

Social Psychology - Social Thinking & Social Influence

Module 36

Personality Psychologists...

- Think about why different people act differently in the same situation

Social Psychologists...

- Think about situations - why a person will act differently in one situation than in another

Dirk Willems



Dirk Willems - Aspersen, Netherlands

- An Anabaptist, tried for holding Anabaptist services & allowing baptisms in his home
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- Escaped palace prison w/knotted rags
- Crossed the moat but his jailer fell through ice
- Re-arrested & burned to death, 1569; all property confiscated to the crown

Questions to consider:

- How do we explain people's behavior?
- How do we form our beliefs and attitudes?
- What is the relationship between what we think and what we do?

Attribution Theory

- To attribute is to explain why
- Example: "I attribute the reason he is afraid of dogs to the fact that he was bitten by a dog as a child."

Attribution Theory

- To attribute people's behaviors to either their enduring traits (their general personality), or to the situation they are in at the time.

Fundamental Attribution Error

- Overestimating the influence of personality and underestimating the influence of the situation at that particular time
- We tend to assume that people behave a certain way because of their personality, and forget that it is just as likely it's the situation they are in
- More common in Western cultures - why?

Fundamental Attribution Error

More common in Western cultures because of our "individualist" view of the world

Westerners tend to look at the individual, whereas people from the east tend to look at the bigger picture

Fundamental Attribution Error

- We tend to explain our behavior through looking at the situation in ourselves more than we do others

Attribution Theory affects how we make public policy

- Example: policies on welfare, abortion, homelessness, poor student behavior...
- Recognize: the way we attribute behaviors is not just mental/emotional - it has real life applications and consequences

Attitudes Affect Actions

- Our beliefs affect our behaviors
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- People will stand up for what they believe, and once they've stood up for it, they'll believe it even more strongly

Actions Affect Attitudes... The Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon

- Getting small compliance leads to larger compliance over time
- People may eventually change their attitudes to match their behaviors - for good or bad
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- Ex.: Prisoners of War during the Korean War (see pgs 492-493)

Example: Nazi behavior WWII

- Were the Nazi soldiers who murdered thousands of Jews and others during the Holocaust just horrible, evil people? Or are there psychological explanations for their actions?

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive dissonance (thinking disagreement) - when our attitudes and our actions don't agree

Cognitive Dissonance Theory - our brain's effort to bring our beliefs and actions together

- talking ourselves into changing our attitudes so we don't have to feel bad about our actions
- sometimes even revising our memories

Quiz Yourself...

- When your actions and your attitudes don't agree, you experience what?

Quiz Yourself...

- Your neighbor in class bombed their psych test. You think to yourself, "What a dummy. She should have studied more." You bomb the 2nd psych test. You think to yourself, "Well, if the teacher knew what she was doing I would have done better!"

- Which theory explains your line of thinking?

Quiz Yourself...

- You do not believe in stealing. But your friends pressured you into just standing watch as they stole. Later they talked you into stealing a 5 cent candy. Then later, a 50 cent candy. Now you're knocking over the local convenience store.

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Quiz Yourself...

- An American is more likely to look at a homeless person and think to himself, "that guy needs to get it together - he must be lazy." Whereas a Japanese person is more likely to look at that same homeless person and think about the circumstances that brought him to homelessness.

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Social Influence

- Humans are social creatures
- Social influence has enormous power

Influence of Culture

- Social norms vary from culture to culture
- What is culture: Enduring behaviors, attitudes, values shared by a group & passed on to later generations
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Automatic Mimicry

- Chameleon effect
- Yawning, facial expressions, body language
- A form of empathy
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Conformity

- Microcultures
- Humans fear rejection - seek acceptance

Milgram Experiment

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOYLCy5PVgM>
- (5 minutes)

Group Behavior

- Social facilitation - doing better in others' presence
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 - Especially in harder tasks

Group Behavior

- Social loafing - "someone else will do it"
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Group Behavior

- Deindividuation - feeling of arousal and anonymity
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Group Polarization

- To polarize - we become stronger in our beliefs if we talk to people who believe the same
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Groupthink

- When you censor your true thoughts to go along with the group (almost brainwashed?)
- So nobody dissents, so everyone thinks "they all agree, I must be mistaken," so nobody dissents ...
