

## Social Thinking

### Social Behavior

#### Attraction

- Interpersonal Attraction: phenomenon of individuals liking each other
  - Affected by several factors: similarity, self-disclosure, reciprocity, and proximity.
  - Appearance also plays a role – the more symmetric one's face is, the more attractive they are.
  - Also attracted to body proportions that approximate the **golden ratio** (1.618:1)
- Tend to be attracted to people who have similar attitudes, intelligence, education, height, age, religion, appearance, and socioeconomic status
  - Partially due to convenience, easier to spend time with people who enjoy similar things.
- Attraction can also occur if opposing qualities match. I.e. – opposites attract
  - People are drawn to have their values and choices validated by another person
  - E.g. – nurturer getting in a relationship with someone who craves nurturing
  - Successful relationships like this still have fundamental similarities that make the relation work.
- Self-Disclosure: sharing one's fears, thoughts, and goals with another person
  - When met with non-judgmental empathy, this behavior deepens attraction and friendship
  - Behavior must be reciprocated, since it can be interpreted as being taken advantage of if it is only one-sided.
- Reciprocal Liking: people like others better when they believe the other person likes them.
- Proximity: being physically close to someone increases likelihood of friendships forming.
  - Convenience plays a role in this: easier to have conversations and make plans with people in the same area.
  - **Mere exposure or familiarity effect**: people prefer stimuli that they have been exposed to more frequently.
    - So being in proximity with someone makes you want to like them

#### Aggression

- Behavior that intends to cause harm or increase social dominance
- Can take form of physical actions or verbal/nonverbal communication
- Aggression most often settled by threat and without actual bodily harm
- Aggression offers protection against perceived and real threats
  - It could be the deciding factor that allows one to pass on genes.
- Biological components of violent behavior:
  - **Amygdala**: part of the brain that is responsible for associating stimuli with their corresponding rewards or punishments
    - Responsible for telling the person whether something is a threat or not.
    - If activated, aggression is increased

- Higher-order brain structures (like the prefrontal cortex) have some control over the amygdala. Tend to tone down emotional reactivity
  - **Prefrontal Cortex:** lower activity is linked to increased aggressive behavior
  - **Hormonal control:** higher levels of testosterone is linked to more aggressive behavior
    - May explain why men are generally more aggressive than women.
- Cognitive Neoassociation Model: states that one is more likely to respond to other aggressively whenever they are feeling negative emotions.
  - e.g. – being tired, sick, frustrated, or in pain
- Exposure to violent behavior correlates to an increase in aggressive behavior
  - E.g. – Bobo doll experiment

### Attachment

- Emotional bond between a caregiver and a child, and its development begins during infancy.
- Studies have shown that infants and children are most sensitive to this need
  - Children during the first six months to two years of life need a consistent caregiver to develop appropriately.

### Secure Attachment

- When a child has a consistent caregiver and is able to go out and explore, knowing that they have a secure base to return to.
- Child trusts that the caregiver will be there for comfort. Prefer the caregiver over all others.
- Child will be upset when caregiver departs, and will be comforted by the return of the caregiver.
- Vital aspect of children's social development
- Children with the other three types of attachment can deficits in social skills

### Avoidant Attachment

- Results when the caregiver has little or no response to a distressed child
- Children will show no preference between a stranger and a caregiver
- Show little or no distress when the caregiver leaves, & little or no relief when the caregiver returns

### Ambivalent Attachment

- Caregiver has an inconsistent response to a child's distress
- Child is unable to form a secure base since they cannot consistently rely on the caregiver's response
- Child is very distressed when separated from caregiver, but shows a mixed response when the caregiver returns
- Sometimes referred to as **anxious ambivalent attachment** since the child is always anxious about the reliability of the caregiver.

### Disorganized Attachment

- Show no clear pattern of behavior in response to the caregiver's absence or presence
- Show a mixture of different behaviors:

- E.g. – Avoidance or resistance; seeming dazed, frozen or confused; or repetitive behaviors like rocking.
- Often associated with erratic behavior and social withdrawal by the caregiver.
- Red flag for abuse

### Social Support

- The perception or reality that one is cared for by a social network
- Present at all times, but is most pronounced when someone suffers a personal or family tragedy.
- Emotional Support: listening, affirming, and empathizing with someone's feelings
- Esteem Support: similar to emotional support, but focuses more on affirming the qualities and skills of a person.
  - Attempt to bolster the confidence of a person by reminding them of their skills
- Material or Tangible Support: any type of financial or material contribution to another person.
  - E.g. – making a meal for a friend or donating money to a person
- Informational Support: providing information that will help someone
  - E.g. – doctors providing information to patients to explain their diagnoses, potential treatment options, and risk/benefits of the treatments options.
- Network Support: type of social support that gives a person a sense of belonging.
  - Can be shown physically (hugging) or through gestures, group activities, and shared experiences.
- Social support in general offers numerous health benefits:
  - Helps reduce psychological distress (like anxiety and depression)
    - People with low support show higher levels of major mental disorders, alcohol and drug use, and suicidal thoughts.
  - Improves physical health.
    - People with low social support have higher mortality risk from different diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.
  - People with high social support are less likely to get colds and recover faster when they do.

### Social Behavior and Evolutionary Fitness

#### Foraging

- Behavior of seeking out and eating food
  - Driven by biological, psychological, and social influences
- Biological: Hunger is driven by a complex pathway that involves both neurotransmitters and hormones
  - Controlled by the **hypothalamus**
    - Lateral hypothalamus promotes hunger
    - Ventromedial hypothalamus promotes satiety.
  - Certain genes play a role in foraging behaviors
    - E.g. – some species forage together while forage solitarily
- Cognitive skills like spatial awareness, memory, and decision-making play a role in the success of foraging.

- In group foraging, foraging is primarily a learned behavior. The young learn through observation on how to find and consume food

### Mating and Mate Choice

- Mating System: organization of a group's sexual behavior
  - Monogamy: exclusive mating relationship
  - Polygamy: male having exclusive relationships with multiple females (**polygyny**) or a female having exclusive relationships with multiple males (**polyandry**)
  - Promiscuity: members of one sex mating with any member of the opposite sex, without exclusivity
- Most animal species maintain one dominant mating system. Humans have mating behavior that is highly influenced by social and biological factors
  - Humans also have formal relationships to correspond with their mate choice
- Mate Choice or Intersexual Selection: selection of a mate based on attraction
- Mate Bias: how choosy members of the species are while choosing a mate.
  - Evolutionary mechanism aimed at increasing the fitness of the species
  - May carry **direct benefits**: providing material advantage, protection or emotional support
  - May carry **indirect benefits**: promoting better survival in the offspring

### Mechanisms of Mate Choice

- Phenotypic Benefits: Observable traits that make a potential mate more attractive.
  - Traits usually indicate increased production and survival of offspring
- Sensory Bias: development of a trait to match preexisting preference that exists in population
- Fisherian or Runaway Selection: positive feedback mechanism in which a particular trait that has no effect, or even a negative effect, on survival becomes more and more exaggerated over time.
  - A trait is deemed sexually desirable and this is more likely to be passed on
  - This increases the likelihood that the trait continues to be passed on
  - E.g. – Bright plumage (feathers) of a peacock
- Indicator Traits: traits that signify overall good health and well-being of an organism, thus increasing the trait's attractiveness to mates.
  - Traits may or may not be genetic in origin
  - E.g. – female cats are more attracted to males with clean and shiny coats.
- Genetic Compatibility: creation of mate pairs that have complementary genetics when combined.
  - Provides a mechanism for the reduced frequency of recessive genetic disorders in the population
  - Attraction to others who have starkly different genetic makeups reduces the probability of offspring being homozygotic for a disease carrying allele.

### Altruism

- Form of helping behavior in which the person's intent is to benefit someone else at some cost to themselves.

- Can be motivated by selflessness, but can be motivated by egoism or ulterior motivation like public recognition.
- **Empathy:** ability to vicariously experience the emotions of another
- **Empathy-Altruism hypothesis:** individual helps another person when they feel empathy for the other person, regardless of the personal cost.
  - Heavily debated theory for the connection between empathy and altruism.
- More recent theories suggest that an individual will only help another person when the benefits outweigh the costs for the individual.

### Game Theory

- Attempt at explaining decision-making behavior. Was originally used in economics and mathematics to predict the interaction based on game characteristics like strategy, winning and losing, rewards and punishments, and profits and costs.
- Game payoff refers to fitness in biology.
- **Evolutionary Stable Strategy (ESS):** When adopted by a given population in a specific environment, natural selection will prevent alternative strategies from arising.
  - Strategies are inherited traits that are passed along by the population
  - Object of the game is to become more fit than competitors
- Classic example is the Hawk-Dove game which shows that two different strategies can coexist as evolutionary stable strategies.
- Due to social influences, there can be four possible alternatives to direct competition:
  - **Altruism:** donor provides a benefit to the recipient at a cost to themselves
  - **Cooperation:** both the donor and recipient benefit by cooperating
  - **Spite:** both the donor and recipient are negatively impacted
  - **Selfishness:** donor benefits while the recipient is negatively impacted.

### Inclusive Fitness

- Measure of an organism's success in the population.
  - Based on the number of offspring, success in supporting offspring, and the ability of offspring to then support others.
- This measure is based on not only the number of viable offspring, but the benefits of certain behaviors on the population at large.
  - E.g. – A family of close relatives will share many of the same genes. Thus altruism within a family unit will promote the reproduction and survival of individuals with similar genomes.
  - E.g. – protecting the young by a large group. By sacrificing themselves to protect the young, an organism can ensure the passing of genes to future generations.
- As a whole, inclusive fitness promotes the idea that altruistic behavior can improve the fitness and success of a species as a whole.

## Social Perception and Behavior

### Social Perception or Social Cognition

- Provides the tools to make judgments and impressions regarding other people

### Components of Social Perception

- Perceiver: influenced by experience, motives and emotional state
  - Past experiences can affect our attitudes toward current and future experiences and can also lead to particular expectations of events.
  - Motives influence what information is deemed important
  - Emotional state influences how an event is interpreted
- Target: the person about which the perception is made
  - Knowledge of target can affect perception
    - i.e. – could potentially perceive target based on past experiences
- Situation: given social context can determine what information is available to the perceiver.

### Impression Bias

- A model of social perception that focuses on our selection of cues to form interpretations of others.
- When a perceiver comes into contact with an unfamiliar target, they take in all cues from the target and the environment through an unfiltered lens.
  - As target is familiarized, the cues taken in are used to categorize the target.
    - E.g. – friend vs enemy; caring vs standoffish
  - Additional time spent with the target will lead the perceiver to confirm their initial categorization.
  - After this confirmation period has passed, the perception of additional cues becomes selective in order to paint a picture of the target that is consistent with the perceptions that the perceiver has already made.
- Theory Supports the **primacy effect**: idea that first impressions are often more important than subsequent impressions
  - **Recency Effect**: opposite of the primacy effect. Most recent information about an individual is the most important in forming one's impressions
- Reliance on Central Traits: Individuals tend to organize the perception of others based on the traits and personal characteristics of the target that are most relevant to the perceiver.
- Implicit Personality Theory: states that there are sets of assumptions people make about how different types of people, their traits, and their behaviors are related.
  - Basis behind how categories are formed during impression formation.
  - **Stereotyping**: making assumptions about people based on the category in which they are placed.

### Halo Effect

- Cognitive bias in which judgments about a specific aspect of an individual can be affected by one's overall impression of the individual.
  - I.e. – tendency to allow a general impression of a person to influence other, more specific evaluations of that same person.
- Individuals who are perceived as attractive are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy and friendly.

### Just-World Hypothesis

- Good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people.
- Closely related to the concept of *karma*: a universal restoring force
- Strong belief in this promotes the idea of “blaming the victim”

### Self-Serving Bias or Self-Serving Attributional Bias

- Bias refers to the fact that individuals will view their own success based on internal factors, and their failures based on external factors.
  - I.e. – all good things that happen are based on one’s good traits and behaviors, and all bad things are based on situational factors beyond one’s control.
  - Used to protect self-esteem
- Related to both motivational processes and cognitive processes
  - **Self-Enhancement**: type of motivational process that focuses on the need to maintain self-worth
    - Done through internal attribution of successes and external attribution of failures
  - **Locus of control** is an example of a cognitive process.
- Emotion also affects this bias since it affects self-esteem
  - Individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to protect their own image and are thus more likely to exhibit self-serving bias.
    - Since individuals with higher self-esteem feel an increased need to protect their own self-identity.
- Relationships also affect this bias:
  - Individuals in close relationships are less likely to blame the other person, instead a joint attribution will be made.

### Attribution Theory

- Focuses on the tendency for individuals to infer on the causes of other people’s behaviors.

### Dispositional and Situational Causes

- Causes for attribution can be divided into two categories: dispositional and situational
- Dispositional (internal): attributions that relate to the person whose behavior is being considered. Includes their beliefs, attitudes and personality characteristics
- Situational (External): attributions that relate to features of the surrounding.
  - E.g. – Threats, money, social norms, and peer pressure.
  - Consider the characteristics of the social context rather than the characteristics of the individual as the primary cause

### Cues

- Consistency Cues: the consistent behavior of a person over time
  - The more regular the behavior, the more it is associated with the motives of the person.
- Consensus Cues: extent to which a person’s behavior differs from others
  - A dispositional attribution is more likely to be formed about a person’s behavior if that person deviates from socially accepted behavior

- Distinctiveness Cues: extent to which a person engages in similar behavior across a series of scenarios.
  - Situational attribution more likely explains a person's behavior if that person behavior varies in different situations.
- Correspondent Inference Theory: focuses on the intentionality of others' behavior.
  - When an individual performs a behavior that helps or hurts us: behavior is explained through dispositional attribution

#### Fundamental Attribution Error

- Posits that we are generally biased towards making dispositional attributions rather than situational attributions, especially in negative contexts.

#### Attribute Substitution

- When individuals must make judgements that are complex, but instead a simpler solution is substituted or a heuristic is applied.

#### Cultural Attribution

- Type of culture an individual is a part of plays a role in the type of attributions that the individual makes.
- Individualistic cultures (like American and European cultures) tend to put high value on personal goals and independence.
  - Tend to make more fundamental attribution errors than collectivist cultures.
  - More likely to attribute behavior to dispositional factors
- Collectivist Cultures (like Asian and African societies) place high value on conformity and interdependence
  - More likely to attribute behavior to situational factors.

## Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

### Stereotypes

- Negative connotation but are fundamentally necessary for everyday life.
- Psychological purpose is to make sense of a complex world by categorizing and systematizing information to better identify items, predict their behavior, and react.
  - Stereotypes are useful in defining categories and determining what does or does not fit into that category.
- Negative connotation comes from when stereotypes are used to develop prejudices towards and others and to discriminate.
- In sociology, stereotypes occur when attitudes and impressions are based on limited and superficial information about a person or a group.
  - Contents of stereotypes are the attributes that people believe define and characterize a group
- Stereotype Content Model: Attempts to classify stereotypes with respect to a hypothetical in-group using two dimensions: warmth and competence
  - **Warm Groups**: Groups that are not in direct competition with the in-group for resources
  - **Competent groups**: those that have high status within society.

- Can have four possible combinations of warmth and competence

		Competence	
		low	high
Warmth	high	<b>Paternalistic stereotype</b> low status, not competitive (housewives, elderly people, disabled people)	<b>Admiration stereotype</b> high status, not competitive (in-group, close allies)
	low	<b>Contemptuous stereotype</b> low status, competitive (welfare recipients, poor people)	<b>Envious stereotype</b> high status, competitive (Asians, Jews, rich people, feminists)

### Self-fulfilling Prophecy

- The expectations of a stereotype can create conditions that lead to the confirmation of those expectations.

### Stereotype Threat

- People being concerned or anxious about confirming a negative stereotype
- Can cause reduced performance, encourage self-handicapping strategies, and lower one's personal investment in an activity.
  - E.g. – White men in sports, women driving, and homosexual couples providing childcare.
- Awareness of these stereotypes, may cause the stereotyped individuals to perform worse or avoid performance altogether.

### Prejudice

- An irrational positive or negative attitude toward a person, group, or thing, prior to an actual experience with the entity.
- Can form as a result of dissimilarities among groups, races, ethnicities, or environments.
- May be kept internally or run throughout a large community
  - **Propaganda:** A common way in which large organizations attempt to create prejudices in others
    - Posters often invoke fear and exaggerated negative depictions of the target group

### Power, Prestige, and Class

Many social factors affect prejudice:

- **Power:** ability of people or groups to achieve their goals and their ability to control resources
- **Prestige:** level of respect shown to a person by others
- **Class:** socioeconomic status
- Social inequalities can result in the grouping of *haves* and *have-nots* which may aid in the development of social prejudices between *haves* and *have-nots*

### Ethnocentrism

- Practice of making judgements about other cultures based on the values and beliefs of one's own culture. Can range from displays of ethnic pride to violent supremacy groups.

### In-Group and Out-Group

- In-group: social group in which a person feels a sense of belonging or identifies as a member
- Out-Group: social group with which the individual does not identify
- Often, negative feelings towards the out group are not based on a sense of dislike towards their different characteristics, but instead the feelings can be attributed to favoritism for the in-group's characteristics.

### Cultural Relativism

- Perception of another culture as different from one's own, but with a recognition that the cultural values, mores, and rules of a culture fit into that culture itself.
- I.e. – although there are differences between my culture and yours, my culture is not perceived as having rules that are superior to your culture. They are simply just different

### Discrimination

- Occurs when prejudicial attitudes cause individuals of a particular group to be treated differently from others
- Discrimination is a behavior while prejudice is an attitude. Both are usually negative.
- Prejudice does not always result in discrimination
- Unequal distribution of power, prestige and class influences discrimination like it does prejudice.

### Individual vs Institutional Discrimination

- Individual Discrimination: one person discriminating against a particular person or group
  - Considered to be conscious and obvious
  - Can be eliminated by removing the person who is displaying the discrimination
- Institutional Discrimination: discrimination against a particular person or group by an entire institution.
  - Discrimination is built into the structure of society: much subtler and harder to eliminate.
  - Perpetuated by maintenance of "status quo"