

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	Paternalistic stereotype low status, not competitive (housewives, elderly people, disabled people)	Admiration stereotype high status, not competitive (in-group, close allies)
	low	Contemptuous stereotype low status, competitive (welfare recipients, poor people)	Envious stereotype 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"