Ourselves and Others

We look to causal factors when trying to explain others' behaviours. Sometimes we can focus too heavily on one causal factor, and not consider others. Human behaviour is complex and often a result of many factors.

Expectations

Rosenhan (1973) showed that labelling in psychiatric units caused expectations from patients. Normal researchers were documented as engaging in "compulsive note taking".

Rosenthal & Jacobson labelled 20% of children in a yeargroup as 'bloomers'. They tracked their progress longitudinally and found that they gained considerably higher IQ points on the WISC compared to controls. Suggesting that expectations are pervasive.

This is also evidence of the **self-fulfilling prophecy** (Darley et al. 1980)

Ross et al (1975) arranged for female students to observe others performing a decision making task. It was reported that some did quite well, scoring 24 out of 25 correct, whereas others did not do so well. Even after the students learnt that these results had been fabricated, their predictions of future performance were affected by the previously fabricated results. Suggesting that impressions form expectations that are difficult to change.

Correspondence Bias

The tendency to over-value dispositional or personality based explanations for the observed behaviours of others.

This is the same as the **Fundamental Attribution Error** which is characterised by our tendency to emphasise **dispositions over situation**s when explaining **other people's** behaviour.

An attribution is a causal factor that we attribute to someone else. They are the "why?" of behaviour (Heider, 1958). We are constantly making attributions about other people's behaviour, even from photographs etc.

When? We leap to attributional explanations when events are unexpected or negative.

Why? Prediction, social goals (more often negative ones) and control

We naturally seek causal connections or attributions of two types: **dispositions and situations.**

REMEMBER The Actor-Observer bias characterises how the self overemphasises the situation. The FAE talks only about others and their tendency to be attributed dispositional explanations.

When do we make attributions?

Kelley's Covariation Model (1967) States that we choose a cause that covaries with behaviour when the behaviour we are observing does not immediately elicit a causal attribution. Here, we collect information about potential causal factors that are present when the event occurs and absent when it does not occur. Ultimately, we will make an external or internal attribution. **How?** We consider how often a behaviour is **distinct** or unique to the situation ("this person only flatters me"), we consider whether other people perform the same action ("everyone flatters me") and we consider whether this behaviour is done in other circumstances ("this person flatters me all of the time"). Depending on the occurrence or covariation of these events, we make attributions accordingly (e.g. "that person only flatters me because I am in power")

consistency	distinctiveness	consensus	attribution
low			discount
high	high	high	external
high	low	low	internal

One example of covariational reasoning.

Fundamental Attribution Error/ Correspondence Bias (Lee Ross, 1977) People mistake a strong situation for a weak one: making unwarranted dispositional attributions. This happens in quiz shows for example, with Stephen Fry. When Milgram asked other psychologists about how likely it was for people to go to the end, they made a FAE.

How fundamental is it? People are arguably very stable within situations and people and situations select each other (e.g. police force). Genes therefore contribute to a person's personality (Plomin) and allow a person to select their environment and factors like their occupation, and so it is perhaps not that erroneous to attribute people's behaviours to their dispositions.

Correspondence Bias (Ned Jones & Davis, 1965) Participants asked to write essays in favour of against Castro in the bay of pigs. One group were randomly selected and another group chose to write the essay. Results showed that those randomly assigned to write the essay were deemed be nearly as pro Castro as those that chose to write the essay. **People under-emphasised the situation.**

Gilbert et al. (1995) describe 4 mechanisms causing the correspondence bias: **lack of awareness** (not acknowledging situational factors)**, unrealistic expectations** ("a true american would never write a pro-Castro speech")**, inflated categorisations** (expecting to hear a pro-castro speech causes a person to perceive a pro-castro speech, regardless of whether it is or isn't) **and incomplete corrections** (inconsistency between expectations and actual behaviour).

Quattrone 'flipped this on it's head' by telling participants that a person had written an essay on their own whim, but had potentially picked up on the biases of the experimenter, who had their own agenda. Here, participants attributed the attitudes to the experimenter, not the writer. The correspondent inference had been switched. However, this does not necessarily deny the correspondence bias as participants here were asked to consider the situational influences.

Correspondent Inference: The Correspondence Bias links to the Correspondent Inference Theory in that the latter refers to a persons tendency to characterise someone as having a personality trait that corresponds with their observed behaviour. The bias is just one example in which this tendency goes wrong.

It could be argued however that the audience supposed that they were supposed to draw conclusions. Based on the fact that they had no other information about the person, the attribution they were making was not 'fundamentally' bias.