

Social Psychology

o The study of how our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and behaviors are influenced by our interactions with others.



F.R.I.E.N.D.S

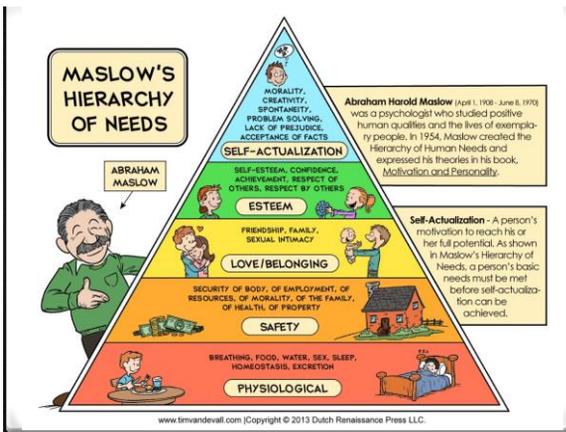
Social Cognition



- o A subfield of psychology that focuses on the study of how we perceive, store, and retrieve information about our social interactions.
- o Questions to Ask:
 - o Why do we choose the friends we do?
 - o What attracts us to certain people but not others?
 - o How well are adept at reading other's non-verbal cues?
 - o How do we adjust our perceptions of others to explain their behavior or our own behavior?

Why Do We Need Friends?

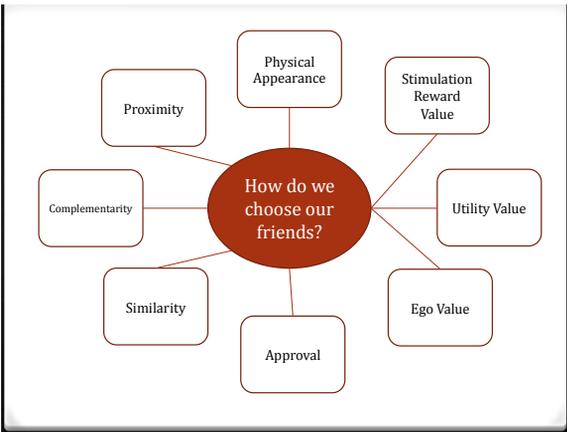
- o In infancy, we learn to associate personal contact w/our basic needs being met
- o As we age, close personal relationships are still associated w/basic needs, just the needs change
- o **Abraham Maslow & Carl Rogers** – social acceptance, feelings of love and affection necessary for psychological growth
- o **Bandura & Walters** – in order to develop, we must have praise, respect, love, affection, & a sense of achievement





How do we choose our friends?

Pages 522-525	Explanation	Examples
Proximity	Form friendships with people who are geographically close to us, eliminates fear of initial contact.	Form friends with classmates, church group, neighbors, etc.
Reward Values		
Physical Appearance		
Approval		
Similarity		
Complementarity		





Reward Values

Proximity helps make friends, but does not ensure friendships last.

- A friendship must serve some benefit:
- Reward Value System helps illustrate potential benefits of a relationship:
 - **Stimulation Reward Value:** the ability of a person to expose you to new ideas and experiences or to provide interest/entertainment
 - **Utility Value:** the ability of a person to help achieve a goal or outcome, willingness to give time and resources
 - **Ego-Support Value:** the ability of a person to provide approval, encouragement, and/or sympathy.



Physical Appearance & Approval

Physical Appearance:

- Mostly to form friendships w/people we consider "desirable" or "equal" to us
- People we consider attracted, we perceive as more interesting
- See friendships as an extension of own character
- Tendency to judge those deemed "unattractive" harshly

Approval

- Tendency to choose friends who agree with own views & ideas
- Serves to provide ego-support value
- **Caution** – we also want honest feedback tempered w/positive support



Similarity & Complementarity

Similarity

- Tend to choose friends w/people who have similar backgrounds, attitudes & interests
- Reasons for this:
 - Shared concept of what is fun
 - More likely to do stuff together
 - Easier to communicate
 - Feel uncomfortable w/ those who challenge our ideas

Complementarity

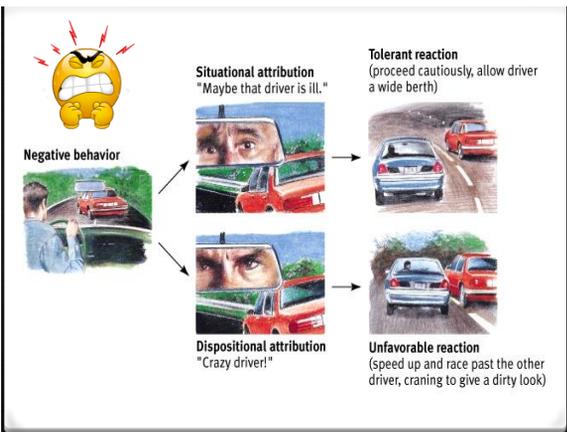
- Attraction that develops between opposite types of people
- The ability to supply what the other lacks
- Challenges our ideas & preconceptions
- Form of stimulation reward value
- Can't be too different





Attribution Theory

- o Developed by Fritz Heider (1958)
- o Definition: we explain someone's behavior by crediting either the external situation or the person's internal disposition.
- o Two Types:
 1. **Situational Attribution** - a person's reaction to an external stressor 
 2. **Dispositional Attribution** - a person's innate personality

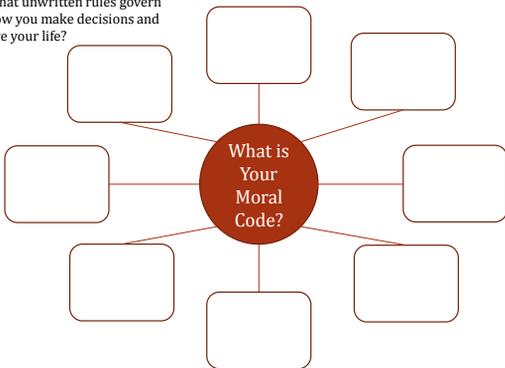


Fundamental Attribution Error

- **Definition:** a tendency for observers to *underestimate* the impact of situation and *overestimate* the impact of personal disposition
- People behave differently in different scenarios/situations
 - In people we know, we assume bad behavior is situational
 - In people we don't know, we assume bad behavior is dispositional
 - In ourselves, we attribute bad behavior as situational and good behavior as dispositional (**self-serving bias**)



What unwritten rules govern how you make decisions and live your life?





Personal Code of Ethics

- o From where did your personal moral code come?
- o What are some similarities between you and your partner's moral code?
- o What do you think would cause you to compromise your personal moral code?
- o What parts of your code would you NEVER violate?



Attitudes = Actions

- o **Attitude:** feelings, often influenced by our beliefs, that predispose us to respond (act) in a particular way. 
- o Two main paths to changing attitudes:
- o **Central Route Persuasion:** a change in attitude resulting from people focus on systematic arguments and respond with favorable thoughts 
 - o Occurs most in people who are interested in the subject
 - o Most commonly found in people who are naturally analytical
- o **Peripheral Route:** A change in attitude resulting from incidental cues 
 - o Occurs most commonly in people who rely on "snap judgements"
 - o Decisions can be made on the basis of physical attractiveness, because someone else liked it, gut feeling.



Actions = Attitude

- o Attitudes can follow behavior (actions)
- o By asking people to act against their personal beliefs in small increments, people can be persuaded to change their beliefs.
 - o **Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon:** once people agree to small request will be more likely agree with larger requests
- o Adoption of a new **role** can also affect attitude
 - o **Role** - a set of norms (expectations) about a social position that outlines how a person is supposed to behave in that position
 - o In a new role, a person will adopt a new set of norms (behaviors)
 - o **Stanford Prison Experiment - Philip Zimbardo** 
 - o **Abu Ghraib Prison Atrocities** 

Cognitive Dissonance Theory



◦ **Definition:** tendency to act in a manner to reduce the discomfort we feel when our two of our thoughts are inconsistent or our actions are inconsistent with our beliefs.

◦ **Implications:**

- When dissonance occurs, we adapt beliefs to fit actions
- Tendency to justify the inconsistent thoughts/behaviors
- Engaging in positive behaviors can result in positive attitude



“Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act. Silence in the face of evil is evil itself.” ~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Social Influence: Behavior is Contagious

- Society greatly influences behavior in areas of:
 - Conformity
 - Compliance
 - Obedience
 - Group Behavior
- **Chameleon Effect:** Chartrand & Baugh(1999)
 - Humans are natural mimics
 - Tendency to take on others' expressions, postures, and tone of voice (intonation)
 - Often adopt mood and attitudes of those around us (**mood linkage**)
 - Ex: contagious yawning, copycat violence



Conformity & Group Pressure

o **Conformity:** Adjusting behavior and/or thinking to that of a group standard

o **Reasons for Conformity:**

1. **Normative Social Influence:** influence resulting from a person's desire to gain approval from the group. Following unwritten rules (**norms**) for expected behavior
2. **Informational Social Influence:** influence resulting from one's willingness to accept others' opinions (majority rule)

o **Asch Study on Conformity:** (Solomon Asch, 1955)

- o Subject asked to give an answer after others had done so
- o Subject would give wrong answer if everyone else gave wrong answer.





Conditions which Strengthen Conformity



- o If one is made to feel insecure or incompetent
- o There are three or more in a group
- o The group is unanimous in their decision/action
- o One admires the group's status or attractiveness
- o One has made no prior commitment or any response
- o One's behavior is being observed by others in the group



- o One's culture highly values respect for social standards (ex. China & North Korea)

DANGER



CONFORMITY HAZARD

CONTAINS POSSIBLY NEW INFORMATION
WHICH MAY STIMULATE INDEPENDENT THOUGHT

Factors That Limit Conformity

- Fewer than three in the group
- One other person gives dissent (disagrees)
- Being from a society that values non-conformity



Importance of Physical Appearance