Self and other

Outline

- Self
  -- Everyone notices you
  -- You are terrific
  -- What you do makes sense
- Self and other
  -- the fundamental attribution error
- Other
- Groups

Why do we like others?

- Proximity
  “mere exposure effect”
- Similarity
- Attractiveness

Attractiveness Bias

- physically attractive people are rated higher on intelligence, competence, sociability, morality
- studies
  - teachers rate attractive children as smarter, and higher achieving
  - adults attribute cause of unattractive child’s misbehavior to personality, attractive child’s to situation
  - judges give longer prison sentences to unattractive people
How do we form impressions?

1. The power of first impressions
   - Kelley’s study
     - students had a guest speaker
     - before the speaker came, half got a written bio saying speaker was “very warm”, half got bio saying speaker was “rather cold”
     - “very warm” group rated guest more positively than “rather cold” group

2. First impressions are fast: Thin slices

   -- teaching
   -- personality ratings
   -- Gaydar

What effects do our perceptions of other people actually have on other people?

Self-fulfilling Prophecies

- When our beliefs and expectations create reality
- Beliefs & expectations influence our behavior & others’
- Pygmalion effect
  - person A believes that person B has a particular characteristic
  - person B may begin to behave in accordance with that characteristic
“You see, really and truly . . . the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she’s treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will . . .”

-- Eliza Doolittle

Studies of the Self-fulfilling Prophecy

- Rosenthal & Jacobson
  - went to a school and did IQ tests with kids
  - told teachers that the test was a “spurters” test
  - randomly selected several kids and told the teacher they were spurters
  - did another IQ test at end of year
  - spurters showed significant improvements in their IQ scores b/c of their teacher’s expectations of them

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How do we think about human groups?

• Us vs. them
• Stereotypes

Categories

• Humans and other animals accumulate information about categories of objects
• This information allows us to respond adaptively to novel instances, and is essential for survival

We also categorize people

• Men vs. women
• Child vs. adolescents vs. adults ...
• Whites vs. blacks vs. asians ...
• Lawyers vs. doctors ...
• Jews vs. Catholics ...
• Straight vs. gay ...
• Americans vs. Europeans ...
• Californians vs. New Yorkers ...
• Yale students vs. Harvard students ...

This is not necessarily a bad thing

Stereotypes are often positive
Stereotypes tend to be accurate

But ...
But there are problems

1. Not always accurate
   -- confirmation bias with stereotypes

2. Moral problems
   -- people should be judged as individuals, not as group members
   -- debates over profiling

But there are problems

1. Not always accurate
   -- confirmation bias with stereotypes
   -- misleading data from media

2. Moral problems
   -- negative stereotypes have all sorts of bad effects
   -- e.g., stereotype threat
You have 90 minutes to answer the following questions. Good luck!

Studying stereotypes

- 3 levels of stereotypes in today’s research
  - public
    - what we say to others about a group
  - private
    - what we consciously think about a group, but don’t say to others
  - implicit
    - unconscious mental associations guiding our judgments and actions without our conscious awareness
Implicit Stereotypes

- Use of priming: subject might not know stereotype is being activated, can’t work to suppress it
  - flash pictures of Black vs. White faces subliminally
  - give incomplete words like “hos_____.”

Implicit Stereotypes

- Use of priming: subject might not know stereotype is being activated, can’t work to suppress it
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  - give incomplete words like “hos_____.”
    - subjects seeing Black make “hostile,” seeing White make “hospital”

Who cares?
(what difference can a fraction of a second make?)

Also … implicit attitudes play a role in difficult “judgment calls”
Implicit Stereotypes

• Devine’s automaticity theory
  – Everyone holds stereotypes
  – These stereotypes are automatically activated whenever we come into contact with individuals
  – We have to actively push them back down if we don’t wish to act in a prejudiced way.
  – Overcoming prejudice is possible, but takes work

Summary

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• Groups
  – Stereotypes
Sleep (and dreams)

Electroencephalogram (EEG)

- Electrodes placed on the scalp provide a gross record of the electrical activity of the brain
- EEG recordings are a rough index of psychological states

EEG Waves of Wakefulness

- Awake, but non-attentive - large, regular alpha waves
- Awake and attentive - low amplitude, fast, irregular beta waves
Stages of Sleep

- Sleep stage 1 - brief transition stage when first falling asleep
- Stages 2 through 4 (slow-wave sleep) - successively deeper stages of sleep
- Characterized by an increasing percentage of slow, irregular, high-amplitude delta waves

Upon reaching stage 4 and after about 80 to 100 minutes of total sleep time, sleep lightens, returns through stages 3 and 2

- REM sleep emerges, characterized by EEG patterns that resemble beta waves of alert wakefulness
  - muscles most relaxed
  - rapid eye movements occur
  - dreams occur
- Four or five sleep cycles occur in a typical night’s sleep - less time is spent in slow-wave, more is spent in REM

Summary: 2 types of sleep

- Slow-wave/quiet sleep
  - eyes drift separately and slowly
  - immobile and hard to wake up

- REM sleep
  - active cortex
  - EEGs similar to waking
  - paralyzed, except for eyes
  - erections in men
  - Dreams

What is sleep for?

- Restoration theory - body wears out during the day and sleep is necessary to put it back in shape
  - growth-producing hormone
  - restoration of brain and other organs

- Preservation and protection theory - sleep emerged in evolution to preserve energy and protect during the time of day when there is little value and considerable danger
Sleep Disorders

- Somnambulism - sleepwalking
- Nightmares - frightening dreams that wake a sleeper from REM
- Night terrors - sudden arousal from sleep and intense fear accompanied by physiological reactions (e.g., rapid heart rate, perspiration) that occur during slow-wave sleep
- Narcolepsy - overpowering urge to fall asleep that may occur while talking or standing up
- Sleep apnea - failure to breathe when asleep

Dreams

To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there’s the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause

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- Sleep apnea - failure to breathe when asleep
- Some interesting side-effects of ambien
Two philosophical questions about dreams

- Am I dreaming right now?
- Can I be immoral in a dream?

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Two philosophical questions about dreams

- Am I dreaming right now? NO
- Can I be immoral in a dream? NOT USUALLY

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True dreams versus Sleep thought

- true dream - vivid, detailed dreams consisting of sensory and motor sensations experienced during REM
- sleep thought - lacks vivid sensory and motor sensations, is more similar to daytime thinking, and occurs during slow-wave sleep

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Facts about dreams

- Everyone dreams
- 3-4 times a night
- Fragile memories

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What do people dream about?

• Hill’s 50,000 dream reports; dreambank.net, etc.

-- Most dreams are bad
(more misfortune, more negative emotions)

-- Physical aggression
(more in tribal societies)
(more in men)
(more in Americans)

What do people WANT to dream about?

-- What do people WANT to dream about?
Women: Romance and adventure
Men: Sex with strangers

-- How many dreams are actually sexual?
About 10%

-- What is the most common dream?
Being naked? Flying? Falling?

Dreams and REM Sleep

• What are true dreams for?
• Freudian theories?
• Side effect of memory consolidation
Laughter

Typical prelaugh comments (=90%)

• I’ll see you guys later
• Look, it’s Andre!
• Are you sure?
• I know!
• How are you?
• I try to lead a normal life
• Does anyone have a rubber band?
• It wasn’t you?
• We can handle this

“Humorous” prelaugh comments (=10%)

Poor boy looks just like his father
You smell like you’ve had a good workout
Did you find that in your nose?
[reference to dormitory food]
He has a job holding back skin in the operating room

What makes us laugh?

A first guess:
“We laugh when there is incongruity between what we expect and what actually happens, unless the outcome is frightening”

BUT:
-- doesn’t explain why incongruity causes laughter
-- most incongruity doesn’t cause laughter
-- a lot of laughter isn’t caused by incongruity
Some facts about laughter

1. It is social and communicative
   -- Involuntary noise-making
   -- Contagious
     (laugh tracks, children)

2. It is shared with other primates
   -- laughing-like sounds in monkeys when they attack a common enemy
   -- laughing-like sounds in chimpanzees when they tickle each other

Q: What is tickling?
A: Touching parts of the body in a mock attack

Laughter as a signal of mock aggression and collective aggression?

Mock aggression
(tickling, teasing, insults, kidding around)

Collective aggression
(mob assault, executions)

-- social bonding (Plato), often against a common enemy
Ingredients of humor

- A target, a person or institution, who experiences some harm. It can be an enemy, but also a friend, or even yourself
- The harm should not be so serious that it elicits strong negative emotions such as fear, grief, or pity
- The harm is often of a social nature, sometimes involving sex or scatology--banana peel, pie in face, pants falling down, etc.
- Some level of surprise

Why can’t we tickle ourselves?
(but some can!)

1. No surprise; no mock-aggression
2. General deadening of self-stimulation

Reading Response

- Generate an interesting and testable hypothesis about either (a) dreams or (b) laughter