**Reciprocity**

***What is it?* ---** The Reciprocity principle is based on the social norm that people treat others they way they have been treated. In other words, responding to a positive action with another positive action. Socially, this means that in response to kindness, one is much more cooperative. On the other hand, in response to unfriendly behavior, an individual will be less inclined to cooperate.

***Example ---*** When someone is greeted warmly upon entering a shop, they may be more inclined to make a purchase. For example, if someone was to walk into a carpet shop where the employees were actively rolling and unrolling carpets for them to choose from, they might feel that they need to make up for this effort in some way. Even if they don’t want to buy a carpet, they may find themselves looking around the shop for something small to buy.

***Outline the study ---***

Lynn and McCall (1998)

* We treat other people the way they treat us (which is a social norm) “Returning the favor”.
* Study showed that when people are given mints and sweets with their bill, the size of their tip is larger.

***Outline the study ---***

Regan (1971) “Raffle tickets experiment”

**Aim:**

-Laboratory experiment to test whether participants who had received a favor from the assistant would be more likely to help than those who did not receive a favor.

**Method:**

-Participants were asked to rate paintings one by one. A confederate (assistant of experimenter) was always present in the room and acted as one of the participants.

-In the experimental condition, the assistant left the experiment and returned after two minutes with two bottles of coke, one for himself and one for the participant.

-In the control condition, the participant did not receive coke.

-When all paintings had been rated, the experimenter left the room.

-The confederate then told the participant that he was selling raffle tickets for a new car and that the one who sold the most could win $50.

-He then asked the participant if he would buy some tickets, even a small amount would help.

**Findings:**

-Participants in the experimental condition bought twice as many raffle tickets than the participants in the control condition who had not received a favor first.

-As a follow-up to the experiment, the researcher asked participants to fill out rating scales indicating how much they liked the confederate.

-The researcher then compared how many tickets the participants had purchased from the confederate in the control condition and the experimental condition.

-They found out that liking was associated with buying significantly more tickets from the confederate in the control condition.

-In the experimental condition, it made no difference whether the participants liked the person or not.

-Interestingly, participants who did NOT like the assistant bought as many tickets as those who liked the confederate.

-So this shows the powerful influence of the rule of reciprocity, even if people don’t like a person they will return a favor.

**Evaluation:**

*Strengths:*

-Laboratory experiment so a high degree of control: method controlled, confederate left room for two minutes

-Possible to establish cause-effect relationship between “receiving a favor” and “returning a favor”, which supports the principle of reciprocity.

-Findings supported by many observations in real-life situations.

-Very low cultural bias as psychologists have concluded that reciprocity is a universal behavior across all cultures.

- Ethical: at the end of the experiment, participants received an explanation for the hypotheses and the money was returned to them.

*Weaknesses:*

-Questionable ecological validity: everything has been set up in a lab and controlled.

-Some variables could not be controlled, e.g. confederate could not have acted in the exact same way towards every single participant.

-May have sample bias (participants from one specific area) which limits possibility of generalization.

-Uncontrollable variable: personality. Some people may be more sensitive e.g. feel greater emotional burden to repay.

***Explain why it works ---*** It demonstrates the reciprocity principle: people felt the need to return the favor because it is a social norm that we should treat others the way they treat us. All participants in the experimental condition bought raffle tickets or else they would have probably felt guilty. This is a key component of the principle, that when a person doesn’t repay what another person has provided, there will be arousal of feelings of guilt.

***Evaluation of technique ---***

* Effectiveness:
  + Appealing to the fundamental values of people. Tiger and Fox (1971) suggest that reciprocation could have been important in **human social evolution**.
* Conditions when this technique could be used:
  + Hospitality industry e.g. complimentary chocolates at a hotel along with good service may make a guest feel more inclined to return.
  + Restaurants
  + Retail
* Cultural considerations:

One strength of this technique is that it is based on a value that is generally practiced worldwide. Mutual respect is a cultural and social norm. Ting-Toomey found reciprocity in both individualistic and collectivist cultures. However in individualistic cultures, reciprocity is more of a choice than an obligation as it is in collectivist cultures.

* + A weakness is that the technique may coerce people into ding things they might not want to do initially as they now feel a sense of obligation.
* **Door-in-the-face**

***What is it?* ---** This technique makes use of the principle of reciprocity- the social norm that we should treat people the way they treat us. However, reciprocity does not always involve gift giving. It can also be because one feels the other person has compromised on what he/she wanted, and that this compromise should be acknowledged with some behavior. In this technique, a request is made that will surely be turned down. Then, a smaller request is made. The person is more likely to accept the second request as they feel that the person has already made a compromise to accommodate them.

***Example ---***Older children often use this technique when asking their parents for something. A large request would be presented, for example, a sum of money. After the parent turns down the request, a smaller request would be presented by the child. The parent would more likely agree to the second request as they would feel that the child has already comprised in what they are asking for.

***Outline the study ---***

Cialdini et al (1975)

**Aim:**To study the use of the door-in-the-face technique among university students.

**Method:**

Control condition:Pretending to be representatives of the “County Youth Counseling Program,” Cialdini and his team asked university students if they would be willing to chaperone a group of juvenile delinquents on a day trip to the zoo.

Experimental (DITF) condition: They asked students if they would be willing to sign up to work two hours per week as counselors, for a minimum of two years. No one agreed to volunteer. They then followed up the students’ refusal with the request to take the juvenile delinquents to the zoo.

**Findings:** When students were simply asked to chaperone the day trip, 83% did not agree to volunteer. In the DITF condition, nobody agreed to work as a counselor for two years, but about 50% of the students agreed to chaperone the trip.

**Evaluation:** This study is ecologically valid and shows the use of the door-in-the-face in a natural way among people. The study was ethical in that it was simply a survey asking for volunteers. Findings can not, however, be applied to a different age group or culture, where social norms may be different.

***Explain why it works ---*** In the second condition of the study, the request first made by the representatives is definitely prone to be declined by students. However, when the representatives then make a request that is much smaller, it is more appealing to the students. They feel that the representatives have made a large compromise in what they are asking for, and therefore feel compelled to repay the compromise by accepting the request. They would likely fell guilty if they did not accept the offer when the representatives had made a large compromise.

***Evaluation of technique ---***

This technique is driven by the principle of reciprocity. The social norm that we tend to return favors is what allows the door-in-the-face technique to be highly effective.

This technique is often used by older children to convince their parents to give them something or let them do something. It is also used by salespeople to make sales. They may lower the price of an item, causing costumers to feel compelled to buy the item since the price was already lowered as a compromise. It is common in the sales industry for salespeople to make compromises that are expected to be responded to with purchases.

Reciprocity is present across cultures.

The technique may be less effective on younger people as they may not as easily think to repay a favor by agreeing to the request.