

## DESCRIBE AND EVALUATE APPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THEORIES IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY.

### 1. Jury decision-making – how might juror characteristics influence verdicts?

- ⊖ **Juror's characteristics influencing own verdict** - Pennington and Hastie (1990) suggest that jurors make their decisions by creating hypothetical reconstructive stories that could explain the evidence and then match the story to the verdict. However, people may differ in the kinds of stories they tend to construct or believe, in how many alternative stories they are willing or able to consider, and how early they form their stories, as well as how selective they are, - based upon their personality, attitudes, and experience (schemas).
- ⊖ **Minority influence upon others' verdicts** – Moscovici (1976) suggests that one or a small minority of like-minded individuals may influence the majority or like-minded individuals may influence the majority vote by conversion over a longer period of time of deliberation, if they are consistent, committed in their opinions and arguments, seem to be acting on principle rather than out of self-gain and incur some cost, as well as are not overly rigid and unreasonable in their opinions and arguments.
- ⊖ **Foreperson influences upon others' verdicts** – foreperson is perceived as leader, it is usually men of higher SES (socio-economic status), might influence the verdict, although evidence is mixed here.
- ⊖ **Social / majority influences on jury decision-making** – jurors are a group not one individual so that decision they make is of better quality. But is it? “Liberation hypotheses” was proposed – jurors have usually decided on a verdict before they retire to deliberate and jury deliberation consists merely of trying to persuade others to the same opinion. Social group pressure may thus lead to illogical decisions for a number of reasons:
  - (A) **group polarisation** – a group tends to make more extreme decisions (either riskier or more cautious) through a process of social comparison and increasing conformity to the group's initial majority decision;
  - (B) **conformity** – group pressure to agree with majority verdicts may result in a lack of consideration for alternative, minority opinions. This can be both informational (uncertainty over the verdict) and normative (need to be socially approved). The pressure may increase with the severity of the crime, the need for a majority rather than unanimous verdict (whoever cares about one or two dissidents then...), and the size of the jury (1 against 5 people resists less than 2 against 10 people – see Asch);
  - (C) **Groupthink** – esp. in a cohesive and isolated group, dominated by a directive leader – e.g. confirmatory bias – not equally considering evidence against their joint beliefs;
  - (D) **Social loafing** – individuals in the jury may be inclined to deliberate less that they would alone and let others think for them.

#### **Evaluation –**

- ⊖ Studies of shadow juries (where a mock jury sits in on the trial and their deliberations can be recorded and analyzed) reveal that decisions are made similar to those from real juries. (*so what? – they still make a group...*)
- ⊖ How to compare real and mock decisions – realism, pressures and responsibilities can't possibly be replicated.

## 2. The effects of defendant characteristics on the jury

- ⊖ **Physical attractiveness** of the defendant seems to have a strong effect on the verdict, esp. with female defendants, and when the crime is not very serious. It has also been found that in cases of sexual harassment, the relative level of attractiveness between the defendant and victim was important (e.g. attractive male harasser + unattractive female victim = verdict lower, while unattractive male harasser + attractive female victim = verdict higher). Also, attractive victim of theft was more likely to provoke a guilty verdict for the defendant than an unattractive victim (e.g. Kerr, 1978).
- ⊖ **Race / ethnicity** of the jurors and the victim – mixed evidence here – stereotypes, prejudice, overt and latent prejudice.

## 3. Attribution bias and eye-witness testimony (social cognition field)

- ⊖ **Attribution** refers to the decision we make over what was responsible for witnessed behaviour (**internal/dispositional** attribution vs. **external/situational** attribution).  
Attributions are subject to psychological biases:
- ⊖ **Fundamental Attribution Error** – tendency to excessively make internal attributions to others (Ross, 1977) – according to FAE, witnesses may attribute a criminal's behaviour to faulty personality rather than social circumstances (e.g. unemployment);
- ⊖ **Ultimate Attribution Error** (Pettigrew, 1979) – FAE for groups;
- ⊖ FAE and UAE increase with hedonic relevance (: someone did harm to you) and the amount of damage done.
- ⊖ **Actor-Observer Effect** – (Jones and Nisbett, 1972) – internal attributions to others + external attributions to oneself – e.g. criminals blame society;
- ⊖ **Self-serving bias** – one's successful behaviour – internal attribution, one's failures – external attributions.
- ⊖ The **Just World Hypotheses** – attribution of blame – cognitive dissonance produced by the fact that bad things happen to people produces the tendency to blame the victim.

## 4. Self-fulfilling prophecy in education and anti-social behaviour

- when observer's beliefs or expectations about a person or a group influences their social interactions with them and thus actually elicits or creates the expected behaviour. How does it occur? Schemas and stereotypes lead to confirmatory bias towards somebody, and so we selectively attend to that person's behaviour and react to it accordingly. Due to, e.g. selective reinforcement / punishment, conformity, the person's behaviour changes, which in turn confirms the expectations of the observer, who creates the ever-increasing feedback that creates the self-fulfilling prophecy.
- The effects of the self-fulfilling prophecy have been experimentally demonstrated in **education (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1977)**, although not always replicated;
- **Cross-culturally** – **Jahoda (1954)** reported that Ashanti tribe of West Africa believed that those born on Wednesday are naturally aggressive while those born on Monday are naturally calm, and are given names which reflects this. Police records there show a higher percentage of juvenile delinquents have Wednesday than Monday names.