# **Social Psychology chapter 5:**

-Social Attribution Explaining Behavior-

How to explain behaviors

Social psychology is often attaching a name to a known behavior

### **Explaining Events**

#### Attribution theory(the what and why)

* how people assign causes to events around them
* Effects of their casual assessments

#### Causal attribution

* linking the event to a cause, such as inferring that a personality trait is responsible, or there is a specific situation

#### Importance of causal attributions

* The type of attribution that you make will influence how you respond to a situation
* ex) think a person is being dishonest to impress and has the reverse effect- how you attribute can affect how you respond

### **Explanatory dimensions:**

#### Internal versus external

- the cause is linked to the self or to the external situation

#### Stable versus insatiable attribution

- cause- seen as fixed OR as something temporary

#### Global versus specific attributions

- cause - seen as affecting other domains in life OR is restricted to affecting one specific domain

### **Pessimistic attributional style**

* This involves, stable, internal, global attributions habitually made in response to negative events
* This can lead to lower grades and poorer physical healthier later in life — very western

Why do people watch the news— waiting to seek something positive but reject the positive because of a pessimistic nature

Explanatory style, controllability, and gender

An individual's attributional style has a powerful effect on his or her long-term outcomes

Gender and attribution:

* Boys—lack of effort
* Girls— lack of ability

### **Counterfactual thinking**

* Comparing real outcomes to imagined alternatives

Counterfactual thoughts(if I just… Then)

* Thoughts of what might have could have, or should have happened “if only” something occurred differently

Stages of grief

Denial

Anger — counterfactual thoughts

### **Emotional amplification**

* Increase in an emotional reaction to event-proportional to - imagine event not happening
* We may feel more personally responsible for failure depending on how easy it is to imagine an alternative

ex) Olympics — bronze medalists are much happier than silver metal because the silver medalist imaging the gold as the alternative and the bronze alternative could have been not metal

### **Self-serving attributional bias**

* Attribute failure and other bad events

- external circumstances of oneself.

When losing - it’s not our fault

When winning - we did great it was hard work

**Review**:

External for errors

* The professor sucks

Internal for their success

* I worked very hard

Self-serving attribution can often be found in corporate companies' documents — such as accident reports and insurance forms the authors often push the blame onto others.

Fundamental attribution error

* The failure to recognize the importance of situational influences on behavior and the corresponding tendency to overemphasize the importance of dispositions on behavior.
* Self-assessing ourselves
* Fundamental- assessing others
* Inferences may be made about someone's true personality even when we are aware that their behavior resulted from an assigned role.
* Underestimate the situational factors

### **The fundamental attribution error: giving credit and assessing blame:**

* The fundamental attribution error and perceptions of the advantaged and disadvantaged
* An inferential problem we face in our daily lives is deciding how much credit to give people who are succeeding in life and how much blame to direct at those who are not.
* - either all about who they are or all situations — not a mix of the two
* The error = you are attributing too much to a disposition or situation

Critical thinking - hurricane Katrina — flooded so people who were socioeconomically lower class and attributed those images to who they are as people and not the hurricane itself

##### **Cause #1:**

* Motivation to believe in a just world

- the just world hypothesis is the belief the people get what they deserve in life and deserve what they get

* Good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people

- fundamental attribution error may be reassuring because they feel less vulnerable to external factors that influence on life outcomes

##### **Cause #2:**

* Perceptional salience and causal attributions

-perceptual salience influences whether a potential cause springs to mind or how readily it springs to mind

-fundamental attribution errors may occur because people are often more salient than the surrounding context