Person Perception

Forming Impressions of Others

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Person Perception

• **person perception**: how we come to know about others’ temporary states, emotions, intentions and desires
  – impression formation
  – attribution
Impression Formation

• integrating sources of information about others into a unified and consistent judgment

• decide very quickly based on minimal information
What information do we use?

- roles
- physical cues
  - appearance and behavior
What information do we use?

• **salience**: stimuli that stand out against a background

• bright, noisy, moving, novel characteristics attract our attention
What information do we use?

context effects:

• contrast: perception of increased difference from the context

• assimilation: perception of increased similarity to the context
What information do we use?

- we quickly move from observations to infer personality traits
  - more economic (simpler)
  - automatic

- Asch:
  - central traits—dominant
  - peripheral traits—less important
  - e.g., warm-cold
What information do we use?

**implicit personality theory:**
assumptions and naïve belief system about which traits and behaviors go together

**categorization:**
perceive individuals as group members
What information do we use?

**continuum model of impression formation:**

- category-based, stereotypical impressions
- careful and systematic processing of information for individuated impressions
- *dual-processing*
Dual Processing

• describe two basic ways of thinking about social stimuli involving:
  1. automatic, effortless thinking
  2. more deliberate, effortful thinking
Implicit cognitions: judgments or decisions that are under the control of *automatically* activated evaluations occurring *without our awareness*. *Unintentional* thinking which uses *few* cognitive resources. Operates *quickly* and *cannot* deal with new problems.

Explicit cognitions: *deliberate* judgments or decisions of which we are *consciously aware*. *Intentional*, *effortful* and *flexible* when dealing with new problems. Consumes *considerable* cognitive resources.
Integrating Impressions

- **negativity effect**: negative traits given more weight in evaluations
- **positivity bias**: tend to evaluate people in a favorable light
  - “rose colored glasses”
- **primacy / recency effects**: first / last bits of information carries more weight
- **emotional expressions** also influence our impressions
Integrating Impressions

evaluative consistency

• view people as consistently good / bad even when contradictions exist

• **halo effect** - I like Ayca so I think she has a great number of good qualities

• how do we resolve inconsistencies?
Integrating Impressions: Schemas

**Schemas** - organized, structured sets of cognitions that include:

- knowledge about an object
- relationships among its attributes
- specific examples

- role schemas: professor, receptionist, devoted lover…
Schemas

- **stereotypes**: beliefs about typical characteristics of members of a group
- **prototypes**: the abstract ideal of a schema
- **exemplars**: particular instances of a category (that we met)
Integrating Impressions

**motivated person perception:**

- our goals and feelings about another person influence the information we gather
- forming impressions, anticipate future interactions, need for accuracy, prior expectations / experiences, outcome dependency etc.
- our cognitive and emotional state also matters
Making Attributions

• **Attribution** is the process where people use information to infer causes of behaviors or events

• How / when do people ask “why?”

• Fritz Heider - people need to:
  – understand (form coherent view of) the world
  – gain control of their environment

• Especially unexpected & negative events
Making Attributions

• Dispositional (Internal) Attributions:
  – explains the cause as being internal to actor
  – refers to traits, attitudes, personality, enduring internal states

• Situational (External) Attributions:
  – explains the cause as being external to actor
  – refers to actions of others, luck, nature of situation
Making Attributions

**Correspondent Inference:** an inference where the actor’s action corresponds to a stable personality characteristic

Jones & Davis

Rules to make corresponding inferences:
- the social desirability of the behavior
- actor’s degree of choice
- actions that produce *noncommon effects*
- behaviors not part of a social role
Making Attributions

Kelley’s Covariation Model:

• do a particular cause and a particular effect go together across situations? how?

• 3 pieces of information:
  – consistency: Does Elif always behave like this towards the object?
  – consensus: Do other people have similar responses as Elif?
  – distinctiveness: Does Elif behave like this towards other similar objects?
Why did Elif laugh at cmylmz?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinctiveness</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH-she didn’t laugh at anyone else</td>
<td>HIGH-everyone else laughed</td>
<td>HIGH-she always laughs at him</td>
<td>Stimulus (the comedian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW-she always laughs at comedians</td>
<td>LOW-hardly anyone else laughed</td>
<td>HIGH-she always laughs at him</td>
<td>Person (Elif)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH-she didn’t laugh at anyone else</td>
<td>LOW-hardly anyone else laughed</td>
<td>LOW-she rarely laughs at him</td>
<td>Context (drunk?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biases in Attributions

**fundamental attribution error:**
- overestimate the impact of dispositional causes,
- underestimate the impact of situational causes on others’ behaviors
- e.g., personality rather than situation
- cultural differences
Biases in Attributions

actor-observer effect: tendency to attribute:

• our own behavior to external/situational causes, but

• others’ behavior to internal/dispositional causes

• Why?
  – perceptual: actors look at situation, observers look at actors
  – access to different information
Biases in Attributions

• How would you explain a poor grade on a test?
• How about a good grade?

**self-serving bias:**
• take credit for own success
• deny responsibility for failures

(also occurs for in-groups)
Biases in Attributions

false consensus effect: we see our own behavior/opinions as typical
• biased sample of others (i.e., friends)
• own opinions more accessible
• motivated to see ourselves as good & normal
• false uniqueness
Biases in Attributions

- biases - cognitive shortcuts
- meet our needs and motives (self-esteem, perceived control)
- Remember *dual processing*?
  1. automatic and simple attributions occur first
  2. deliberate, systematic, and effortful attributions come later

  correct for biases like fae
Accuracy of Judgments

- accurate about external, visible attributes
- not so much for inferred, invisible states (e.g., personality, feelings)
- pragmatic accuracy
- fairly accurate about emotional state
Facial expressions

• Seven primary emotions:
  – Anger
  – Disgust
  – Fear
  – Happiness
  – Surprise
  – Sadness
  – Contempt

• *Survival value* hypothesis
Non-verbal communication

• **non-verbal behaviors**: communicate substantial amount of info
• send and receive info using gestures, expressions, vocal cues, body movements rather than words
• **visible channel**:  
  ▪ facial expressions, gestures, posture, appearance, distance, eye contact
• **paralinguistic** qualities: variations in speech other than verbal content  
  ▪ pitch, amplitude, voice quality of speech, length of answers, number of pronouns etc.
Body movement and non-conscious mimicry

- angry / threatening displays > angular and diagonal body & arm movements
- warm / welcoming displays > rounded
- culture influences displays and interpretations of non-verbal behavior
- **non-conscious mimicry**: adopting the behaviors, postures of interaction partners without conscious awareness or intention
Body movement and non-conscious mimicry

- culture and gender influence the expression of nv cues
- **social role**: socially defined expectations that individuals in a given situation are expected to fulfill
- social role theory > different roles occupied by men and women in society
  - smiling, extravagant expressiveness & manly emotion, types of emotions, decoding nvb
Deception

- deception and non-verbal leakage
  - true emotions tend to “leak” out through nonverbal channels
- some nonverbal channels leak more because they are less controllable
  - e.g., the body versus the face versus words
- liars:
  - blink more, hesitate more, more speech errors, higher-pitch voices, more dilated pupils
- e.g. lie to me