

Chapter 1 - Introducing Social Psychology

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Social Psychology

- The scientific study of how individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by other people
- The study of how other people affect us
- So long as someone is being affected in any way by other people, including their imagined presence or actions, the situation is relevant to social psychology

Social psychologists are interested in how other people affect every aspect of individual's lives, including thoughts (cognitions), feelings (affect), and behaviours.

Social psychologists study how individuals process information about other people and how they store this information in memory.

Social psychologists also examine people's feelings and emotions, such as their prejudice against outgroups and their affection for friends and lovers.

Social psychologists are, of course, interested in explaining social behaviour.

The ultimate goal of the science is to understand why various kinds of actions toward other people occur or do not occur, such as conformity, aggression, helping and discrimination.

Social psychologists take the perspective of individuals in a social setting, rather than focusing only on objective features of the situation.

A term that is often used to refer to individuals' perceptions of a situation is:

Social Construals

- How they construe (perceive, interpret) the situation

Social psychologists focus on actors' social construals to understand behaviour

Social psychology is a science

Social psychologists rely on direct tests of their ideas.

Scientific evidence is necessary before a proposal will be taken seriously, it is not enough merely to speculate about an event and generate a plausible explanation

How Other People Affect Us

Social psychologists have shown that other people influence virtually every aspect of life, including how we interpret events, how we feel about ourselves, and how we behave.

The process of comparing ourselves to other people to make judgements about the self is called *social comparison*.

Other people affect not only how we interpret events and how we feel about ourselves, but also our actions

Social psychologists have been very interested in how individuals can be transformed in group settings, including the tendency for some large groups to exhibit aggressive behaviour.

One example for mob aggression focuses on feelings of anonymity. If people feel unidentifiable when they are immersed in a large group, they may be 'released' from their normal inhibitions and do things they would not have done alone or in a smaller group. The term *deindividuation* has been used to refer to this feeling that people are unaccountable for their actions when in a large group.

Beware

Social psychology is not just common sense

Common sense allows competing predictions, as in the similarity and liking example given earlier.

Another reason is that because intuitions are not always right, we must conduct research to find out which ones are valid. A final reason is that folk wisdom is often vague and simplistic; real life is usually more complicated.

Hindsight is Not Always Golden

When we learn of an outcome, it seems that it was obvious and that 'we knew it all along'.

This is an illusion.

Things that seem obvious in hindsight may not have been easily predicted in foresight.

The tendency to think a known outcome was obvious is called the hindsight bias.

Why Study Social Psychology?

If we really want to develop an informed and reasoned approach to dealing with social problems, we need to understand why people behave the way they do and the likely effectiveness of different solutions.

The principles of social psychology are relevant to understand not only broad, complex social issues, but also more limited, everyday problems that many of us face.

You will learn some things about yourself.

It will help you better understand yourself and your social world.

Social Psychology's Connections to Other Areas of Psychology

The area of psychology that is perhaps most closely related to social psychology is personality psychology. Personality psychologists study traits, or dispositions, that help to explain human behaviour. Dispositions are consistencies in thought or action that characterize an individual across time and settings and that make him or her different from other people. The primary goal of personality psychologists is to identify the dispositions that are most useful for describing behaviour and for differentiating between individuals. In contrast, social psychologists want to understand the impact of external, situational factors on behaviour - in particular, how individuals are affected by other people.

Developmental psychologists study age-related changes in human abilities and behaviours, ranging from childhood to the end of the life span. Most developmental psychologists study children, often focusing on either social development or cognitive development.

Cognitive psychologists study how the human mind works, including memory, information processing, consciousness, and decision making. This field has made important contributions to our understanding of how knowledge is organized in memory, as well as common errors in judgment and decision making. One area of social psychology overlaps substantially with cognitive psychology: social cognition, which is the study of how information about people is processed and stored. The 'about people' aspect of the definition of social cognition is critical; cognitive psychologists additionally study the processing of non-social information.

Clinical and counselling psychologists study people who are having difficulty coping with life's demands. Sometimes also called abnormal psychology, these fields focus on individuals who are suffering from some kind of psychological or emotional problems. In contrast, social psychologists are primarily interested in 'normal' individuals' behaviour in social settings.

Social Psychology's Connections to Other Disciplines

Sociology is the discipline most closely related to social psychology. Sociology is the study of how social and cultural forces influence behaviour. Sociologists focus on groups to understand phenomena, in contrast to social psychology's focus on the individual.

Anthropology is the study of past and present cultures, particularly how cultural features influence behaviour. Archaeology is one branch of anthropology, which involves the investigation of past cultures through their physical remains. The two fields overlap very little in terms of theoretical perspective (cultures vs. individuals) or research approach (investigation of existing records and materials vs. experiments).

Political science is the study of methods of government, including the principles and operations of political institutions. Political scientists engage primarily in theoretical analysis of governmental systems, rather than experiments on how factors influence individuals' perceptions. Interestingly, a hybrid sub-discipline known as political psychology has emerged in the past 20 years in which social psychologists and political scientists sometimes work together to understand human political behaviour.

Historical Background of Social Psychology

Social psychology emerged as a field distinct from other disciplines and from other areas of psychology sometime in the middle of the 20th century, perhaps most clearly during the 1950s. Thus 'modern' social psychology has only existed 50 or 60 years.

Social Psychology's Roots in Philosophy

The earliest sources of social psychology (and of psychology more generally) can be found in

philosophy.

The Greek philosopher Plato, generally considered the father of Western philosophy, suggested that people experience the world in three distinct ways: in thoughts, in emotions and in action.

Aristotle, one of Plato's students, argued forcefully that living a good life and achieving personal happiness are both dependent on providing benefits to other people in addition to the self.

Aristotle's view was that connections with others form an essential part of who we are.

Much attention in social psychology has been directed to social norms. The concept of social norms can be traced back to one of the great ideas of philosophy: the **social contract**. The social contract refers to the idea that, to survive and prosper, human groups had to develop some basic rules of social and moral conduct; an absence of rules would have led to societal break down.

A final connection between social psychology and philosophy involves the concept of identity. Social psychologists have been very interested in issues related to how people see themselves. Similarly, perhaps the fundamental question in philosophy has been the essence of human existence.

Social Psychology's Early History

European researchers began to use scientific methods to address questions about human perceptions and judgment, moving away from the introspective techniques used by philosophers.

An increasingly important view in psychology during the first few decades of the 20th century was **behaviourism**, which attempted to explain behaviour purely in terms of stimulus-response connections established through experience and reinforcement.

Kurt Lewin, the father of social psychology.

Older social psychologists were opposed to behaviourism, believing instead in the **Gestalt Theory**, which based on the idea that people's overall, subjective interpretations of object are more important than the objects' physical features. Gestalt researchers also emphasized that objects are perceived in their totality, as a unit, rather than in terms of their individual features.

Social Psychology's Emergence as a Distinct Area of Psychology

Social psychology came out of the Second World War as a field that used experimental techniques to study social behaviour.

Chapter 3 - Social Cognition: Thinking About People

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Categorization: the process of recognizing and identifying something. Categorization is the most basic process we use to understand structure our world.

Social Cognition: the study of how information about people is processed and stored

We also discuss how people think about events that could have happened but did not - called 'what if' or counterfactual thinking.

It might be helpful at the outset to note that there are generally thought to be two basic motives that underlie human information processing. One motive is to perceive the world accurately. A second motive is to view the self positively.

Schemas: The Building Blocks of the Mind

Schemas: are mental representations of objects or categories of objects.

People have specific schemas for specific interpersonal interactions called **relational schemas**.

Another term used for schemas is *concepts*.

Schemas or concepts contain the principal features of the object or category, as well as simple assumptions or 'theories' about how the object or category functions.

Categorization

The basic function of schemas is to categorize objects in ways that impose meaning and predictability. When we encounter an object, we must identify what it is (categorize it) before we can behave effectively toward it.

Going Beyond the Information Given

When we categorize something, we assume that it possesses the characteristics of the schema (or most of them) even if we cannot perceive those characteristics directly.

We are going beyond the information given in the sense that we are inferring other, nonvisible characteristics about the object on the basis of our categorization. Categorization allows us to form impressions and make decisions quickly and efficiently, without having to think carefully about every object we encounter.

Selective Information Processing

Many researchers have shown that the schema used to categorize an object can influence what is noticed about the object.

Schemas also influence the interpretation of information.

Schemas lead us to assume that the object possesses particular characteristics, and anything that vaguely implies those characteristics may be taken as evidence that our assumption is accurate.

Although ambiguous information will usually be interpreted as consistent with a schema, anything that obviously contradicts our expectancies will grab out attention.

Accessibility: What's on Your Mind?

When a schema is activated, it provides expectancies about the object's probable characteristics and influences the processing of information about the object.

A schema will be activated when the object's features match the features of the schema.

Accessibility is the ease with which the schema comes to awareness.

Social and cognitive psychologists have shown that when a schema has been used recently, it is more accessibly, an effect that is called **priming**.

The extent to which schemas are easy to activate for an individual across time and situations is termed **chronic accessibility**.

Cultural Differences in Accessible Schemas

Cultures differ in the schemas that are used most often to categorize both self and others. Western cultures emphasize in their socialization individuality, freedom, and independence, whereas Eastern cultures emphasize in their socialization harmony, obedience and interdependence.

These differences in accessible schemas imply that people from different cultures may perceive the same event of the same person quite differently.

Stereotypes: Schemas in the Social Domain

Stereotype: a set of characteristics that someone associates with members of a group; it is a cognitive structure containing the individual's beliefs that members of a group share particular attributes.

Just like other types of schemas, stereotypes reflect our attempt to categorize an object and draw inferences about it.

An interesting aspect of stereotypes is that we ourselves are members of some groups about which we have stereotypes. A group to which a perceiver belongs is called his or her ingroup. Your ingroups probably include university students, people in your age group, your gender, and your ethnic identity.

An outgroup is a group to which a perceiver does not belong. Outgroups for you include professors, elderly people, the opposite sex, and ethnic groups other than your own.

Stereotypes often include information about how much variability exists in the group.

This tendency to overestimate the similarity within groups is much stronger for outgroups than for one's ingroups. That is, whereas people often view their ingroups as being quite diverse, outgroups tend to be seen as more uniform.

The exaggeration of similarity within groups to which we do not belong is called the **outgroup homogeneity effect**.

Our stereotypes can change how we interpret ambiguous behaviour.

Automatic Versus Controlled Processes

Cognitive and social psychologists have come to realize that people do not have full control over all of their mental processes.

An **automatic process** is a judgment or thought that we cannot control: it occurs without intention, very efficiently and sometimes beneath our awareness.

A **controlled process** is a judgment or thought that we command, it is intentional, requires significant cognitive resources and occurs within our awareness. We can turn it on or off at will.

Reconstructive Memory

Most social cognition theorists assume that retrieval occurs by using schemas to search memory. For instance, we begin by thinking about a schema related to our memory goal, which then activates other related schemas, which ultimately activate the information you need.

Memory retrieval must be a 'reconstructive' process.

Cues or strategies must be used to search memory and to estimate the correct answer.

Reconstructive memory is trying to cognitively rebuild the past based on cues and estimates.

Autobiographical Memory

Autobiographical Memory is stored information about the self.

It comprises our knowledge about the self, including our personal history.

Often involves estimating what we were like in the past, because we may not be able to retrieve actual, concrete information.

Differences between the ratings of current and past selves do not necessarily reflect actual changes (improvements).

There is a desire to see the current self positively.

Given that the autobiographical memory is reconstructive, an important question is whether false memories can be implanted in people's mind.

Some evidence suggests that yes, it is possible to tamper with autobiographical memory.

We should not overstate the problem; human memory provides an amazing storage system for recollections of our past experiences. But human memory is not infallible.

A highly controversial question regarding the accuracy of autobiographical memory is whether 'recovered' memories of childhood sexual abuse can be false.

The Accuracy of Eyewitness Testimony

Not only is eyewitness testimony compelling to judges and jurors, but when an eyewitness positively identifies a suspect, the police often stop investigating all other leads. The consequence is that an eyewitness identification can dramatically effect the course of the investigation and the trial.

Unfortunately, eyewitnesses can sometimes be mistake. Human memory is fallible, perhaps especially when the eyewitness was emotionally fearful or upset.

Members of a particular racial group tend to be better at identifying people from their own racial group than people from other racial groups.

One quality that might be better than confidence is the speed with which eyewitnesses make their identification.

These researchers found that eyewitnesses who identified someone as the target person in 15 seconds or less were correct 69% of the time, 16 to 30 seconds were correct 43% and more than 30 seconds were correct only 18% of the time.

If a false element was inserted into a question about the event, participants often later included the false element in their memories.

These findings reflect that when people cognitively construct past events, they rely on cues as a starting point for retrieving memories.

Exposing witnesses to a **blank lineup** is a good way to assess their credibility, this lineup does not include the suspect; everyone is known to be innocent.

Another recommendation is that a **sequential lineup** is better than a traditional, simultaneous lineup. This is a procedure in which the eyewitness is presented with each person in the group individually, rather than the entire lineup together.

Evidence suggests that when eyewitnesses see a traditional simultaneous lineup, they try to find the person who looks most like the perpetrator, which can lead to erroneous identifications; eyewitnesses may assume that the police have arrested the guilty person, who must, therefore, be in the lineup.

It has also been suggested to teach the jurors' about reconstructive memory with a psychologist.

Heuristics and Biases in Everyday Judgments

It turns out that we typically use informal rules or shortcuts to come up with quick 'intuitive' answers. These informal rules or shortcuts in everyday judgments are called **heuristics**. These are 'rules of thumb' or simplifying strategies for making judgments quickly.

The hypothesis that perceivers usually rely on simple rules to make judgments and engage in careful, thoughtful processing only when necessary has been called the **cognitive miser model** of information processing.

These examples illustrate the application of two heuristics: the availability heuristic and the representativeness heuristic.

Availability Heuristic is the tendency to base a judgment on how easily relevant examples can be generated.

In most cases, the availability heuristic will rely on the total number of examples that can be recalled. Recent research has shown, however, that people are sometimes influenced directly by the ease with which they can recall something, independently of the number of content of what they recall.

Representativeness Heuristic is the tendency to judge the likelihood that an object belongs to a certain category based on how similar the object is to the typical features of the category.

This can lead us astray when we rely on it exclusively.

Illusory Correlations

Illusory Correlation: occurs when an individual believes that two variables are related to one another when, in fact, they are not.

People are especially likely to notice events that confirm their expectancies, which leads them to overestimate the frequency of such confirmations. People tend to see what they expect to see.

The hypothesis of hot hand is widely accepted in sports.

Interestingly, the researchers found no evidence for a hot hand. The probability of making a shot was unrelated to whether a previous shot had been made.

Hindsight Bias

Hindsight Bias: the tendency for people to overestimate the predictability of known outcomes.

One important cause is that people reinterpret pre-outcome information based on knowing the outcome.

Second, people generate explanations that would not have occurred to them if they had not known the outcome.

The Planning Fallacy

People consistently underestimate how long it will take to complete a task.

This **planning fallacy** occurs for relatively straightforward and familiar tasks like reading a chapter of a textbook or shopping for holiday gifts, as well as more complex tasks like writing an essay or renovating a kitchen.

What causes the planning fallacy? When people estimate how long a task will take, they focus on specific ways the task can be accomplished without considering potential problems that might occur.

Counterfactual Thinking

Counterfactual Thinking 'what might have been' thoughts, reflections on how past events might have turned out differently.

They are very common and may be uniquely human - the capacity to think about alternative realities is probably something that distinguishes humans from other species.

The most common type of counterfactual thought has been labelled **upward counterfactual thoughts**. These involve reflect on how things could have turned out better. They are likely to occur after a negative outcome.

The reason we engage in upward counterfactual thinking after a negative outcome is because it helps us to avoid similar negative outcomes in the future.

Some counterfactual thoughts involve imagining how things could have been worse. These reflections are called **downward counterfactual thoughts**. These kinds of thoughts usually make people feel fortunate, because their present condition is better than what it could have been. One possible benefit of downward counterfactual thoughts is they can make people feel better.

Self-Serving Judgments

Let us now consider two examples of how this motive to see the self positively can cause **self-serving judgments**, which are perceptions or comparisons that enhance the perceived worth of the self.

Social psychologists have shown that when people believe that they will interact with or be dependent on another individual, they tend to view that individual more positively than do people who are not expecting to interact with or be dependent on the individual.

People can activate a stereotype strategically, based on its implications for feedback they have received.

Mood and Social Cognition

Another way that social cognition can be 'hot' is through mood effects. Whether we are in a happy, neutral or negative mood can influence a variety of perceptions and judgments.

Mood congruent recall the idea that positive feelings will activate positive memories and negative feelings will activate negative memories

Positive moods seem to reduce our need for compelling evidence or arguments before we will agree to something.

Several studies have supported the idea that positive moods reduce the tendency to use detailed information to make decisions although there may be circumstances under which good moods do not lead to superficial processing.

If people in a good mood do not focus on detailed information to make judgments, what do they base their judgments on?

The answer is heuristics, at least in some situations.

Participants in a good mood rely on heuristics more than those in a neutral mood.

Chapter 4 - Social Perception: Perceiving the Self and Others

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Attributions : judgments about why an event occurred or why someone behaved in a certain way
People often make casual judgments in a relatively scientific manner - as if they were **intuitive scientists**.

Covariation Model of Attribution: an attribution theory proposing that we make casual judgments by determining whether a particular behaviour correlated with a person, a situation, or some combination of persons and situations

When individuals have personal experience with a situation, they usually assume that most other people would respond similarly to themselves, and they draw conclusions about the cause of behaviour based on this assumption.

There is, in fact, a general tendency for individuals to assume that other people share their attitudes and behaviours to a greater extent than is actually the case; this tendency is called the **false consensus effect**

One reason for the bias is that we tend to interact mainly with other people who agree with us.

A second reason is a motivational one - we want to believe that others agree with us.

Many everyday attribution situations conform to having a plausible *internal* cause (dispositional cause), which is often non-observable, and one or more plausible *external* causes (situational causes), which are normally observable.

The attribution process based on a single observation frequently involves looking to see whether a plausible external cause is present.

The sequence for looking for an external cause and, if one is present, reducing the perceived importance of internal causes, is an example of the **discounting principle**.

The flip side of the discounting principle is the **augmentation principle**, which applies to situations in which there are factors present that should worked against the behaviour. It states that the perceived role of a cause will be increased when other causes are present that would work against the behaviour.

The Correspondence Bias

The Fundamental Attribution Error

We tend to rely too much on personality to explain other people's actions.

The **correspondence bias** is 'the tendency to see behaviour as caused by a stable personal disposition of the actor when it can just as easily be explained as a natural response to situational pressures'

The tendency to assume the people's actions and words reflect their personality, their attitudes, or some other internal factor, even when there are plausible external or situational factors.

This represents a failure to use the discounting principle.

Causes of correspondence bias

- First, we may simply *overlook* or be unaware of situational factors that influence other people's behaviour
- Second, we simply underestimate the *power* of situational factors
- The process of taking situational factors into account requires cognitive resources, which may not always be available
- Cultural influences
 - Western cultures preach that anyone can be successful if they try hard enough, and values like personal freedom and liberty are held very high in Western cultures. It is possible that this emphasis on individualism causes people from Western cultures to focus on internal, personal variables like personality traits, attitudes and values when explaining behaviour.
 - In collectivist cultures there is less emphasis on individuality and more emphasis on such things as group harmony, social obligations, and conformity to tradition. These cultures may be less likely to explain behaviour in terms of personal, internal characteristics.

Beyond Words: Understanding Nonverbal Behaviour

One important determinant of how we interpret other people's words and actions is their **nonverbal behaviour**: actions and cues that communicate meaning in ways other than direct verbal statements.

Nonverbal behaviour includes a multitude of cues such as facial expressions, vocal qualities like pitch and intensity, interpersonal space, eye gaze, and gestures

Example: how words are expressed

Researchers have found that nonverbal information does enhance our understanding of interactions. Nonverbal cues are particularly useful in judging the emotion of speakers - how other people are feeling. The most obvious nonverbal cues for inferring emotions are facial expressions, such as smiling and frowning. But other cues like a quivering voice, shaking hands, and frequent shifting of body posture reflect such emotions as nervousness and embarrassment. One of the reasons nonverbal cues are seen as informative about true feelings is that they are not completely under voluntary control. Even when people try to mask their feelings, nonverbal cues can 'leak' their emotions.

Presumably, children must learn such things as the difficulty of hiding emotions before they can judge the appropriate weight to give to verbal content and nonverbal cues in spoken communication.

Interpretation of nonverbal cues is a skill that slowly develops over children's early years.

Darwin believed that facial expressions evolved from more primitive behaviours and all human expressed their emotions similarly.

The recognition of facial expressions is far from perfect, but evidence for at least some universality of emotion recognition is accumulating.

Cross-cultural recognition accuracy was substantially above chance on every one of seven basic emotions: anger, contempt, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise.

Gender and Cultural Differences in Nonverbal Behaviour

Women are better judges than men of other people's emotions.

Women are more oriented toward interpersonal harmony than men; alternatively, it may be that women must be more vigilant about others' emotions because they are less physically powerful and therefore more vulnerable than men. Second, whereas women are better judges of emotions than are men, women's own facial expressions of emotion are generally easier to judge than are men's expressions. This difference may reflect the stereotype that it is more socially acceptable for women to express their emotions than it is for men.

Cultures differ in their **display rules** - norms for how and when emotions should be expressed.

It is considered inappropriate in Japan to show strong emotions, especially strong negative emotions whereas Canadian culture allows freer expression of emotional states.

Cultures also differ in nonverbal gestures and greetings.

Finally, there are substantial differences in how close or far apart individuals stand in different cultures.

Self-Perception

We rely on other people for much of our self-concept.

First, other people sometimes tell us about ourselves

These judgments by other people may be internalized into the self-concept, especially if they come from more than one person. This idea that other people's judgments about us will be integrated into our self-concept was labelled the **looking glass self**.

A second way that other people are involved in judgments about the self is that we often compare ourselves to other people.

The process of explicitly comparing ourselves to other people in order to judge the self is called **social comparison**.

If we assess our abilities too optimistically, we might get ourselves into situations that are above our heads.

If we assess our abilities too harshly, we might avoid challenging ourselves in productive ways.

The goal of assessing our abilities accurately is usually best achieved by comparing ourselves with other people who are similar to us on dimensions that are relevant to performance.

Upward social comparison involves comparing yourself to someone who is better off than you are and provide useful ideas for how to improve.

Downward social comparison is social comparison with people who are worse off or less skilled than we are.

Upward social comparisons can sometimes make us angry and resentful, if we think that we should be doing as well as other people who are better off. When we feel that we deserve better outcomes than we are receiving, we experience **relative deprivation**, which is a feeling of anger or resentment about one's outcomes based on comparisons with others.

There are also some conditions, however, under which upward social comparisons may not elicit negative affect at all, but instead might produce hope or optimism about the future.

Imagine that your occupational goal is to establish your own software company in the computer field. If your friend achieves success and fame in the software field, it might make you feel like a failure in comparison, and you might be jealous. But if your friend achieves success and fame in another field, such as music, you might be happy about his or her success and feel proud of your friendship.

The latter process is called **basking in the reflected glory** of another person.

How we react to the success of someone close to us also depends on how close we are to them.

Cultural Differences in Social Comparison

Most social psychologists interested in cultural differences have compared two types of societies: individualist and collectivist.

Individualist cultures: cultures in which people are seen as independent beings who possess stable abilities, traits and attitudes

Collectivist cultures: cultures in which people are seen as interdependent beings who should contribute to harmonious group functioning

People from individualist cultures are primarily motivated to pursue success, whereas people from collectivist cultures are primarily motivated to avoid failure.

Self-perception Theory

Self-Perception Theory: a theory proposing that we often judge our own internal states by reviewing our past behaviour and inferring internal states consistent with our behaviour unless there were clear external causes for our behaviour

We use this when internal states are weak or ambiguous, when we do not have a clearly defined evaluation of a target.

Sometimes people perform activities because they must do so.

At other times, however, they engage in activities for intrinsic reasons - because they enjoy the activities or find them fulfilling in some way.

Overjustification Effect: an inference that we performed a potentially enjoyable activity for external reasons rather than because we enjoyed it.

It turns out that if a reward is given only when performance is good, then the reward may not have a negative effect. Rewards given for good performance show recipients that they are skilled at an activity, which can actually increase personal motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation will occur when people have feelings of autonomy (Freedom to choose), competence (effectiveness), and relatedness (being connected to others). This analysis suggests that parents and educators need to avoid actions that make children feel controlled or disconnected from others to motivate activities that are potentially intrinsically enjoyable.

Self-Serving Judgments

Almost all of us think that we are above average in our group.

Researchers have found that most of us rate ourselves as more honest, more fair, more loyal, more considerate, less lazy, less deceitful, more polite, and more capable than the average person.

We also perceive ourselves as less persuasible than average by negative media communications such as advertising and political appeals, though we consider ourselves just as responsive as other people to positive communications such as health information.

Bias Blind Spot is the tendency for people to think that biases and errors in judgments are more common in others than in themselves.

Why are we unrealistically optimistic about our future?

- We want our futures to be rosy and are threatened by the possibility of negative life events
- We think that we deserve positive outcomes because we are, after all, good people

- We are aware of factors that might reduce our own risk for certain problems, but we do not realize that many other people also possess these risk-reducing features

Accurate perceptions of the self would seem to be adaptive. Accurate perceptions should facilitate successful prediction of our own outcomes and of others' behaviour toward us. The more accurately we see ourselves, the more effectively we should be able to deal with the world.

From this perspective, unrealistically positive self-evaluations and unrealistically optimistic predictions for the future would be expected to be maladaptive.

Some theorists have proposed that self-enhancement can be adaptive.

Positive illusions about the self are associated with contentment, high self-esteem, creativity, high effort, persistence at tasks, and coping effectively with stressful events.

Other researchers have argued that self-enhancement is not always, or even not usually, adaptive. Instead, these theorists have argued that excessive self-enhancers will be seen as arrogant and selfish.

One possibility is that the negative impressions are caused by unrealistic self-promotion which becomes tiresome over time. It has also been suggested that narcissism interferes with the establishment of meaningful social relationships with others; people who are overly fond of themselves may fail to make others feel valued and respected.

Greater self-enhancement has been shown to be associated with numerous positive states, including high self-esteem, lower depression, and greater perceived purpose in life.

There is even evidence that self-serving tendencies are positively correlated with some biological signs of well-being.

Members of collectivist cultures engage in less unrealistic self-evaluation than do members of individualistic cultures, but they still self-enhance to some degree.

Self-Efficacy in Everyday Life

Self-efficacy refers to the belief that you are capable of performing a particular behaviour that is required for a particular goal. The lack of self-efficacy almost guarantees that the goal will not be achieved.

High self-efficacy, relative to low, has been shown in many studies to predict both undertaking a behaviour and continuing a behaviour despite negative feedback.

This perception that failure can be overcome is associated with increased effort and persistence.

Self-efficacy is a form of control: people believe that they can perform an action successfully.

Given that we want to see ourselves as having control, it may not be surprising to learn that we often think we have more control than we really do. This is the **illusion of control**.

Learned helplessness: a state of apathy in which we simply give up trying to achieve our goals.

False hope syndrome: the tendency to try repeatedly but unsuccessfully to achieve a goal because of unrealistic expectations about the likelihood of success.

Self-Discrepancy Theory

Actual self: how people believe they really are

Ideal self: how people would ideally like themselves to be

*when these two differ, people will have low self-esteem

Ought self: how people think they should or ought to be.

Self-discrepancy theory: a theory proposing that perceived difference between the actual self, the ideal self, and the ought self produce emotional consequences.

When we fail to achieve our ideals, we experience negative emotion along a *dejection* dimension.

This is the absence of positive things. We therefore feel unhappy, disappointed, sad and depressed.

When we fail to live up to our ought self, we experience negative emotion along an *agitation* dimension. This is the presence of negative things. We therefore feel anxious, guilty, nervous and ashamed.

What Others See in Us

We are selective actors, we adopt deliberate guises to achieve particular goals.

impression management: the deliberate control of one's public behaviour to create a certain impression (*self-presentation*)

If public behaviour differs from private behaviour, then individuals are modifying their actions

because someone can observe them, which constitutes self-presentation.

The two self-presentation goals are to appear likeable and to appear competent.

Ingratiation is behaviour that is designed to make someone like us. Flattery is one, friendliness is another, giving gifts and doing favours are still others.

Ingratiation has some risks, because other people may know that we want them to like us. Excessive flattery and syrupy friendliness can elicit suspicion, which can actually lead to less rather than more liking.

Ironically, then, when ingratiation is most important (because we are highly dependent on someone), it is more likely to arouse suspicion.

Self-promotion is behaviour that is designed to make someone respect you.

It can also have the unintended effect, however, of reducing liking, especially for female candidates.

Perhaps because frankly stating one's accomplishments is inconsistent with the stereotypical expectation that women will be modest.

Self-Handicapping

The tendency to seek or create inhibitory factors that interfere with performance and thus provide an explanation for potential failure has been termed **self-handicapping**.

This strategy involves deliberately doing something that can hurt performance so that failure will not imply low ability.

It is assumed that people self-handicap because they lack confidence that they can perform well on a task or test and want to have an excuse for the feared failure.

One technique is simply not preparing.

Another is taking on an obstacle that must be overcome.

Another is simply claim you did not prepare, or that you are sick, or that you have been under a lot of stress.

The first two methods have been termed behavioural self-handicapping, and the third is self-reported self-handicapping.

Men are more likely to behavioural self-handicap, men and women equally self-report self-handicapping.

Return to the Correspondence Bias

To explain their own behaviour, people tend to focus on external factors. This pattern of differences in attributions has been called the actor-observer difference: actors tend to make external attributions for their own behaviour, whereas observers tend to make internal attributions for the same actions.

The observer part of the phenomenon reflects the correspondence bias.

Where does the actor come from?

We have a lot of knowledge about our own behaviour in the past

Knowing these variations across time and settings makes clear to us that we are not as consistent or stable as implied by a trait attribution.

We want to view ourselves as flexible, we want to believe that we can respond appropriately to different situational contexts.

Our visual focus while we behave is on the environment, whereas the visual focus of observers is on us; consequently, the environment is more salient to us, whereas we are more salient to observers.

Chapter 6 - Attitudes and Social Behaviour

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Attitude: an individual's evaluation of a target. The target can be an object, an issue, a person, a group, a behaviour, or any other identifiable aspect of the environment.

By calling it an evaluation, theorists mean that an attitude is a good-bad judgment.

Researchers must infer attitudes from individuals' observable responses.

It turns out that attitudes can come from sources: emotional reactions, cognitive information, and past behaviour.

Whether an individual evaluates a target positively or negatively will depend on three things:

- How the object makes the person feel
- The person's beliefs about the object
- The person's previous actions toward the object

It might be helpful to acknowledge a potentially confusing issue in the attitudes literature: the two-way relation between attitudes and behaviour. We have just noted that previous behaviour toward a target may contribute to an individual's current attitude toward the target.

Both directions of influence can occur. Past behaviours influence current attitudes, and current attitudes influence future behaviour.

Ambivalent attitudes: evaluations of targets that include both positive and negative elements

These can lead to different behaviour over time because either the positive or the negative elements about the target may come to mind at a particular point, and whichever type of element is dominant will drive behaviour.

Explicit attitudes: are those that people can report consciously

Implicit attitudes: an individual's automatic evaluative response to a target, which can occur without awareness.

Implicit attitudes reflect low-level associations between objects and evaluations, whereas explicit attitudes reflect higher-level evaluations that are based on rational beliefs about the object and its features.

Typically, implicit attitudes conform to explicit attitudes.

Perceptions of Other's Attitudes

There is a common structure to people's perceptions of others' attitudes. Two dimensions are most important: liberal versus conservative and traditional versus novel.

Why do We Evaluate?

Object-Appraisal Function: a function of attitudes in which attitudes provide rapid evaluative judgments of targets, facilitating approach or avoidance.

Values: can be defined as broad, abstract standards or goals that people consider to be important guiding principles in their life. Examples of values include freedom, equality, and happiness.

Symbolic attitudes have a **value-expressive function** which means that they allow people to convey an identity that connects them to some groups and makes them distinct from other groups.

Object-appraisal attitudes give the individual a quick evaluation of the target, whereas value-expressive attitudes tell other people about the individual's identity or values.

Measuring Attitudes

Likert-type scales: respondents read a number of statements, each of which expresses a clear position on an issue, or a clear attitude toward a target. Respondents are asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each item.

Participants' attitudes would be calculated by scoring responses to each question from 1 to 5, with higher number always reflecting the same direction of attitude and then summing all of the items.

Some advantages of likert-type scales for measuring attitudes are that they are relatively easy for researchers to construct, are clear and simple for respondents to complete, and have been shown to produce reliable scores.

Semantic Differential Scale: This procedure asks respondents to rate an attitude object on several

evaluative dimensions. The target of the attitude is written at the top of the page, and several rating scales are presented below the target. The opposing adjectives appear at each end of a 5-point response scale, and the respondent is instructed to put an X or check mark somewhere on the scale to indicate his or her evaluation. Participants' attitudes are calculated by summing their ratings across all of the evaluative dimensions.

Since advantages of semantic differential scales are that they are easy for researchers to construct and straightforward for respondents to complete. They assess evaluations very directly, because participants rate the attitude object on dimensions that are explicitly evaluative.

Opinion surveys are designed to assess public opinion about an issue, event or group. Most opinion surveys contain just one or two items on a particular issue, and responses are often limited to 'yes' or 'no'.

All of the self-report techniques we have described rest on at least two assumptions:

- People know what their attitudes are
- They will report those attitudes honestly

Given that people want to appear likeable, moral, and competent, they may be tempted to shift their answers on attitude scales in the direction of the socially desirable position.

Another problem with self-report techniques is that they typically do not yield a clear and easy way to measure the ambivalence of an individual's attitude.

Nonverbal Measures of Attitudes

Social psychologists have developed several nonverbal measures of attitudes.

Nonverbal measures include behavioural measures, physiological measures, and implicit measures. Some researchers have used participants' overt behaviour to infer their attitude toward an object.

One advantage of behavioural measures of attitudes is that they are usually unobtrusive measures, participants usually do not realize that their attitudes are being assessed.

It appears that although the heart rate and blood pressure may sometimes indicate the intensity of people's feelings about a target, arousal symptoms are poor at distinguishing between positive and negative evaluations.

Another category of physiological responses that has been explored as a measure of attitudes is muscle movements in the face. These movements can be monitored by putting electrodes at certain places on the face - **facial electromyography**. This can record very small muscle contractions.

Challenges:

- Complex and time-consuming
- Sensitive to emotional reactions, less sensitive to evaluations that lack a strong affective component.
- Possible for people to deliberately alter or inhibit some of their facial responses.

Implicit Association Test: this procedure requires participants to complete two sorting tasks as quickly as possible. On one sorting task, the target of the attitude must be sorted into the same category as some 'good' objects. On the second one, the target must be sorted into the same category as the 'bad' objects.

The basic idea is that if participants complete the task in which the target is associated with 'good' things more quickly than with bad things, they are assumed to have a positive implicit attitude toward the target.

Affective Sources of Attitudes

An object that has no causal role in the outcome nevertheless comes to evoke positive or negative feelings simply by its association with the affect-arousing event. This process is called **evaluative conditioning** and is a common source of feelings about objects, settings and people.

Mere exposure effect: the tendency for repeated contact with an object, even without reinforcement, to increase liking for the object

Why does this occur?

- We are uncertain how to respond to novel objects, and this is unpleasant. When we come to know the object better, there is less uncertainty about how to respond to it.
- When we are familiar with an object, we can perceive and categorize it more quickly and easily than unfamiliar objects.

Cognitive Sources of Attitudes

This influence of cognitive information occurs in many attitudes. Your attitudes toward people you know are influenced by your beliefs about their positive and negative characteristics. Your attitudes toward consumer products are influenced by your perceptions of their quality and performance.

Physiological Processes and Attitudes

There is another domain that also has implications for attitudes: physiological or biological processes.

Alcohol myopia: refers to the fact that intoxication reduces cognitive capacity, which results in a narrowing of attention. When individuals are intoxicated, their ability to pay attention to multiple cues is impaired. As a result, only the most obvious and strongest cues, external or internal, will be perceived.

Although the experiences are the specific events that cause the attitudes, the experiences occur because of the inherited characteristics. Thus, the final attitudes reflect a combination of biology and experience.

People care more about highly heritable attitudes than attitudes low in heritability.

Parents, Peers and Attitudes

Socialization is the process by which an infant becomes an acceptable member of his or her society - one who behaves appropriately, knows the language, possesses the requisite skills, and holds the prevailing beliefs and attitudes.

Nonrestrictive parenting leads to imaginativeness and independence, restrictive parenting leads to obedience and politeness.

Warm parenting leads to freedom and personal responsibility, cold parenting leads to safety issues such as family and national security.

Reference Group: a group that serves as a standard of comparison for an individual, whether in terms of attitudes, values, or behaviour. Individuals try to conform to the norms and values of their main reference groups.

Jeer pressure: to refer to the conformity pressure that is produced by seeing someone ridiculed by another person

How Do Attitudes Affect Behaviour?

Rational choice refers to making deliberate, reason decisions based on our attitudes. Selective perception refers to a more subtle process: the biasing effect of our attitudes on how we interpret and understand the world.

Theory of reasoned action: this model views human as rational decision makers who behave on the basis of logical beliefs

Behavioural intention: which refers to the individual's plan to perform or not perform the action. These are caused by two variables, the individual's attitude toward the behaviour and the individual's subjective norm concerning the behaviour

An attitude is an individual's overall evaluation of a particular behaviour, which is based on the individual's beliefs about the consequences of the behaviour.

Subjective norms are individuals' feelings of social pressure to perform or not perform an action.

In the theory of reasoned action, behavioural intentions depend on attitudes and subjective norms.

IMB Model: information, motivation, behavioural skills.

Like the theory of reasoned action, the IMB model conceptualizes behaviour as involving deliberate choices among options.

Their choices will depend on the information they possess, their motivation to perform risky or safer behaviours, and their skill at performing preventive behaviours correctly.

Selective Perception

The bottom line is that people often see what they expect to see, and what they want to see, based on their attitudes.

Attitudes can influence what we notice and how we interpret events.

Note that this biasing effect of attitudes can occur for both explicit and implicit attitudes

We are generally motivated to interpret information as supporting our attitudes.

Hostile media phenomenon: the tendency for people who feel strongly about an issue to believe

that the media coverage of the issue is biased against their side

When the Attitude is Strong

Extremity: people with strong attitudes often endorse extreme positions near the end of the scale. A second feature that reflects the strength of the attitude is *importance*: the individual says that the attitude is very important to him or her. A third quality is *accessibility*, which refers to how easy it is to activate a schema or attitude. A fourth is that they are often based on *direct experience* with the attitude object, rather than on indirect information obtained from other people.

When the Behaviour is Controllable

Attitudes are assumed to guide behaviour when the individual has the freedom to behave in whatever way he or she chooses.

Behaviour must be voluntary or controllable, in order for the individual's personal preferences to play a role.

The theory of planned behaviour retained the constructs of attitudes and subjective norms as predictors of behavioural intentions, but added to construct of perceived behavioural control as a third predictor of intentions.

If perceived behavioural control is low, then favourable attitudes and subjective norms may not be enough to produce intentions to perform the behaviour.

When the Measures Match

As the measures of behaviour became broader and more inclusive, they correlated more strongly with the measure of broad attitudes.

The compatibility principle refers to the fact that measures of attitudes and measures of behaviour must be matched in terms of generality.

Chapter 7 - Attitude Change

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Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognition is a belief or a piece of knowledge

Most cognitions are irrelevant to each other.

Consonant Cognitions are consistent with one another; they imply that the other is valid or good

Dissonant Cognitions are inconsistent with one another; they imply that the other is wrong or bad

Festinger hypothesized that awareness of consonant cognitions makes us feel good, whereas

awareness of dissonant cognitions makes us feel bad.

Dissonance can be defined as the state of feeling bad or conflicted about one's own irrational behaviour.

Dissonance between very important cognitions causes more intense negative feelings than does dissonance between less important cognitions.

The Reduction of Dissonance

Dissonance as a state of 'aversive' arousal.

We are motivated to reduce it.

Dissonance reduction must involve *rationalization*: convincing ourselves that our current or past behaviour made sense after all. Dissonance theory, then, is a motivational model focusing on self-persuasion in the form of rationalization.

One way to reduce dissonance is to change one of the dissonant cognitions directly.

Directly reducing dissonance may not always be possible, however. Changing one's behaviour can be challenging and many cognitions are based on strong evidence that we cannot easily distort or deny.

If changing one of the dissonant cognitions is difficult, then another way that people can reduce dissonance is by adding consonant cognitions. These cognitions support the person's behaviour and make it seem more reasonable.

Dissonance can be reduced by reducing the importance of one of the dissonant cognitions and/or increasing the importance of one of the consonant cognitions.

Early Research on Dissonance Theory

We begin by describing the three major domains of the theory

- Induced compliance
 - **Counter attitudinal behaviour**: behaviour that is counter to, or inconsistent with, an individual's attitudes, values, or beliefs
 - **Induced compliance paradigm**: this paradigm investigates dissonance that results from counterattitudinal behaviour. Participants are induced to comply with the experimenter's request that they behave in a way that is known to be inconsistent with their attitudes.
- Effort justification
 - **Effort justification paradigm**: involves leading participants to suspect that effort that had invested may have been worthless. The prediction was that participants would reduce dissonance by convincing themselves that the goal was actually worthwhile
- Free choice
 - After making a decision, people almost always experience some dissonance; this kind of dissonance is called *post decisional dissonance*
 - The chosen option will usually have some negative features, and the rejected option will usually have some positive features.
 - The **free choice paradigm** is used to study post decisional dissonance in the lab. It involves asking participants to make a choice between two or more alternatives.
 - Dissonance theory predicts that thinking about the negative features of the chosen alternative or the positive features of the rejected alternative will arouse dissonance. People will reduce this by focusing on the positive features of the chosen alternative and the negative features of the rejected alternative.
 - Difficult choices result in more post decisional dissonance than easy choices

Alternative Interpretations of Dissonance Findings

Self-perception theory: people sometimes infer their internal states, such as attitudes and emotions, from their behaviour and the situation in which the behaviour occurred.

An important difference between dissonance and self-perception theories: the role of unpleasant arousal. Dissonance theorists hypothesized that aversive arousal motivated the attitude changes, whereas self-perception theorists hypothesized that there was no arousal at all.

Aversive arousal is necessary for attitude change to occur.

Impression Management theory: proposed that participants in dissonance studies did not want to appear inconsistent to the experimenter and therefore falsely reported attitudes that were relatively consistent with the counter attitudinal behaviour that they had exhibited.

Although impression management motives do influence public behaviour, the attitude change that occurs in dissonance-arousing situations is almost certainly real.

Self-affirmation theory: argues that people want to view themselves as moral, capable individuals. Counter attitudinal or irrational behaviour threatens participants' views of themselves as honest and intelligent. Counter attitudinal behaviour is upsetting because it threatens self-worth, it implies that participants are dishonest or foolish.

Giving people an opportunity to demonstrate their self-worth after counter attitudinal behaviour reduces or eliminates attitude change.

Recent Research on Dissonance Theory

Preference for Consistency: a disposition that represents the extent to which people desire predictability and consistency within their own responses and within other's responses.

People who score high in PFC are more bothered than people who score low in PFC by ambivalent attitudes.

They will be more sensitive to dissonance.