

Lecture 6-Attitudes and Attribution Across Cultures

Making Attributions in Intercultural interactions:

- Types of Explanations
 - Ability- internal factor which should not be projected on external factors
 - Task Difficulty
 - Effort- People can explain their success through the amount of effort they put into it
 - Luck- people tend to explain their failure due to luck "I was unlucky"
- Cultures tend to use different explanations for success and failure
- Isomorphic Attribution (Triandis 1977)
 - If you interpret what someone said the same way they intended to then it is isomorphic attribution
 - If you interpret what someone said differently than how they intended, then it is **NOT** isomorphic attribution
 - The intention is not perceived the same way by the listener

Cultural Style of Attribution

- In individualistic cultures people tend to focus on the individual as determining the causes of behaviour
 - People attribute success to ability and failure to external factors
- In collectivistic cultures people tend to give greater emphasis to external causes of individual behaviour
 - People attribute success to help from others and failure to the lack of effort
 - E.g. Panama, Ecuador, Columbia, Guatemala, Venezuela

Fundamental Attribution Error

- Is it possible that the fundamental attribution error is a uniquely western phenomenon?
 - Tends to be more prevalent in western individualistic societies
- Miller (1984)
 - Participants: American and Asian Indians of varying ages
 - They had to describe the cause of actions they had observed in their lives
 - At age 8 there is no difference between Americans and Indians
 - Americans tend to make more internal attributions- by the time they are adults they are significantly different in making internal attributions
 - Indians tend to make less internal attributions from age 8 to adulthood when compared to American adults
 - American overestimate the dispositional factors whereas Indians overestimate the role of external factors
- Our culture also has an impact on how we see or perceive things

Masuda and Nisbett's Study (2001)

- Results:
 - Both American and Japanese college students recalled details about the focal fish to nearly equal extent
 - Japanese students, however reported more details about the supporting case in the background

Bicultural Identity

- How bicultural individuals make attributions for human behaviour?
 - We switch from one context to another and back & forth

Hong Et Al. Study

- Results:
 - Those with bicultural identity made more situational attributions when Chinese images were presented and less situational attribution when American images were given

- Conclusion:
 - Social perceptions are fluid and depend on with culture is brought to mind

Self-Serving Attribution

- Self-serving attributions
 - The tendency of explaining one's success to internal disposition factors and one's failure to external situational factors
 - we protect our competency by passing our reason of failing to something or someone else
- Functions of self-serving bias
 - Defending One's Action
 - Sande, Goethals, Ferrarj, & Worth (1989) – American students were told to interpret actions
 - Positive attributions to ourselves or to what we believe to be correct
 - Overestimating one's contribution and underestimating other's contributions
 - Ross and Sicoly (1979)
 - We do not usually remember the contribution of other people in our own success – you think you have done more but we tend to not remember

Self-Effacement Attribution

- Self-Effacement or modesty bias
 - The tendency to make internal attribution for failure and external attribution for success
 - Yik, Bond and Paulhas (1998)
 - Canadian students on average rate themselves higher

Hidden Self-Effacement

- Heine, Takata, and Lehman (2000)
- Participants: students in Canada and Japan
- Computerized mathematical judgement test
- Participants were asked "Who do you think had performed better on the test, you or the average student at your university?"
 - False Feedback- it doesn't matter how they performed... were randomly assigned to above average, average or below average
 - In the success condition, the participants had higher score than the average student on most trials, whereas in the failure conditions, the average students' scored were generally higher than the participants' score

Self-Effacement & Culture

- Functions of self-effacement or modesty bias in **collectivistic** societies:
 - This bias is important for social relations
 - The person is more accepted by others

The Case of Macadamia Nuts

- Korean Airline executive sent a jet back to the gate for being served macadamia nuts in an unopened bag rather than on a plate (December 2014)
- The father of the executive apologized and said "please blame me; it is my fault... I failed to raise her properly"
 - It is not an individual responsibility because the blame comes back to the family

Attitudes & Culture

- Attitudes toward environmental problems—Schultz (2002)
 - Participants were asked to write a short essay about "the environmental problems that concern you the most"
 - The coding of responses indicated three types of concerns

- Egoistic (concerned about yourself), Altruistic (concerned about society and self) and biospheric (beyond humanity, talks about plants, animals, more holistic view)
- Attitudes we have are shaped by the values of our culture

Attitude Toward Soccer

- Ann Coulter, a conservative pundit, in response to the World Cup fever in the US wrote this is “a sign of the nation’s moral decay”
- “No American whose great-grandfather was born here is watching soccer. One can only hope that, in addition to learning English, these new Americans will drop their soccer fetish with time”

Sexual Attitudes

- In what ways do sexual attitudes differ among cultures? Almost everything!!
 - Kissing
 - Oral Contact with Female Breasts- in most cultures it is accepted, but in some it is considered inappropriate because it is associated with breastfeeding
 - Sexual positions
 - Masturbation
 - Homosexuality, shifted to more acceptable. In many countries however it is still not acceptable
 - Virginity
 - Bestiality
- Attitudes that we may not find acceptable are or can be considered acceptable in other countries
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