



Lecture 10 Handouts

## Social Psychology-Liking and Friendship

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### Social Psychology

Study of how others influence our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

### Social psychology

“The study of the (individual psychological) origins involved in the development, structure, and functioning of social groups.”

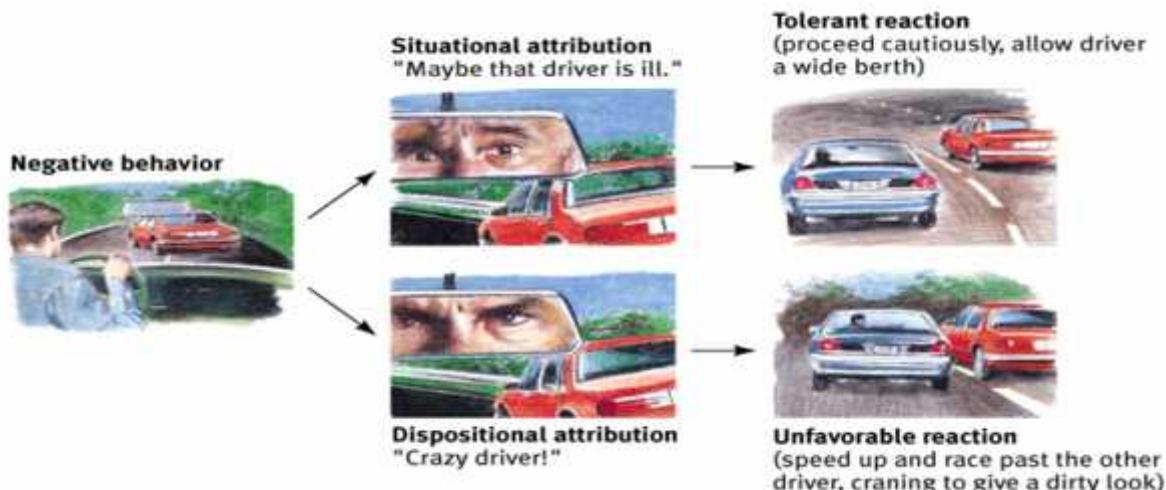
### What Are Social Psychology’s Big Lessons?

We construct our social reality, and our social intuitions are often powerful but sometimes perilous. Social influences shape our behavior, as do personal attitudes and dispositions also shape behavior. Social behavior is biologically rooted. Social psychology’s principles are applicable to everyday life and other disciplines.

1. **Power of the Situation:** It emphasizes how social contexts and environments significantly influence behavior, often more than individual characteristics do.
2. **Role of Social Influence:** Social psychology highlights how individuals are influenced by others through conformity, obedience, or persuasion.
3. **Importance of Attribution:** It underscores the significance of how people interpret and explain the behavior of others and themselves, thereby shaping perceptions and interactions.
4. **Impact of Social Cognition:** Understanding how people perceive, interpret, and recall information about themselves and others is crucial in comprehending social behavior.
5. **Nature of Prejudice and Discrimination:** Social psychology sheds light on the origins and consequences of bias, discrimination, and stereotypes, highlighting the need for social change.
6. **Significance of Relationships:** It emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships, intimacy, and social connections for well-being and personal growth.
7. **Role of Culture:** Recognizing the influence of cultural norms, values, and practices on individual and group behavior is fundamental in understanding human interactions.

## Attribution Theory

Tendency to give a causal explanation for someone's behavior, often by crediting either the situation or the person's disposition



## Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is a process by which we attribute feelings and intentions to people to understand their behavior. For example, we may unconsciously apply this theory when we witness someone shouting on public transport. We might attribute their behavior to their character, assuming they are an angry person. Alternatively, you might attribute it to the situation they are in, such as, if the train is busy, it might make them nervous and more likely to act out. These two explanations correspond to the primary types of theories, dispositional and situational attribution.

### 1) Dispositional attribution

Dispositional attribution attributes the cause of someone's behavior down to internal traits. Which may encompass personality, core beliefs, and motivations. By attempting to explain intentional behavior, we tend to look internally and analyze the individual's personality. By overemphasizing the internal causes while neglecting the external factors, we fall in to a cognitive biased called a fundamental attribution error. That's when we assume people's actions relate to the type of person they are and nothing else. Some further examples of dispositional attribution are:

- Your colleague receives a promotion, and you attribute this to their dedication to the role.
- A person studies at medical school, and you attribute this to their caregiving personality.

- A person is glaring at you on the bus, and you attribute this to them having a hostile personality.

## 2) Situational attribution

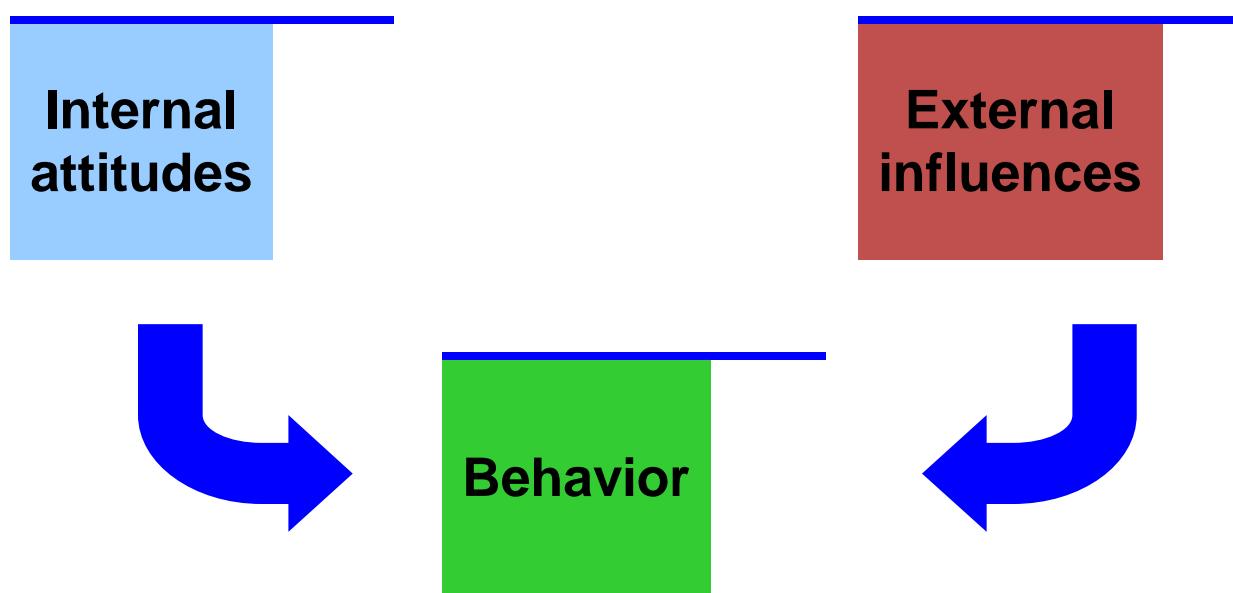
Situational attribution shifts the focus away from personality and more towards situations and events. This perspective leans more towards external attributions. This type of attribution is more common when explaining our behavior. We look outwards and blame circumstances outside of ourselves. This is often easier than engaging in self-analysis. Examples of situational attribution include.

Being late for work and blaming the weather or public transport.

- Failing an exam and blaming your teacher for not preparing you.
- Spilling a drink on the carpet and attributing it to the unevenness of the carpet.

## Social Thinking

Our behavior is affected by our inner attitudes as well as by external social influences.



Social thinking refers to the process by which individuals interpret and make sense of their social environment, encompassing the role of both internal attitudes and external social influences in shaping behavior.

- a) **Inner Attitudes:** Internal attitudes, such as beliefs, values, and personal principles, play a significant role in guiding behavior. These attitudes are shaped by personal experiences, upbringing, cultural background, and introspection.

**Impact of Inner Attitudes:** Our behavior is often influenced by our internal attitudes. For example, if an individual values honesty, they are more likely to behave honestly in various social situations, even when confronted with temptation or pressure to deceive.

- b) **External Social Influences:** The society and social environment in which individuals are embedded exert a profound influence on behavior. This encompasses societal norms, cultural expectations, peer pressure, media influence, and the influence of authority figures.

**Impact of External Social Influences:** External social influences can shape behavior by establishing standards for acceptable conduct and by influencing individuals' perceptions of social norms. For example, yielding to peer pressure or societal expectations can lead individuals to adopt behaviors that are not in line with their inner attitudes.

- **Relationship between Internal Attitudes and External Influences:** Social thinking recognizes the dynamic interplay between inner attitudes and external influences. While inner attitudes provide a foundation for behavior, they can be influenced and modified by external factors, and vice versa.
- **Self-Reflection and Adaptation:** Understanding the role of social thinking prompts individuals to engage in self-reflection, critically examining their inner attitudes and the external influences that shape their behavior. This awareness enables individuals to adapt their behavior in response to changing social contexts and to align their actions more closely with their values.
- **Promoting Positive Behavior Change:** By acknowledging the role of social thinking, interventions aimed at promoting positive behavior change can target both inner attitudes and external influences. Strategies such as education, awareness campaigns, and establishing supportive social environments can assist individuals in aligning their behavior with their values and contribute to positive societal outcomes.

## Social Relations- Liking and Attraction

### 1. The Need to Belong

The need to belong is a basic human motive. We attach great importance to others' perceptions of us. Individuals with a network of close social connections typically experience greater happiness, better health, and higher life satisfaction compared to those who are more socially isolated.

The Need to Belong refers to the innate psychological need for social connections and acceptance within a group. Humans are social beings, and the desire to belong to social groups is deeply ingrained in our evolutionary history. This need influences various aspects of behavior, emotions, and cognition.

- **Formation of Social Bonds:** The Need to Belong drives individuals to seek out relationships and form bonds with others. Whether its friendships, romantic partnerships, or belonging to larger social groups, fulfilling this need is essential for psychological well-being.
- **Consequences of Social Rejection:** When individuals experience social rejection or exclusion, it can have profound psychological effects. Rejection activates regions of the brain associated with physical pain, leading to feelings of loneliness, sadness, and decreased self-esteem.
- **Impact on Behavior:** The Need to Belong influences behavior in numerous ways, such as conformity, social comparison, and seeking approval from others. People may modify their behavior to fit in with social norms and gain acceptance from their peers.

## 2. Ostracism

It involves acts of exclusion or ignoring and is frequently employed as a form of social punishment. It leads to multiple negative outcomes including self-defeating behaviors, an inability to regulate behaviors, and aggression.

Ostracism refers to the intentional exclusion or rejection of individuals from social interactions or group activities. It can manifest in different ways, such as ignoring someone, excluding them from conversations or events, or actively shunning them.. Ostracism carries significant psychological implications for both the ostracized individual and the group.

- **Psychological Effects:** Ostracism can lead to feelings of hurt, rejection, and social pain. The ostracized individual may experience decreased self-esteem, loneliness, and even depression as a result of being excluded from social interactions.
- **Impact on Group Dynamics:** Ostracism can also affect the dynamics within a group. Witnessing or participating in the ostracism of others can lead to feelings of guilt, discomfort, or conformity within the group. Over time, repeated instances of ostracism can erode trust and cohesion within the group.
- **Coping Strategies:** Individuals may employ various coping strategies to deal with ostracism, such as seeking social support from other sources, engaging in self-affirmation, or attempting to rejoin the group through apology or behavior modification.

## 3. Need for Affiliation

It is the desire to establish social contact with others. We are motivated to establish and maintain an optimum balance of social contact. Benefits of Affiliation include a sense of attachment, social integration, reassurance of worth, sense of reliable alliance, and guidance.

The Need for Affiliation is a specific component of the broader Need to Belong, focusing on the desire to establish and maintain close relationships with others. Individuals vary in the strength of this need, with some seeking high levels of social interaction and others preferring more solitary pursuits.

- **Motivation for Social Interaction:** The Need for Affiliation motivates individuals to seek out social interactions and form close relationships. These relationships provide emotional support, companionship, and a sense of belonging.
- **Individual Differences:** The strength of the Need for Affiliation can vary among individuals and may be influenced by factors such as personality, attachment style, and life experiences. Some people have a high need for social connection and may feel distressed when they lack close relationships, while others may be more content with solitude.
- **Implications for Well-Being:** Fulfilling the Need for Affiliation is important for overall well-being and mental health. Strong social connections have been linked to increased happiness, resilience to stress, and even physical health benefits.

## Factors Involved in Interpersonal Attraction

### 1. Familiarity: Being There

Familiarity means who are we most likely to become attracted to? Two basic and necessary factors in the attraction process:

- Proximity
  - Exposure
- **Proximity**

The physical closeness of two people is *the single best predictor* of the development of a social relationship e.g. more likely to know our neighbors than people 10 blocks away.

The Person Next Door Experiment: Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) tracked friendship formation among the couples in various apartment buildings. Residents had been assigned randomly to their apartments. Most were strangers when they moved in. The researchers asked the residents to name their three closest friends in the entire housing project. Just as the proximity effect would predict, 65% of the friends mentioned lived in the same building, even though the other buildings were not far away. Even more striking was the pattern of friendships within a building. 41% of the next-door neighbors indicated they were close friends. 22% of those who lived two doors apart said so. Only 10% of those who lived on opposite ends of the hall indicated they were close friends.

- **Mere Exposure**

Contrary to folk wisdom, familiarity does not breed contempt. The more often we are exposed to a stimulus, the more we come to like that stimulus. Familiarity can influence our self-evaluations. If we simply recognize a brand, we will judge it more positively. Researchers asked people to pick which of two airlines to fly on, one familiar, one unfamiliar. People overwhelmingly chose the familiar. Even after adding three troubling pieces of information, such as accidents, 67% still chose the familiar company. One goal of advertising is to blitz us with a name so many times that it unconsciously triggers the recognition heuristic. Children definitely preferred the taste of food in McDonalds wrappers over the same food in plain wrappers.

## 2. Physical Attractiveness

We react more favorably to others who are physically attractive than to those who are not. Bias for beauty is pervasive.

- ***Is Beauty an Objective Quality?*** Some argue that certain faces are inherently more attractive than others. High levels of agreement for facial ratings across ages and cultures. Physical features of the face are reliably associated with judgments of attractiveness. Even Babies prefer faces considered attractive by adults
- ***Is Beauty a Subjective Quality?*** People from different cultures enhance their beauty in very different ways. Ideal body shapes vary across cultures, as well as among racial groups within a culture. Standards of beauty change over time. Situational factors can also influence judgments of beauty.
- ***Why Are We Blinded by Beauty?*** Inherently rewarding to be in the company of people who are aesthetically appealing for possible intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. There is tendency to associate physical attractiveness with other desirable qualities.
- ***Physical Attraction Stereotype:*** People within a culture, assume that attractive people have the traits that are valued by that culture. Adults and children are biased toward attractive people. Even infants stare at attractive people longer than unattractive people!
- ***Lessons begin early*** – how many ugly heroes are there in children's tales vs. the number of ugly villians?

## 3. Similarity

Proximity increases familiarity, which leads to liking, but something more is needed to fuel a growing friendship. That “fuel” is *similarity*—a match between our interests, attitudes, values, background, or personality and those of another person. Three Areas of Similarity that Increase Liking:

- a. Demographic Similarity
- b. Attitudes and Values
- c. Personality
  - i. Similar cognitive complexities
  - ii. Similar emotional styles
  - iii. Attachment styles

The more similar to ourselves we find someone to be, the more we tend to like them. Friends are more likely to share opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Dissimilarity breeds dislike in an even stronger fashion than similarity breeds liking.

#### **4. Reciprocal Liking**

One of the *most potent* determinants of our liking someone is the belief that person likes us—*reciprocal liking*. Reciprocal liking effects can only occur if we like ourselves. People with negative self-concepts tend to be skeptical that others actually do like them and therefore may not reciprocate liking. Reciprocal liking can arise because of a *self-fulfilling prophecy*.

People with a negative self-concept respond quite differently:

- Such people indicate that they'd prefer to meet and talk to a person they know has criticized them earlier than meet and talk to a person they know has praised them earlier.
- Thus if people think of themselves as unlikable, another person's friendly behavior toward them will seem unwarranted, and they may not respond, setting in motion another self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **Theories of Liking and Attraction**

- A. Exchange Theory**
- B. Equity Theory**
- C. Gain-Loss Theory**

#### **A. Exchange Theory**

The main idea behind social exchange theory is that everyone tries to maximize the rewards they obtain from a relationship and minimize the costs. If a relationship is to be successful, both parties are expected to *give* and *take* in equal proportions.

In exchange theory, there are 4 basic steps:

1. Reward
2. Cost
3. Outcome
4. Comparison level

1. **Rewards** are the positive, gratifying aspects of the relationship that make it worthwhile and reinforcing, including:
  - The kinds of personal characteristics and behaviors of our relationship partner that we have already discussed, and
  - Our ability to acquire external resources by virtue of knowing this person (e.g., gaining access to money, status, activities, or other interesting people).
2. **Costs** are, obviously, the other side of the coin, and all friendships and romantic relationships have some costs attached to them. (Such as putting up with someone's annoying habits and characteristics)
3. **Outcome** If the cost is more than reward we have a negative outcome. If on the other hand there is a profit left over after we have subtracted the cost we have a positive outcome,

$$Reward - cost = outcome$$

4. **Comparison Level** People's expectations about the level of rewards and punishments they are likely to receive in a particular relationship.

## B. Equity Theory

Proponents of **equity theory** describe equitable relationships as the happiest and most stable. In comparison, inequitable relationships result in one person feeling:

- a. Over-benefited (getting a lot of rewards, incurring few costs, having to devote little time or energy to the relationship), or
- b. Under-benefited (getting few rewards, incurring a lot of costs, having to devote a lot of time and energy to the relationship).

## C. Gain- loss Theory

This deals with the area of liking and feedback. According to this theory changes in another person evaluation of us will have more impact on our liking for them than if the evaluation were constant. Thus we like a person who is esteemed for us increases over time better than someone, who has always liked us (**a gain situation**). Similarly, we dislike a person whose evaluation of us become negative over time. More than someone who has always disliked us (**a loss situation**).

## Social Relations- Friendship

Definition: Reciprocal relationship with positive affect. It is distinct from popularity. It is important because it is a source of social support. It develops conflict resolution skills. It is the preparation for adulthood. It can have bad consequences as well: Quality of friendships.

## Stages of Friendship

There are 4 stages of friendship.

1. Formative stage.
  2. Exploratory research.
  3. Negotiation (Bargaining) State.
  4. Commitment.
1. **Formative Stage:** Analysis focuses upon the sequence of events and stages that led to the development of friendship. The sequence may be examined as we described the process of an imaginary group. For instance, a group of students from various universities, who are strangers to each other, are brought together for a weekend conference.
  2. **Exploratory Research:** At the first meeting of the imaginary group, the students who are attending the conference, look each other and engage in a process term as sampling and estimation. Each person explores a varying degree of cost to themselves and the rewards available in potential relations with other persons around the room.
  3. **Negotiating / Bargaining:** The process is not conscious or rational. Each person makes evaluations and attempts to negotiate a definition of the situation and of the resultant relationship that will maximize the outputs. In parts such attempts take the form of strategies.
  4. **Commitment:** Members of pair progressively reduce their sampling and bargaining with other person. They stop looking around the room, stop thinking about other possibilities and commit themselves to a particular other person. Thus, reach a stage called institutionalization.

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