

## Exercise walk-through

Attribution Theory and Person Perception ■ 4.1

eXercise

## You must be able to

- distinguish a **dispositional** 内在 from a **situational** 情境 attribution
- describe the **fundamental attribution error** 基本归因错误
- explain the **self-serving bias** 自利偏差 and the **actor-observer** difference
- describe how **first impressions** and **stereotypes** 刻板印象 shape perception

## Method — Two kinds of attribution

A **dispositional** attribution explains behaviour by the person's character; a **situational** attribution explains it by the circumstances. Most behaviour reflects both.

## Method — The fundamental attribution error

When explaining **others**, we overweight disposition and underweight situation. The driver who cuts in is “aggressive”; when we do it, we were late for a reason.

## Method — Self-serving and actor-observer

The **self-serving bias** attributes our successes to disposition and our failures to situation. The **actor-observer** difference is the wider version: we see our own situation and only the other person's behaviour.

## Method — First impressions and stereotypes

Impressions form fast and then bias later interpretation, so ambiguous behaviour is read to fit the impression. A **stereotype** does the same at group level, supplying expectations before any individual evidence.

## Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State the difference between a dispositional and a situational attribution.

## Solution 2.1

Method: Two kinds of attribution

### Worked steps

dispositional explains behaviour by the person's character **B1**; situational explains it by circumstances **B1**.

## Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain the fundamental attribution error with one example.

## Solution 2.2

Method: The fundamental attribution error

### Worked steps

overweighting disposition when explaining others' behaviour (B1); e.g. calling a driver aggressive rather than considering they may be rushing to an emergency (B1).

## Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A student attributes a good grade to ability and a bad one to an unfair test.

- (a) Name the bias.
- (b) State one function it serves.

## Solution 2.3

Method: Self-serving and actor-observer

### Worked steps

(a) the self-serving bias **B1**. (b) it protects self-esteem **B1**.

## Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Explaining a stranger's rudeness by their personality rather than their circumstances illustrates

- A** the self-serving bias
- B** the fundamental attribution error
- C** a situational attribution
- D** stereotype threat

## Solution 3.1

- A the self-serving bias
- B the fundamental attribution error
- C a situational attribution
- D stereotype threat



### Worked steps

- B. the situation is discounted in favour of a trait explanation.

## Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

We tend to explain our own behaviour situationally because

- A** we are more honest about ourselves
- B** we can see our own situation but only others' behaviour
- C** disposition does not apply to us
- D** we have no self-knowledge

## Solution 3.2

- A we are more honest about ourselves
- B we can see our own situation but only others' behaviour 
- C disposition does not apply to us
- D we have no self-knowledge

### Worked steps

- B. our own circumstances are visible to us; others' are not.

## Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

An interviewer forms an impression in the first minute.

- (a) State one way this can bias the rest of the interview.
- (b) Suggest one procedural safeguard and justify it.

## Solution 3.3

Method: First impressions and stereotypes

### Worked steps

(a) later ambiguous answers are interpreted to fit the impression **B1**. (b) use a structured interview with fixed questions and scored criteria **B1**, because it forces the same evidence to be gathered and rated for every candidate **B1**.