

confrontation between political figures. Studies have been conducted in the context simulations and questionnaires, strictly controlled laboratory settings using traditional experimental methods, real-world settings such as hospitals and other large organizations, and through historical case study analysis.

Importance

Much of what humans do as individuals and society involves influencing others. People want and need things from others, things such as affection, money, opportunity, work, and justice. How they get those things often depends on their abilities to influence others to grant their desires. In addition, people are also the constant targets of the influence attempts of others. Thus, it is important to understand what causes people to comply with others' wishes, and how the exercise of power affects both targets and influencing agents. The study of social power provides that knowledge.

Gregg Gold

See also Compliance; Influence; Power; Power Motive

Further Readings

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SOCIAL PROJECTION

Definition

Social projection refers to the tendency to assume that others are similar to oneself. Students who cheat on their statistics exams, for example, probably believe that many others cheat as well, whereas honest students think that cheating is rare. Projection is not limited to value-laden behaviors such as cheating versus being honest, and therefore, projection is not necessarily a defense mechanism. Statistically, projection is simply a positive

correlation between what people say about themselves and what they believe is common in the group.

Though not considered a defense mechanism, it was believed for a long time that projection is a judgmental bias that people should rather get rid of. Surely, the argument was, people have enough information about others to make accurate estimates about the group. An individual's own attitude, preference, or personality trait is but a single bit of data that should not make a difference. It is now recognized, however, that projection can improve the accuracy of the perception of the group when knowledge of the self is all a person has.

Useful Projection

Suppose a person is brought to the laboratory and told that there are different types of people, and that each individual's type can be measured by a new test. After testing, the person is informed of being type T. Not knowing anything about how many different types there are and how common each one of them is, the person can speculate that his or her type is the most common one. Now, the person's single data point is useful. This is a good guessing strategy because most people are by definition in the majority rather than the minority.

Consider another example. A new gene is discovered, but it is unknown whether many (e.g., 90%) or few people (10%) have it. Both possibilities seem equally likely at first. Now a randomly chosen person tests positive for the gene. Because this person is more likely to represent a group in which the gene is common than a group in which it is rare, it can be inferred that the gene is common. This kind of inductive reasoning supports the idea that social projection is rational when a person has little knowledge other than self-knowledge. The more that is known about individual others, the more projection should diminish—and generally does.

A good example of a situation in which a person knows little about others is the one-shot Prisoner's Dilemma. To illustrate, suppose each of two players has a coin that must be placed heads up or tails up. If both choose heads, both get \$15; if both choose tails, both get \$5; if they make different choices, the one choosing heads gets nothing, whereas the one choosing tails gets \$20. Heads is the *cooperative* choice because it leads to the best result for the group; tails is the *defecting* choice that yields the best outcome for the individual regardless of what the other person does. Most people project after making a choice, irrespective of what that choice was. Cooperators expect

cooperation, and defectors expect defection. More important, social projection can increase the probability that a person chooses to cooperate. People who strongly believe that others will make the same choices as they themselves do will expect to receive the payoff for mutual cooperation (\$15) rather than the sucker's payoff (\$0) if they don't cooperate.

Harmful Projection

Sometimes people project when they should not. Public speakers, for example, know certain things about themselves that are hidden from the audience. They know how well they prepared, how anxious they feel, or which critical piece of information they forgot to mention. Many people cannot help but assume that the audience knows what they themselves know, especially when their own experiences are as emotional and vivid as their awareness of their own stage fright. Here, the projective assumption that one's own feelings and thoughts are transparent to others leads to overprojection. Unfortunately, efforts to suppress awareness of these unpleasant states or self-consciousness do not diminish projection. Instead, the unwanted thoughts become hyperaccessible, that is, they push themselves back into consciousness and are then projected even more strongly onto others.

Even seasoned public speakers must be wary of projection. The more knowledgeable they are about their topic, the more they are inclined to assume the audience already knows what they are about to say. To appreciate the actual differences between themselves and the audience, these speakers must deliberately adjust their expectations. Students can experience how difficult it is to overcome this projection of knowledge when taking an exam. They can predict the performance of others from their own experience with the test's difficulty. In this regard, students are similar to one another and projection is useful. When, however, students have been informed of the actual test results, they also project this knowledge to others who do not have it, and their predictions get worse.

Variations in Social Projection

Social projection tends to be strong regardless of whether people predict attitudes, behaviors, or personality traits. This is so, partly because people have some latitude to define the meaning of these attributes in self-serving terms. A person who cheats on exams may downplay the severity of the offense and thereby conclude that cheating is common. A lover of Pinot

may think that the superiority of this grape is a fact of nature, to be recognized by all except the most boorish of people. Estimates regarding abilities are different because abilities are defined as relative. To believe that one has a high ability to play chess is to believe that one can beat most competitors. It is not possible to predict that most others will also beat most others. By contrast, it is easy to project one's love for the game to others.

For any type of personal attribute, projection is weak when people make predictions for groups to which they themselves do not belong. Men, for example, project their own attributes only to other men (the ingroup) but not to women (the outgroup), whereas women project to other women but not to men. Because most people's self-concepts comprise mostly desirable attributes, the lack of projection to outgroups has serious consequences for social stereotyping and intergroup relations. Inasmuch as they limit their projections to ingroups, people come to see these groups as extensions of themselves, and thus, as mostly desirable. Their perceptions of outgroups, which do not benefit from projection, are comparatively neutral. In the context of intergroup relations, an increase of projection to the outgroup would be a good thing.

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See also Attribution Theory; False Consensus Effect; Projection

Further Readings

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SOCIAL PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY

Definition

Broadly defined, social psychophysiology is the study of human social behavior as it relates to and is revealed by physiological or bodily responses. Hence, social