



PSY 152 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

DR. E-AFFUM-OSEI



Learning Objectives

- Explain Social Psychology
- Discuss attitudes, social perception, and group behavior
- Discuss studies on conformity and obedience

Introduction

- ❖ What is “social psychology”?.
- ❖ Studies the nature and causes of individual thoughts, feelings, and overt behavior in social situations.
- ❖ Studies how individuals’ thoughts feelings and behaviors influence and are influenced by others.
- ❖ It focuses on interpersonal behavior and the role of social forces in governing behavior

Introduction

- ❖ Topics of social psychology.
- ❖ Attitudes: making social judgement
- ❖ Perceptions: forming impressions of others
- ❖ Attribution: explaining the causes of events and behavior
- ❖ Group behavior: following others and others following you
- ❖ Conformity and obedience: yielding to others

Attitudes

- ❖ How do you feel about abortion, capital punishment and same sex marriage?
- ❖ People have attitudes toward these issues
 - ❖ Cognitive evaluation
 - ❖ e.g., bad or good
 - ❖ Feelings
 - ❖ e.g., Like or dislike
 - ❖ Behavioral tendencies
 - ❖ e.g., approach or avoidance

Attitudes

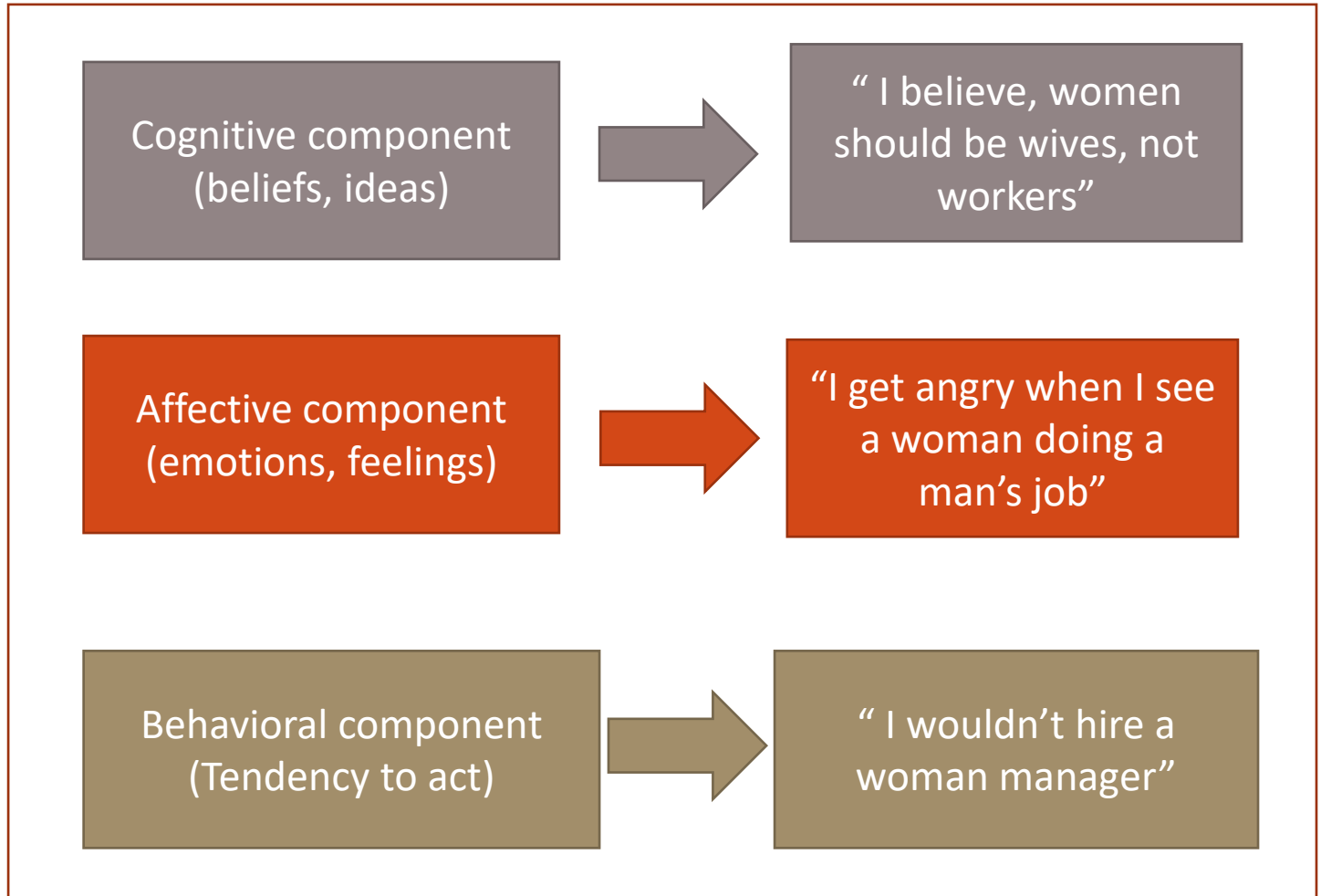
- ❖ **Attitude** is an enduring mental representation of a person, place or thing that evokes an emotional response and affected behavior.
 - ❖ **Explicit:** Attitudes that we are aware of, that shape our conscious decisions and actions.
 - ❖ It can be directly measured
 - ❖ **Implicit:** Attitudes about which we are unaware and that influence our behavior in ways we do not recognize.
 - ❖ It can be measured indirectly.

Attitudes

- ❖ Three components of Attitude
- ❖ (A-B-C components)
 - ❖ **Affective component:** emotions and how you feel about something
 - ❖ **Behavioral component:** tendency to act in a certain way
 - ❖ **Cognitive component:** beliefs, ideas about something

Example: Attitude toward working women

Sexist attitude toward women



Attitudes

- ❖ Theory of attitude **formation** and **change**
- ❖ **Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory**
 - ❖ A state of tension that occurs when a person simultaneously holds two cognitions that are psychologically inconsistent.
 - ❖ When a person's belief is incongruent with his or her behavior
 - ❖ e.g., you believe that a bribe is not good but one day you took a bribe and felt guilty but you say "it's just one day"
- ❖ "Dissonance" often leads to motivation to reduce the dissonance by changing attitudes or behaviors

Social perception

- ❖ **Social perception:** refers to the ways in which people form and modify impressions of others
 - ❖ e.g., how do you think about your best friend?
- ❖ Perception may be influenced by
 - ❖ **Physical appearance:** attractive people are viewed as kind, interesting, outgoing etc.
 - ❖ **Stereotype:** beliefs that people have certain characteristics because of their membership in a particular group.
 - ❖ e.g., gender, ethnicity, occupation

Social perception

- ❖ Social perception may be influenced by first impression including primacy and recency effects:
- ❖ **Primacy effect:** the tendency to evaluate others in terms of first impressions.
- ❖ **Recency effect:** the tendency to evaluate others in terms of the most recent impression.

Attribution

- ❖ **Attribution** is the belief concerning why people behave in a certain way.
- ❖ **Attribution process:** people draw inferences about the motives and traits of others (i.e., explain why things happen)
- ❖ **Attribution theory** A theory that people are motivated to explain their own and others' behavior by attributing causes of behavior to a **situation** or a **disposition**.

Types of Attribution

- ❖ **Dispositional attribution:** An assumption that a person's behavior is determined by internal causes such as personal attitudes, and traits (i.e., **internal attribution**).
 - ❖ Within the person's control
- ❖ **Situational attribution:** An assumption that a person's behavior is determined by external circumstances (i.e., **external attribution**)
 - ❖ Outside the person's control

Biases in attribution

- ❖ **Fundamental attribution error:** To assume that others act predominantly on the basis of their dispositions, and traits, even when there is evidence suggesting the importance of their situation (*i.e.*, *internal attribution*).
- ❖ **Actor-observer effect:** To attribute our own behavior to situational factors but to attribute the behavior of others to dispositional factors.

Biases in attribution

- ❖ **Self-serving bias:** To view one's successes as stemming from internal (**personal**) factors and one's failures as stemming from external (**situational**) factors.
- ❖ e.g., “if I get an “A” in the psychology course, I attribute that I am smart” i.e., **internal attribution.**
- ❖ e.g., “if I get an “F” in the psychology course, I attribute that the test is difficult and the lecturer did not cover the topics” i.e., **external attribution.**

Interpersonal attraction

❖ Positive or negative feelings toward another person e.g., liking, disliking or loving

❖ Factors that may influence interpersonal attraction

- a) Physical attractiveness
- b) Matching hypothesis
- c) Reciprocity
- d) Proximity



Liking &
loving

Interpersonal attraction

- ❖ Positive or negative feelings toward another person
 - ❖ e.g., liking, disliking or loving
- ❖ Factors that may influence interpersonal attraction
 - ❖ **Physical attractiveness:** physical appearance has been found to influence likeness and love
 - ❖ e.g., partners in dating, job interviews and employment

Interpersonal attraction

- ❖ Factors that may influence interpersonal attraction
 - ❖ **Matching hypothesis:** the view that people tend to choose or like persons similar to themselves in attractiveness and attitudes in formation of interpersonal relationships.
 - ❖ **Reciprocity:** the tendency to reciprocate feelings and attitudes that are expressed about us.
 - ❖ e.g., we like those who like us and care for us
 - ❖ **Proximity:** the tendency to like individuals who are closer to us. e.g., our classmate or neighbours

Group behavior

- ❖ **Group** consists of two or more individuals who interact and are interdependent toward the achievement of a specific goal
 - ❖ e.g., sport teams
- ❖ **Aspects of group behavior**
 - ❖ Social facilitation
 - ❖ Group decision
 - ❖ Mob behaviour
 - ❖ Bystander effect

Group behavior

- ❖ **Social facilitation:** The process by which a person's performance increased when other members of a group engage in similar behavior.
- ❖ Social facilitation is influenced by **evaluation apprehension** i.e., concern that others are evaluating our behavior.
 - ❖ e.g., runners tend to move more rapidly when they are members of a group

Group behavior

- ❖ **Group decision making-** psychologists have found a number of “rules” that govern group decision making.
 - ❖ **Group polarization:** taking an extreme position or attitude on an issue.
 - ❖ The group reinforces their dominant point of view
 - ❖ group consensus
 - ❖ **Groupthink:** A process in which group members are influenced by cohesiveness and a dynamic leader to ignore external realities as they make decisions.
- ❖ In close-knit groups, the tendency for all members to think alike and suppress disagreement for the sake of harmony.

Group behavior

❖ Group decision making:

❖ **Bystander effect:** people are less likely to offer help in groups as compared to when being alone

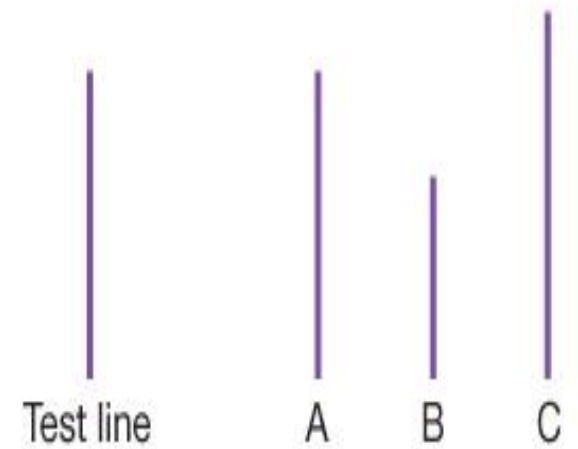
❖ **Diffusion of responsibility:** the spreading of sharing responsibilities for a decision or behaviour within a group. e.g., “someone else may help”

❖ **Social loafing:** the tendency to reduce one’s effort when working in groups as compared to when working individually.

❖ e.g., “someone else may do the job”.

Conformity and obedience

- ❖ **Conformity:** To change one's attitudes or overt behavior to adhere to social norms.
- ❖ Conformity may be influenced by social pressure.
- ❖ **Solomon Asch (1952) Experiment**
- ❖ Participants in a group were asked to match line lengths.
- ❖ Confederates picked wrong line.
- ❖ Only 20 percent of participants remained independent when the group was involved.

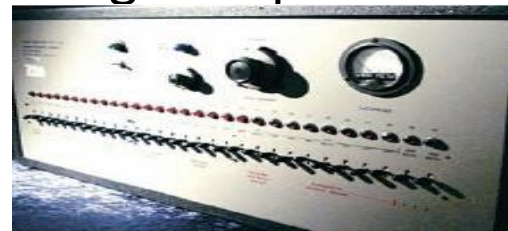


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYIh4MkcfJA&t=3s>

Conformity and obedience

- ❖ **Obedience** : To perform in response to a command given by the authority
- ❖ **Stanley Milgram (1960s) “Learning Experiment”**
 - ❖ The experiment investigated whether people would follow orders even when the orders violated their ethical standards.
 - ❖ As part of the experiment on learning, participants were told to administer an electric shock to another participant every time that participant misremembers a series of words.
 - ❖ As the experiment proceeds, the amount of electricity participants were administering rises.
 - ❖ Participants started at 15 volts, but the switchboard goes up to 450 volts .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBDkJ-Nc3Ig>



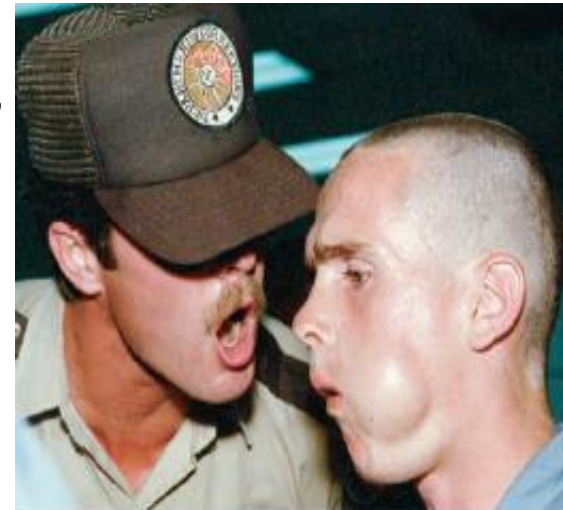
Conformity and obedience

- ❖ Stanley Milgram (1960s) “learning experiment”
- ❖ Most people were far more obedient than anyone expected.
- ❖ Every single participant complied with at least some orders to shock another person.
- ❖ Two-thirds shocked the learner to the full extent.
- ❖ Results are controversial and have generated further research on violence and obedience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g1MJeHYIE0>

Conformity and obedience

- ❖ Obedience Study: Philip G. Zimbardo (1970s) Stanford Prison Study
- ❖ Students agreed to live in a “simulated” prison for two weeks.
- ❖ They were randomly assigned to be prisoners or guards.
- ❖ Those assigned the role of prisoner became distressed and helpless.
- ❖ Those assigned the role of guards became either nice, “tough but fair,” or punitive and harsh.
- ❖ The study had to be ended after six days.



Why people obey

❖ Entrapment

- ❖ A gradual process in which individuals escalate their commitment to a course of action to justify their investment of time, money, or effort

- ❖ The first stages of entrapment pose no difficult choices. But as people take a step, or make a decision to continue, they will justify that action in order to feel that it is the right one and that they haven't done anything foolish or unethical.

