

Attributions Across People and Cultures

Across Cultures

Collectivist cultures in asian countries typically consider interrelationships between people. Views of the self are relational and context dependent.

Individualist cultures in western countries typically make attributions to do with the self.

Nisbett et al. (2005) Where does the difference lie? Counted numbers of figures in paintings in national galleries. Also measured the perspective from each drawings. Found that there were more people in collectivist paintings and perspectives were much more social. This was also the case in children's drawings of their homes.

More fundamentally, they measured low-level perceptual and attention tasks and found differences. Japanese mentioned twice the number of relations between objects in the **Michigan Fish Task** (asking people to describe a fish tank). People from collectivist cultures are influenced more by the biasing frame in a field independence study. People from collectivist cultures are more likely to notice change blindness (a disappearing building) as they are encoding the interrelationships.

People from different cultures begin to make their different attributions during low level processing and cognition. We still don't know how or why though.

Reactions to Racism

Kawakami et al. (2009) Participant is in an experiment with two others. One leaves to answer his phone and bumps the other. The person bumps makes a racist comment to the participant ("clumsy black people or stupid n_____"). When asked to imagine this situation, participants presumed that they wouldn't pick the participant if they made a racist comment. However, the reality was that it didn't matter. They were equally likely to pick the participant to work with them regardless of the comment (or non-comment) that they made. This suggests that we are typically unaware of how a persons disposition will affect us in a situation.

Across People

Actor-Observer Bias We are more likely to explain our actions in terms of the situation, and other's actions in terms of their dispositions.

Nisbett et al. (1973) asked students why they chose a major and why their friend chose a major. Results showed that own decisions were more likely to be considered in terms of situation ("engineering is a high paying field"), whereas others were more likely to be considered in terms of disposition ("they love money")

Switching Focus (McGill, 1989) It is possible to manipulate which answer a participant gives in these questions (disposition or situation) by asking questions that either emphasise the disposition ("why did you/ your best friend choose this major?") or questions that emphasise situation ("why did you/your best friend choose this major, in particular?").

This suggests that our attributions depend on the perspective we take when considering attributions. We see our friends (and so think in terms of disposition) but less frequently see ourselves (especially in social interactions, and are more used to considering our thoughts and feelings).

Storms (1973) supported this notion by getting participants with cameras attached to their head to have a social interaction. The amount of dispositional attributions made depends on whether a participant sees the playback from their own or from the other persons perspective, with dispositional attributions made for the person viewed in the camera.