

Psychology 020
Chapter 16: Social Psychology
Tuesday February 18, 2008

Social Psychology: scientific study of how individuals behave, think and feel in social situations (i.e. in the presence [actual or implied] of others)

Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour

Attribution: judgements about the causes of our own and other peoples behaviour and outcomes

Personal (internal) attributions: caused by their traits or characteristics

Situational (external) attributions: caused by other factors (e.g. situation).

Fundamental Attribution Error: in judging the cause of others behaviour we...

- Underestimate the importance of situational factors and
- Overestimate the importance of internal factors

Self-Serving Bias: when judging the cause of our own behaviour...

- We overestimate the importance of situational factors in failures
- We underestimate the importance of internal factors in successes

Are first impressions most important?

Primacy effects: our tendency to attach more importance to the first information that we learn about a person

Asch Study (1946) – reverse order of adjectives.

1st impressions important in developing the initial schema. The schema then acts as a filter for incoming information.

Cognitive Miser Theory: Idea that we have limited cognitive resources so any device that releases cognitive resources will be used often.

Kernel of Truth Hypothesis: stereotypes may stem from some real fact that gets overgeneralized.

Outgroup Homogeneity Effect: tendency to assume that there is more similarity among outgroup members than ingroup members

Preservations of Stereotypes

Illusionary correlations: people perceive correlations btw traits and groups that are distinctive

Confirmatory hypothesis testing: people seek evidence that confirms their beliefs and attend confirmatory evidence and ignore disconfirming evidence.

Creation of subgroups

Self-fulfilling prophecy: people (often unconsciously) elicit the behaviour they are expecting, thereby confirming it.

Rosenthal's "Pygmalion in the classroom study"

Sherif's Robbers Cave Study:

- Group of 12-13 year old boys in a summer camp
- Divided into two groups and put into competition with each other
- After competing, the groups viewed each other negatively
- The hostility between the two groups ceased when two groups working together

Realistic Group Conflict Theory: prejudice results when groups are in direct competition for resources.

If this is true, how can prejudice be reduced?

Try to encourage cooperation, rather than competition, in the creation of a superordinate goal.

Social Identity Theory: self-esteem is influenced by the fate of social groups we belong to and we are motivated to protect it. Threats to self-esteem increase the need for ingroup bias and v.v. Ingroup esteem can be increased via outgroup prejudice. This invokes downward social comparisons.

The reduction of prejudice: "the best way to reduce tension and hostility between groups is to bring them into contact with each other in various ways" (Allport, 1954).

Contact Reduces Bias when:

- Endorsement by those in authority
- Acquaintance potential – frequency, duration and intimacy of contact
- Groups are of equal status
- Groups cooperate successfully

Social Influence

Conformity: a change in behaviour or belief as a result of real or imagined group pressure

Compliance: conformity that involves publicly acting in accord with social pressure while privately disagreeing

Obedience: performing an action in response to a direct order

Informational social influence: accept information about reality from others

Normative social influence: conformity based on a desire to fulfill others' expectations, often to gain acceptance

Reasons for Conformity

Social comparison theory: when judging social phenomena that cannot be traditionally quantified, we look to other people, to the majority, to determine what is normal or expected.

Beauty?

Intelligence?

Justice?

Important Factors in Conformity

Situational Factors

- Group size
- Cohesiveness
- Social Support

Personality Factors

- Self-awareness
- Self-preservation
- Need for individuation
- Desire for personal control

Asch's Conformity Studies

Subjects trusted others opinions over their own senses. 37% conforming.

With social influence, group size matters

Minorities stand together strong and lone individuals tend to fall

Unanimity is important

The effects of deviance