

Fundamental attribution error theories



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In social psychology attribution theory tries to explain the ways in which people attribute the behavior of themselves or others to something different than what actually was the cause for the behavior. Often time's people think that they know the reasons that others do things but in fact are incorrect because the actual reasons for the presenting behaviors are other than the suspected causes. When a person thinks that people are behaving in a certain way due to personality traits rather than situational circumstances they have made what is called a fundamental attribution error. Chapter 6 in our text gives an example of a professor who teaches the same classes a 8:30 a. m. and 7:00 p. m. and believes everyone in the 7:00 p. m. class is extraverted because they are always very chatty before class begins and everybody in the morning class are silent types. But what is actually the truth of the matter is in an early morning class while people are physically present they are not necessarily awake enough to be overly chatty because they haven't quite gotten going yet.

The best example the fundamental attribution error that ever happened to me was when I first moved home from Hawaii to Orlando to go to school and I began hanging out with my best friend's cousin who was about the nicest most beautiful girl ever. Now I was under the impression that she was nice because that was just the way she was or because that was just her personality type. So I was taken in by all this niceness and entered into a relationship thinking I had a girl who really liked me and who was about the sweetest person I had ever met in my life. But what I didn't understand was the actual situation that was causing her to act this way. She needed someone who was doing well to help her with her super messed up life and

that was the actual situation. I thought she really was a very sweet girl but on the contrary she is actually a cold uncaring person and a damn fine actress. So I attributed her kind behavior to her personality when in fact she was only adjusting to the situation she was in which was trying to attract someone who could help her with her plight in life.

So I made a fundamental attribution error of the worst kind because it affected everything in my life there after. In my case I have learned now that women are usually up to something especially if they are being overly nice for no apparent good reason. In the future I plan to avoid such terrible attribution errors by doing background and credit checks on all my future potential girlfriends. This attribution error also helped me realize that people in general aren't necessarily always just behaving a certain way just because of personality traits but may also be trying to navigate whatever situation they are in at that current time. For instance a person who is cursing all the time might make everybody think that he or she is very angry and has deep seated problems and has no manners at all when in fact the situation is that they have Tourette's syndrome and they can't help it. But if we aren't aware of a person's situation then we will probably attribute the behavior to the person's personality. But in our own case we jump straight to situational circumstances to justify ourselves but with others we assume it's just them which are what attribution theory and fundamental attribution theory aim to explain.