GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY

Lecture 10
Social Psychology

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Social Cognition

The Way in Which We Interpret and Try to Comprehend Social Events

Attribution

Causal Attribution

O A step of inferring or concluding what the cause of an observation was;

O Answers the question, "Why did he do that?"

Two types of causal attributions

i. Situational attribution: Attributions that focus on factors that are external to a person.

ii. Dispositional attribution: Attributions that focus on factors that are internal to the person.

Examples of causal attributions

Situational

o People's expectations

o Presence of rewards or punishments

o The weather

o Difficulty of an exam

o Other qualities of the situation

Dispositional

o Person's traits or preferences

o Other personal qualities

Culture & Attribution

o People have strong biases in the way they interpret the behaviors of others...

o Biases that can sometimes lead them to overrule the evidence.

o One source of bias is culture.

o However, not everyone in these cultures follow these notions.

Individualistic Cultures

Cater to the rights, needs, and preferences of the individual.

People view themselves as fundamentally independent.

Belief that people behave according to their internal thoughts, feelings, needs, and preferences.

Emphasis is on the ways a person can stand out through achieving private goals.

Override social obligations in order to pursue their own paths.

United States, Western Europe, Canada, Australia

Collectivist Cultures

Stress the importance of maintaining the norms, standards, and traditions of families and other social groups.

People are considered to be fundamentally interdependent and obligations within one's family and immediate community are emphasized.

More likely to create personal plans according to the wishes & expectations of others, and change when the situation demands.

Belief that people behave according to the demands of the situation or the expectations of others, not according to personal preferences.

Most of the world – Latin America, Asia, Africa

Fundamental Attribution Error

O The tendency to attribute behaviors to dispositional qualities while underrating the role of the situation.

Person Perception

"What of person is s/he?"

Implicit Theories of Personality

O The schemas that guide our inferences about what a person is really like, and how he or she is likely to behave in the future.

Individualistic Cultures	• Self is stable across time & situations. • Go beyond the info given and make global judgments about others' personalities.
Collectivist Cultures	• Self is malleable, changes according to relationships & situations. • Make more cautious & limited generalizations about others' personalities.

Stereotypes

○ Schemas about the characteristics of whole groups.

○ Leads people to talk about these groups as if we know all about them and they are all the same.

○ Group stereotypes are often negative, especially when applied to minority groups.

Prejudice

O A negative attitude toward another person based on his group membership – can lead to extreme cruelties & injustice.

The ABCs of Prejudice

Affective Component
- Leads us to view the group as "bad"

Behavioral Component
- Our tendencies to discriminate against other groups

Cognitive Component
- The stereotype itself

Origins of Stereotypes

(i) Stereotypes are transmitted explicitly

(ii) Stereotypes are transmitted implicitly

(iii) Stereotypes are formed due to lack of exposure to a certain group.

Out-group Homogeneity Effect

o A phenomenon related to stereotyping in which a member of a group (the in-group) tends to view the members of another group (the out-group) as more alike than the members of his or her own group.

o E.g. "All Asians are alike" is a statement usually made by a non-Asian.

Measuring Stereotypes

Explicit Measures

o Some form of self-report.

o Assesses negative stereotypes.

o Stereotypes that are more accepted publicly.

Implicit Measures

o No explicit report by subject.

o Detect hidden biases through facial behavior, reaction times.

o Implicit Association Task.

Effects of Stereotypes

a) Stereotypes influence what we believe about another person.

b) Stereotypes shape how we act toward the person.

c) Stereotypes influence how the targets of our stereotypes act so that the stereotype leads the targeted group to behave in a way that confirms the stereotype.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

O Beliefs about how a person will act which actually make that action more likely.

Rosenthal & Jaconsen (1968)

- Randomly assigned children to be "bloomers".

- Labeling affected teachers – raised expectations, increasing the children's test scores over the year.

Stereotype Threat

O Beliefs about how a particular group will act which actually make that action more likely for an individual member of the group.

O E.g. Students who thought about their race did less well on a test of intelligence.

Attitudes

What are Attitudes?

O Fairly stable, evaluative disposition

O Makes a person think, feel, or behave positively or negatively about some person, group, or social issue.

O Associated with emotional feelings and a predisposition to act in accordance with the beliefs and feelings.

How are Attitudes Formed?

o Based on our consideration of the facts – weigh the pros and cons.

o Acquired through one of the forms of learning：

- Classical conditioning
- Operant conditioning
- Observational learning

Attitude Change

Being Persuaded by Others
The Role of Experience
Persuading Ourselves

Being Persuaded by Others

o We may care about an issue and pay close attention to the contents of the persuasive message.

o We may not care about an issue but get distracted, and attitude change depends on superficial factors such as the appearance of the person persuading us.

The Role of Experience

Intergroup Contact

O Robbers Cave study – intergroup rivalry & competition may create hostility, but by working together on goals they care about, such hostility can be eliminated.

O Intergroup contact can have a powerful effect especially if:

a. The contact is sustained over a period of time.

b. Involves active cooperation in pursuit of a shared goal.

c. Provides equal status for all participants.

Social Influence

Conformity
Obedience

Conformity

Changing Behavior due to Social Pressure

Sherif (1937)

o Used autokinetic effect to demonstrate conformity.

o When participants viewed a light alone, their responses regarding movement varied.

o But when they viewed the light with others, their responses rarely differed from the norm that developed in their particular group.

o Even our basic perceptions of the world can be influenced by others.

Asch (1950s)

o Used comparisons of line length to demonstrate conformity.

o When confederates gave incorrect responses that contradicted what the participants knew to be true, the participant went along with the incorrect response abt 30% of the time.

o Less than 1 in 4 chances that the participant would act independently and disagree with the group.

Causes of Conformity

Informational Influence

- Stem's from people's desire to be right.
- When people are confused about the correct answer they are more likely to seek out other cues for how they should respond.
- Leads people to listen more to what others say and more social conformity.
- The reverse is also true.

Causes of Conformity

Normative Influence

- Stems from people's desires to be liked, or not appear foolish and avoid embarrassment.

- People may prefer to be normal than correct.

- When Asch's study was altered so that the participant could write their answers instead, there was very little conformity.

Minority Influence

O   When the group's unanimity is broken by even one dissenting view, social conformity is greatly decreased or eliminated.

Culture & Conformity

Causes of Conformity

Individualistic
Asch's study participants felt greater discomfort from the contrast between their own perceptions & the perceptions of others

Collectivist
Asch's study participants were less distressed about conforming.
Esp. with ties to group.

Obedience

The Person-Situation Debate

The Person

O Authoritarian personalities are more likely o be highly obedient.

O Submissive to persons above and harshness to those below.

O Prejudice against minority groups.

The Situation

Presence of authority figures.

Diffusion of responsibility.

Dehumanization of the victim.

Milgram's Experiments

o Looked at how likely people would obey morally questionable orders.

o Studied the obedience of participants in administering progressively stronger shocks to a "learner".

o About 65% of Milgram's subjects, both males and females, obeyed the experimenter to the end.

Why were Milgram's participants so obedient?

o See another person as the one in control and, therefore, responsible.

o Increase the psychological distance between a person's actions and the end result.

o When participants only had to read the words over a mic and record the learner's responses, and not administer the shocks – 90% continued till the end – highest level of shock.

Ethical Violation

o Participants in Milgram's study were allowed to think they were hurting another human.

o Even after debriefing, being told about the truth of the study, many were distraught about what they had done.

Dehumanization of the Victim

O Make a potential victim seem not human – more like object.

O Reduces or eliminates any sense of guilt at harming another individual and make aggression toward the victim more likely.

Each person in the group has an impact on every other person in the group.

Mere Presence Effects

O **Social facilitation**: Performing better in the presence of others – simple or well-practiced tasks.

O **Social inhibition**: Performing worse in the presence of others – complex or when person is inexperienced.

Why?
(Zajonc, 1965)

o The presence of others increases our level of bodily arousal, which strengthens the tendency to perform highly dominant or automatic responses.

o Simple task – dominant/automatic is usually correct.

o Difficult task – dominant/automatic is usually incorrect.

How do group members influence each other when they are working together?

Social Loafing

O The tendency of individuals to work less hard in groups.

O Individuals feel less accountable, therefore less motivated to try as hard as they can.

O Some may think that their contribution is not crucial to the groups' success.

Deindividuation

[Crowd Behavior] is a kind of mass madness..
Le Bon (1841-1931)

The Key to Crowd Behavior

o An individual loses awareness of himself as a separate individual.

o Deindividuation is more likely to occur when there is

(a) A high level of arousal

(b) Anonymity

o Release of impulsive actions normally under restraint.

The Bad

o Students wore Ku Klux Klan robes and asked to deliver an electric shock to another person.

o They delivered twice as much shock as those not wearing the robes.

o Wearing the robes seemed to lead students to take on the role and "play the part"

The Good

o Students wore nurse uniforms and asked to deliver an electric shock to another person.

o They delivered less shock than a group without the uniforms.

o Wearing the uniform seemed to lead them to take on the positive role of a nurse and play the part.

Causing Deindividuation

Being in a crowd

Wearing a mask

Wearing a uniform & having an assigned role

Stanford Prison Experiment

O Philip Zimbardo's study.

O Aim was to study the impact of roles on behavior.

O Participants were randomly assigned to play the role of either prisoner or guard.

O The study was terminated early because of the role-induced punitive behavior of the 'guards'

Group Polarization

o A tendency for group decisions to be more extreme than the decisions that would have been made by any of the group members working on their own.

o Pattern often observed in group discussions – attitudes of each member of the group become more extreme as a result of the discussion.

o Occurs even in the face of contrasting arguments that might moderate their views.

o E.g. Jury decision-making.

The Sources of GP

o Multiple restatements of own views strengthen the commitment to these views.

o Confirmation bias – people pay more attention to and more readily accept info that confirms their view.

o Desire to conform and excel – be at the leading edge of the group view.

Risky Shift

O Pattern in which a group appears to be more willing to take chances, or more willing to take an extreme stance, than the individual group members would have been on their own.

Social Relations

Helping & Altruism

The Case of Kitty Genovese

O KG was attacked for over half an hour and murdered in front of many witnesses, but no one came to her aid.

Reasons for the Bystander Effect
(Latane & Darley)

I. Situation is Ambiguous

- People don't understand what should be done.
- Intervening in a misunderstood situation can be very embarrassing.

Reasons for the Bystander Effect (Latane & Darley)

II. Situation is Not Ambiguous (Emergency)

- Diffusion of responsibility: each bystander is persuaded that someone else will respond to that emergency.
- Failure to help strangers in distress even when multiple people are aware of the emergency (the larger the group, the less likely the help)

On the Other Hand…

o When the individuals in the group are familiar with each other…

o Large group size can actually encourage rather than discourage helping behavior.

o One may feel uncomfortable expecting them to take action.

o There may be some embarrassment at not helping in an emergency situation.

The Cost of Helping

○ Shapes whether people help each other.

○ Costs include physical danger, time, effort.

○ Costs vary across people – something that may seem physically dangerous t one may not appear as threatening to another.

O Costs are sometimes weighed against the benefits of helping: social approval, avoidance of shame, sexual attraction.

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