



Attribution

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Attribution

❖ Understanding the Causes of Behavior

- Someone close to you starts avoiding you
- You face an interview and you are selected without answering many questions
- You ask a question and your professor does not give any kind of response
- You propose to someone and

❖ We want to understand

- Why someone says or does certain things
- What kind of person is someone—what are their traits, motives, and goals?

❖ Basic desire to understand cause-and-effect relationships in the social world

❖ Attribution

- ❖ The process through which we seek to identify the causes of others' behavior and so gain knowledge of their stable traits and dispositions

Correspondent Inference

Jones and Davis (1965)



❖ A theory describing how we use others' behavior as a basis for inferring their stable dispositions

❖ Attribution

- ❖ External (situational)
- ❖ Internal (dispositional)

Behavior = Situation + Disposition

D = Behavior – Situation

❖ Three Cues

- ❖ Is freely chosen
- ❖ Noncommon effects (distinctive)
- ❖ Is low in social desirability or otherwise violates social norms

Correspondent Bias Jones and Harris (1967)



- ❖ Castro's rule in Cuba
 - ❖ In one condition, participants were told that the essay writer had free choice of position.
 - ❖ On another condition, they were told that the writer was instructed to create the essay in a pro-Castro or anti-Castro manner
- ❖ Participants were asked to estimate the essay writer's true beliefs. - judgments of another's personality and attitudes on the basis of very limited information
 - ❖ Free Choice Conditions:
 - Pro-Castro Essayist: Attributed attitude = 59.6
 - Anti-Castro Essayist: Attributed attitude = 17.4
 - ❖ No Choice Conditions:
 - Pro-Castro Essayist: Attributed attitude = 44.1
 - Anti-Castro Essayist: Attributed attitude = 22.9

Correspondent Bias

Jones and Harris (1967)



- ❖ People did not correct their inference about the writer even though they were aware of the situational constraint faced by writer
- ❖ The tendency for people to over-emphasize dispositional or personality-based explanations for behaviors observed in others while under-emphasizing situational explanations.
 - ❖ The Fundamental attribution error
 - ❖ Correspondence bias
 - ❖ Over-attribution effect

Kelly's Covariation Theory

❖ How we answer – “Why” a behavior occurs

❖ **Consensus**

- The extent to which other people react to a given stimulus or event in the same manner as the person we are evaluating.

❖ **Consistency**

- The extent to which the person in question reacts to the stimulus or event in the same way on other occasions, over time.

❖ **Distinctiveness**

- The extent to which the person reacts in the same manner to other, different stimuli or events.

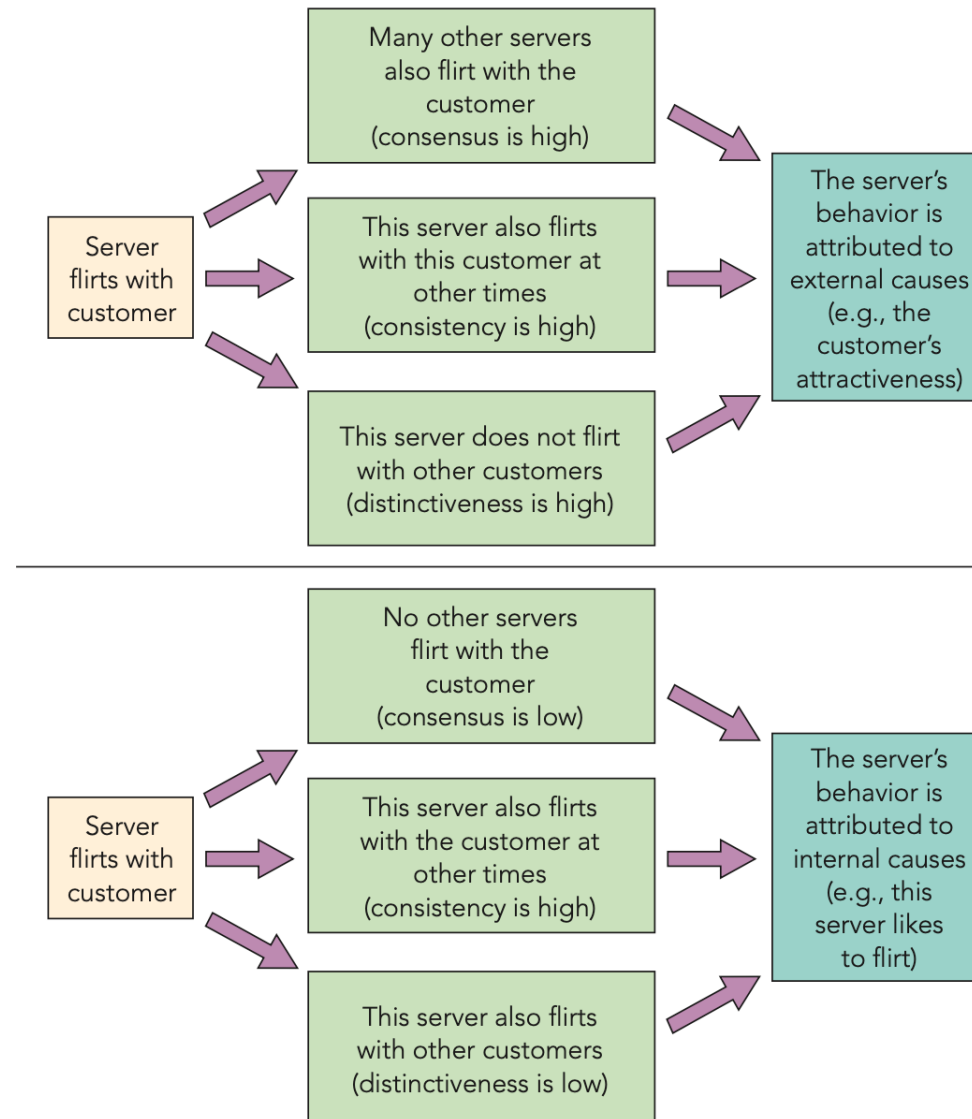
❖ *Internal attribution*

- ❖ conditions in which consensus and distinctiveness are low, but consistency is high.

❖ *External attribution*

- ❖ consensus, consistency, and distinctiveness are all high.

Kelly's Covariation Theory



Other dimensions of Causal Attribution



❖ Stable factors

- ❖ Are the causal factors that influenced their behavior likely to be stable over time, or are those factors likely to change?

- Personality traits and temperament - tend to be quite stable over time
- Factors such as *motives, health, and fatigue* can change over time
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❖ Controllable factors

- ❖ Can individuals change or influence them if they wish to do so

- Individuals can, if they wish, learn to hold
 - Laws or social norms that define how we should behave in various situations

❖ Attribution

- ❖ Internal–external,

- ❖ Stable–unstable

- ❖ Controllable–uncontrollable

Action identification

- ❖ Our interpretation of actions is different
 - ❖ Someone is putting change in jar

- ❖ The interpretation we place on an act—in terms of differing degrees of abstraction—is known as action identification.
 - ❖ Low abstraction
 - When we view others' actions concretely, involving little more than the actions themselves, we also tend to make few attributions about their intentions or higher-order cognition.
 - ❖ High abstraction
 - Action has greater meaning, we attribute much greater mental activity to them. The action reflects much more—the person's goals, characteristics, and intentions—their mind,

Actor-Observer effect

❖ Example

- ❖ When we see another person trip and fall, we tend to attribute it to his or her clumsiness.
- ❖ If we trip, however, we are more likely to attribute our fall to situational causes

❖ Internal attributions

- ❖ We don't tend to “overattribute” our own actions to internal causes
- ❖ Tendency to attribute our own behaviour to situational (external) causes
- ❖ But the behavior of others to dispositional (internal) causes.

Self-Serving Bias

❖ Example

❖ Your professor tells you

➤ “An outstanding paper—one of the best I’ve seen in years. A+”

❖ To what would you attribute this success

➤ When you got F grade – “one of the worst I’ve seen in years”

❖ This tendency to attribute

➤ Our own positive outcomes to internal causes

➤ Negative outcomes to external factors

❖ Known as the self-serving bias

❖ Why

❖ The cognitive model

❖ The motivational explanation
