something difficult for us.
 3. What we do well, we do better when others watch.
 2. **Social loafing** is the phenomenon where people put forth less effort while in a group as compared to being on their own.
 1. While in a group, we rely on the group to pick up more weight than when we have to go it alone.
 2. This happens because the person feels less accountable and that his efforts won't matter much.
 3. Men in individualistic cultures tend to be the highest social loafers.
 3. **Deindividuation** is giving up normal restraints and giving in to the crowd.
 1. This happens when the group both arouses us and lowers our accountability (we're hyped up and feel like we can get away with something in the crowd).
 2. Deindividuation is why a normally calm person in a crowd might yell like crazy at an umpire. Sometimes this phenomenon is called "herd poisoning" because the crowd/herd poisons the mind and judgment of a normally rational person.
 4. The effects of group interaction
 1. **Group polarization** is the idea that the differences between two groups will widen as time passes.
 1. For instance, the political views between two groups of college freshmen may be slight at first, but by their senior years, the gap will have widened.
 2. Talking about the issue seems to actually widen the gap. The more you talk about it, the more set in your views you become.
 2. "**Groupthink**" occurs when everyone in the group quietly goes along with the others to keep harmony, even though the idea may be unrealistic.
 1. Groupthink is fueled by overconfidence, conformity, self-justification, and group polarization.
 2. To fight groupthink, allow alternative opinions, allow experts to view the plans, and ask for possible problems.
6. Cultural influence
 1. The **culture** that we live in gets soaked up by our brains. Our culture impacts our behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, and traditions.
 1. We pass on things from person to person.
 2. Although cultures differ, the ability to have and to pass on culture to others is universal.
 2. Different cultures have their own variations.
 1. The examples are too many, but some differences are: beachwear in different places, wearing shoes in the house or not, to greet with a handshake or kiss. Each area has its own norms—simply, what's normal.
 2. **Personal space** is the comfortable area between you and another person. North Americans and northern Europeans like wider personal spaces than Latin Americans, the French, and Arab nations.
 3. **Punctuality** differs too. North America, northern Europeans, and Japanese are time-conscious. Mediterranean, Indonesia, and Caribbean countries are more unworried about time.

1. The effect—time-watchers see the others as charming but inefficient; laid-back countries see time-watchers as efficient but cold.
 4. Culture's **change over time** as well. Think of beachwear, what's commonly worn on the beach today definitely would not have been the norm 100 years ago.
7. The power of individuals
1. Even though we are social animals, people have the power to do things on their own. History shows it is the power of an individual working alone who brings about great change, rather than many working as a group.
 2. Witness Gandhi who freed India using nonviolent protest or Isaac Newton who literally wrote calculus or Martin Luther who restored Christianity to its Biblical roots.
8. Prejudice
1. **Prejudice** is to "prejudge"—to draw a conclusion prior to analyzing a situation.
 1. At times, **stereotypes** influence prejudice. Stereotypes are preconceived notions about a person or situation. They may or may not fit the actual situation. Stereotypes could be good or bad, they could be right or wrong.
 2. To **discriminate** means to draw a distinction between two things. Discrimination in and of itself is not a bad thing.
 1. When applied to people though, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination can be ugly.
 3. A study suggested people have prejudice based on one's name (and thus perceived race).
 4. In another example, people tend to see women as being more nurturing, sensitive, and less aggressive. This was seen in two pictures of a man. One was normal and the other was feminized. Women then chose the feminized man as being more loyal, trustworthy, and family-oriented.
 5. There are many, many examples of injustice in the world. But to be fair, it is unclear how much of this injustice is due to prejudice, and how much is due to other causes.
 2. When society yields people at the top of the socio-economic ladder (the "rich") and those at the bottom (the "poor"), certain things happen...
 1. The "rich" see themselves as having earned their position.
 2. A "blame-the-other-guy" mentality follows...
 1. The "rich" say the "poor" are where they are because they're lazy. The poor are the result of their own actions or inactions. The rich blame the poor for their low status.
 2. The "poor" see themselves as victims of the "riches'" actions, but not the result of their own actions or inactions. The poor blame the rich for their low status.
 3. The "**ingroup**" includes those on the inside of a social circle and the "**outgroup**" excludes all others. The group we're in is the ingroup, others are the outgroup.
 1. What's more, we have an **ingroup bias** where we favor our own group.
 3. Why are people prejudiced?
 1. Prejudice can begin with the fear of attack by others. It can also start with the **scapegoat theory**, which says people tend to look for someone on whom to place blame when things go wrong.
 2. We can also "think" our way into prejudice. People tend to simplify and categorize things in order to make sense of them. This adds to the "us-them" mentality.
 3. People are able to see differences among their own racial/ethnic group, but others are seen as if "they all look the same." This is called the **other-race effect** or the "own-race bias."
 4. The **just-world phenomenon** states that good behavior is rewarded and bad behavior is punished.
 1. Hindsight bias plays into this as well. Sometimes the victims can be blamed. For instance, after 9/11, some people blamed the United States for a lack of understanding of the terrorists and hinted that the Americans therefore deserved the attacks.
9. Aggression
1. **Aggression**, in psychology, is any physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt or destroy. It can be emotional or very calm, as long as it meets those characteristics.
 2. Aggression has biological factors built into it.
 1. Genetics lays the groundwork first. People are like different types of dogs who are more or less prone to fighting. Twin studies have backed this up. Males are more prone to aggression.

2. Neural influences affect aggression. Neural networks in the brain that inhibit or activate aggression. Namely, the amygdala can activate aggression, and the frontal lobes are important for controlling impulses. There is no one true "hot spot" however.
 3. Biochemical influences affect aggression. Drugs and hormones can affect aggression. Violent people tend to be male, muscular, with low serotonin and high testosterone, and lower intelligence. Alcohol also increases aggression.
3. There are psychological and social factors that play into aggression.
1. The **frustration-aggression principle** says that when things go badly, we're more inclined to get aggressive. Simply put, we seek revenge.
 1. For example, after 9/11, most Americans sought revenge for the unprovoked actions of terrorists.
 2. People are more aggressive when they're cranky. Things like hot weather increase aggressive behavior.
 3. Aggression is more common when people have been taught that their aggression yields results.
 1. For example, terrorists continue to terrorize when they're told that their actions bring about a change in those whom they terrorize.
 2. To counter this, the victims of terrorism should remain strong and send the message that terrorism will not bring about the desired change of the terrorists.
 2. Aggression is modeled in many ways.
 1. Parents can model aggression by yelling and beating their children, rather than lovingly disciplining their child. Rather, constructive physical discipline (spanking) is calm, loving, just, and teaches a lesson for the child's good. Allowing a child to misbehave is, in fact, extremely unloving.
 2. TV and movies are ridiculously aggressive and violent. The message conveyed is clear: violence is sexy and productive.
 1. The "rape scene" and blaming-the-victim infamously comes back. The "rape myth" holds that women (being the "good girls") initially flee from a rapist, then give in, then enjoy it. Here, they say the woman deserved what she got.
 3. Pornography has negative effects in many ways—it makes one's spouse appear less attractive, it makes sexual crimes seem less severe, it makes sexual violence seem less offensive.
 3. **Social scripts** are the "screenplays", conveyed by the media and our culture, that show us how to act in situations.
 1. Youngsters who constantly see glamorized gangsta rappers denigrating women and flashing guns will mimic just that.
 2. Liberal TV shows and even cartoons constantly glamorize free and open sex, then it's accepted as okay behavior and reenacted in real-life.
 4. Video games are extremely violent. The question is, "Does this violence release aggression in a harmless way or add to aggressive behavior?"
 1. At times, people have copy-catted the violence of games to real life.
 2. Certainly, video games **desensitize** the gamer to violence. A person's head cut off? No big deal!
 3. The experimental research is clear...
 1. Violent games lead to an increase in aggressive and violent behavior.
 2. The "**cartharsis hypothesis**" is NOT supported. This is the idea that a person can use a video game as a harmless outlet to aggression ("catharsis" means to let something out, to release the "pressure" that's built up).

10. Attraction

1. We become friends to some people, fall in love with some people, but don't with others. Why?
2. To grow close to someone, people must first share a **proximity**—they must be geographically close together.
 1. Sometimes being close means we fight. Usually, it means we get along.
 2. Being close means being familiar. And, familiarity plays a big part in who we like. The bottom line—we like people with whom we're familiar and who are like us. Conversely, we distrust (and maybe dislike) people unfamiliar and unlike us.
 1. The **mere exposure effect** says that repeated exposure to novel stimuli increases how much we like it. In other words, as we get used to something, we like it more.

2. Experiments show the more we see a person, the more attractive we find them.
3. We like our own faces too. An experiment morphed the subject's faces with a stranger's. Not surprisingly, the subject liked the morphed face more than the stranger's.
3. Physical attractiveness matters (AKA, "hotness" matters!).
 1. After proximity, the next biggest factor that draws attraction is **physical appearance** (sorry, but it's not a "nice personality").
 2. Attractive people get more interest from the opposite sex.
 3. Attractiveness also influences people's perceptions. The good-looking are seen as healthy, happy, sensitive, successful, etc. (all things good). Attractive and well-dressed people get better jobs and earn more as well.
 4. Defense for the not-so-attractive people...
 1. Self-esteem and happiness are independent of attractiveness.
 2. Most people don't feel they are unattractive (the mere exposure effect is at work here—we're prone to like our own appearance).
 3. Different cultures, and different time periods, have different definitions of beauty. People go to extremes to alter their appearances in trying to meet the perceived definition of beauty.
 1. Across cultural boundaries though, men like young-looking women, women like men who look healthy, mature, dominant, successful.
 4. Characteristics like honesty, humor, manners, etc. are great. And, once a person gets to know you with these characteristics, they tend to start seeing you as more physically attractive.
 5. A face that is a computer composite of many faces is seen as more attractive than the faces that make it up. This is perhaps because the averaged face is symmetrical, which we like.
4. After proximity and physical appearance, **similarity**, or getting to know a person, is the next factor that plays into attraction.
 1. Do opposites or similar people usually attract? The research clearly shows that opposites do not attract. We dislike those unlike us, we like people like us. The saying, "birds of a feather flock together" is right.
 2. Friends and couples usually have these things in common: age, religion, race, education, intelligence, smoking behavior, economic level.
 3. The "reward theory of attraction" says we'll like people whose behavior is rewarding to us in some way.
 1. If we live in someone's proximity, we can enjoy their company frequently.
 2. If they're physically attractive, it's nice to be with them and may "up" our status.
 3. If they share our thoughts and feelings, they validate our thoughts and feelings.
5. Romantic love can be broken down into short-term "passionate love" and long-term "companionate love."
 1. **Passionate love** is usually brought on by arousal. Arousal can come in many forms, such as fright, aerobic exercise, eroticism, funny or crude talk.
 1. Whatever the cause of arousal, a study showed men who were aroused viewed a woman as being more attractive than men who were not aroused.
 2. Simply put, when the heart is pounding, we see a member of the opposite sex as more attractive.
 2. **Companionate love** lasts the test of time—it's steady, deep affection. Whereas passionate love yields children, companionate love yields families.
 1. Having a relationship based on **equity** is important. This is where both the man and woman help out one another.
 2. Also, **self-disclosure** is important. This is revealing our innermost desires and dreams to our spouse. To reach this, two people must spend time with one another and gradually earn one another's trust. Research shows that sharing ourselves with others binds us together.

11. Altruism

1. **Altruism** is when we put others ahead of ourselves.
 1. The 1964 rape and murder of **Kitty Genovese** awakened social psychologists to the power of social behavior. Though 38 neighbors heard her cry, they were hesitant to call the police. This is an example on "non-altruism" because the neighbors did not want to inconvenience themselves by getting involved.

1. The Kitty Genovese case also exemplifies the **bystander effect**. It says that, if there are several people present during an emergency, we're less likely to take action.
 2. If only one person was there, he or she usually took action.
 3. Having many people around during an emergency resulted in a "diffusion of responsibility." This is because our level of responsibility is "watered down."
 2. Other patterns of altruism show the best odds of someone helping take place when...
 1. The person seems to need help.
 2. The person seems similar to us.
 3. We've just observed someone else being helpful.
 4. We're not in a hurry.
 5. We're in a small town or rural area.
 6. We're feeling guilty.
 7. We're not preoccupied.
 8. We're in a good mood. This is one of the most consistent findings. When people are happy, they're more inclined to help.
 2. Social psychologists wonder, "Why do people help others anyway?"
 1. A cold-and-calculating theory simply says that we help others if we weigh the costs and benefits and the benefits outweigh the costs. This is called either the **social exchange theory**, or "cost-benefit analysis" or "utilitarianism." Simply put, we get more out of it than we put in.
 2. There are intrinsic rewards. Helping people makes us feel good. Brain scans support this.
 3. The **reciprocity norm** says we should give help (not harm) to those who've helped us.
 4. The **social-responsibility norm** says we should help those who are in need.
12. Conflict and peacemaking
1. **Conflict** is a perceived incompatibility of actions, goals, or ideas. It's bickering or fighting.
 2. **Social traps** occur when our self-interest leads us into lose-lose situations.
 1. Adam Smith wrote the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. In it, he explained that the greatest economic good is achieved through capitalism, by each person pursuing his or her own self-interest.
 1. Capitalism yields the greatest common good, the best for the most people, even though social traps do occur.
 2. Other economic systems, namely communism and socialism, have been shown by history to result in elitism and class inequality, stripping of freedoms, economic stagnation, and widespread hunger.
 2. Jean Jacques Rousseau came up with the "game theory" known as the **Prisoners' Dilemma**.
 1. Imagine two criminals arrested then held in separate rooms. Under interrogation, each is given a choice, either (A) don't confess or (B) confess.
 2. If person 1 confesses, he gets off easy, especially if person 2 does not confess.
 3. If person 2 confesses, he gets off easy, especially if person 1 does not confess.
 4. What usually happens is that both people will confess (they both act in their own best interest). The best option is that *neither* confesses, but out of fear of "being slammed" by their partner, they do what's best for themselves and both confess.
 3. A real-life example of a social trap might be a person who thinks, "If I don't recycle, that's only one person not doing it." If a million others think that way, it makes a big difference.
 3. The **mirror-image perception** concept says we tend to view others as evil and untrustworthy and they see us the same way.
 1. Our negative behavior toward the other group can in turn be reflected back toward us. This creates a **self-fulfilling prophecy** where we think they don't like us, we act unfriendly, and thus, they in fact don't like us and return the unfriendly behavior.
 2. An example of this occurred when Saddam Hussein's military overran tiny and helpless Kuwait in 1990. After America showed altruism by coming to Kuwait's aid and pushing Saddam out, Hussein reciprocated a bitter hatred toward America.
 4. Contact with people whom we prior had held prejudice or dislike helps us get along. In other words, we may say we don't like someone or a certain type of people, but if we spend time with them, we can get along. For example...
 1. The races have grown much closer by being closer on a regular basis.

2. Being around homosexuals regularly increases their acceptance by straight men and women.
3. In other words, familiarity breeds content.
5. **Cooperation** can lead to achieving **superordinate goals**—shared goals that cancel out differences and which can only be achieved through cooperation.
 1. For example, after 9/11, George W. Bush's approval rating shot up to 91%, the highest ever. The shared goal of America was to achieve justice for the wrong brought on by terrorists.
 2. "Rebranding" a person aids in cooperation. Whereas you used to be a "Jet" or a "Shark", if rebranded as a New Yorker, you're more likely to work together.
6. Communication is critical.
 1. Sometimes, when communication breaks down, mediators step into the middle. They try to turn a lose-lose situation into a win-win situation.
 2. During times of crisis, communication is most-needed, but least likely to take place.
7. **Conciliation** is overcoming disagreements and giving in to, or appeasing, another person.
 1. As a non-example, after Saddam Hussein took over tiny Kuwait, President George H. W. Bush said America would "kick Saddam's ass." Saddam said Americans will "swim in their own blood." No conciliation here.
 2. Charles Osgood offered a path of conciliation called "**GRIT**" (Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction). The steps are...
 1. Announce mutual interests and plans to lessen tensions.
 2. Make a small conciliatory act (give in to the other side). This opens the door to reciprocity.
 3. If the enemy responds with reconciliation, that gets another conciliatory response. If the enemy responds with aggression, appropriate action is taken.
 4. In laboratories, GRIT seems promising. In real-life GRIT has not done well.
 1. Hitler was repeatedly given conciliatory responses and appeasements, notably by Neville Chamberlain, which merely encouraged his maniacal behavior.
 2. Two hard-but-true lessons are taught here by history:
 1. Politicians who naively follow the GRIT theory (by relying solely on diplomacy and sanctions) are often played as fools by bullies.
 2. Despite one's own desire to seek out the good in humanity, evil does exist and is very real. And, the evil-doer will use his counterpart's naïve desire-for-good for his own wicked advantage.

page revision: 42, last edited: 25 May 2016, 04:41 (313 days ago)