

PSYC1001 Notes

Social Psychology

Introduction to social psychology

What is social psychology?

- The scientific investigation of how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual or implied presence of others.
- Social psychology links ordinary people's **affective states** (feelings and emotions), **behaviour** (the way they act) and their **cognition** (thought processes) to their social world.
- Social isolation leads to psychological problems:

<i>Experimenter(s)</i>	<i>Studies</i>
Schachter (1959)	SOCIAL ISOLATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolated 5 volunteers in a windowless room for as long as they could endure• FOUND: Considerable individual differences in tolerance for isolation<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 1 participant lasted 2 hours○ 3 participants lasted 2 days (2 were unaffected; 1 was uneasy)○ 1 participant lasted 8 days (without suffering from adverse reactions)
Vokart et al. (1983)	SOCIAL ISOLATION LEADS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prisoners in solitary confinement – “brainwashing”• FOUND: Some prisoners attempted to commit suicide; others were apparently unconcerned.• <i>Agrees with findings of Schachter</i>
Kiecolt-Glaser et al. (1992)	SOCIAL ISOLATION LEADS TO HEALTH PROBLEMS <p>Adverse impact on health and well-being; comparable to damaging health factors (e.g. obesity, smoking, high blood pressure)</p>

- Social psychology vs. common sense
 - **Common sense** cannot distinguish between coincidence and causality
 - **Social psychology** uses **scientific methods** to test theories

Studying Social Behaviour

- Social behaviour is **goal oriented**
- Social behaviour represents a **continual interaction** between the person and the situation
- Person perspective: **Person** includes personality traits or physical characteristics that individuals carry into social situations
- Situational perspective: **Situation** includes the environmental events or circumstances outside the person
- Interaction between the person and the situation
 - Different people respond differently to the same situation
 - Situations choose the person (based on their personal characteristics)
 - People choose their situation (where they enjoy themselves and are with likeminded others)
 - Different situations bring out different parts of the person
 - People change the situation
 - Situations change the person

Methods of Research

Descriptive Methods

- **Descriptive (non-experimental) methods** involve attempts to measure or record thoughts, feelings and/or behaviours in their natural state.
- 3 types of descriptive methods:
 - **Naturalistic observation**: Involves observing behaviour as it unfolds in its natural setting
 - **Archival studies**: Involve examining archives or public records of social behaviour
 - **Surveys**: Involve asking people questions about their beliefs, thoughts, feelings and behaviours
- Descriptive methods are useful in determining the **correlation** between variables (the extent to which two or more variables are associated with one another).

Experimenter(s)	Studies
Barner-Barry (1986)	NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observed how young children interact with a bully
Gordon et al. (2004)	ARCHIVAL RESEARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examined what children are thankful for, pre- and post- September 11, by looking at archived essay contest entries• <u>FOUND</u>: Children were more grateful for US values (freedom) and rescue workers after September 11
Faulker et al. (1997)	SURVEYS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducted phone surveys asking how often people give and receive the “silent treatment”• <u>FOUND</u>:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 67% admitted to using it○ 75% indicated they had received it

Experimental Methods

- **Experimental methods** involve attempts to manipulate social processes by varying and controlling some aspect of the situation.
 - An experiment is a research method in which the researcher sets out to systematically manipulate one source of influence while holding others constant.
- 2 types of experimental methods:
 - **Field experiments** (i.e. field studies): Involve the manipulation of variables using unknowing participants in natural settings.
 - Field experiments are better than descriptive methods of research as they allow cause-effect (**causality**) conclusions.
 - Subjects will also give more natural responses as they are not aware that they are in a study.
 - **Laboratory experiments**: Involve the direct manipulation of variables and the observation of their effects on the behaviour of other variables

Social influence I: Social facilitation

- **Social influence** is the process whereby people directly or indirectly influence the thoughts, feelings and actions of others.
 - » Often occurs when we are not conscious of it.
- Social facilitation is one form of social influence.

Studies of social facilitation

- Triplett conducted the first empirical social psychology experiments.
- **OBSERVED:** Cyclists recorded faster times when racing against others than when they were cycling by themselves (i.e. the presence of others improves performance).
- **THEORY:** Dynamogenic factor theory
 - » The presence of another person is a stimulus to arousing the competitive instinct (having others around makes one competitive)
 - » This then releases or frees nervous energy that is not released when the person is alone.
 - » The sight of movement in the other person (esp. if they are performing better/faster) is also an inspiration for greater effort.
- Two types of social facilitation studies:
 - » **Co-action effects:** observe behaviour when individuals are all simultaneously engaged in the same activity in full view of each other.
 - » **Audience effects:** observe behaviour when it occurs in the presence of passive spectators

Experimenter(s)	Studies
Triplett (1898)	DYNAMOGENIC FACTOR THEORY/SOCIAL FACILITATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children wound fishing reels either alone or in the presence of other children • Children performed 6 trials (alternating between winding the line alone or competitively) • FOUND: Children performed the task faster when performing competitively than when they performed the task alone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Support for dynamogenic factor theory (became known as social facilitation – the presence of others enhances/improves performance.)
Tower (1986)	SOCIAL FACILITATION IN HUMANS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers take 15% less time to travel the first 100 yards at an intersection when there is another driver beside them, than when they are alone.
Bayer (1929)	SOCIAL FACILITATION IN CHICKENS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigated eating behaviour of chickens. • FOUND: Presence of other chickens activated competitive instinct within first chicken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The apparently full chicken ate 2/3 as much grain as it had already eaten.
Chen (1937)	SOCIAL FACILITATION IN ANTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Day 1:</i> Ant digs alone; excavates 232 mg • <i>Day 2:</i> Ant digs with another ant (social facilitation); excavates 765 mg • <i>Day 3:</i> Excavates 728 mg (no. of ants does not matter) • <i>Day 4:</i> Ant digs alone again: excavates 182 mg (fatigued)
Pessin (1933)	SOCIAL INTERFERENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked participants to learn lists of nonsense syllables either alone or in front of an audience • FOUND: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <i>Alone:</i> Took 9.85 trials to learn a list of 7 syllables » <i>Audience:</i> Took 11.27 trials to learn a list of 7 syllables • Contradicts findings of Triplett and Chen • Support for social interference/inhibition (the presence of others can hinder performance)

Theories of social facilitation

Mere Presence theory

- Zajonc (1965) – Mere Presence Theory of Social Facilitation (aka drive theory) – theory that explains both social facilitation and social interference
 - » **The presence of other people (e.g. spectators or co-actors) leads to arousal (activation or drive)**
- Then, performance is facilitated and learning is impaired by the presence of spectators.
 - » If the task/behaviour is easy or well learned, arousal helps performance (e.g. chickens eating, ants digging)
 - » If the task/behaviour is hard or poorly learned, arousal hinders performance (e.g. learning nonsense syllables)
- Zajonc described a well-known behaviour as “**the dominant response**”
 - » **Arousal facilitates the performance of the dominant response**

Experimenter(s)	Studies									
Zajonc, Heingartner, & Herman (1969)	<p>SOCIAL FACILITATION IN COCKROACHES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Investigated the dominant response in cockroaches<ul style="list-style-type: none">» When a light switches on, cockroaches run in a straight lineCockroaches in the mere presence (audience) condition performed the <i>simple</i> maze faster than those in the alone condition<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Arousal facilitates the performance of the dominant responseCockroaches in the mere presence (audience) condition performed the <i>complex</i> maze slower than those in the alone condition<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Arousal inhibits the performance of the non-dominant responseStudy looked at audience effects and also co-action<u>FOUND:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">» Cockroaches who ran the maze in groups ran the simple maze faster than cockroaches who ran the maze solo» Cockroaches who ran the maze in groups ran the complex maze slower than cockroaches who ran the maze soloEvidence for <i>mere presence theory</i>									
Michaels et al. (1982)	<p>SOCIAL FACILITATION IN HUMANS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How often do players sink a ball when playing pool? Is their performance impaired or enhanced by the presence of others? <table><tr><td></td><td>Sink ball when ALONE</td><td>Sink ball when in PRESENCE OF OTHERS</td></tr><tr><td>Good players</td><td>71%</td><td>85%</td></tr><tr><td>Poor players</td><td>36%</td><td>21%</td></tr></table> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Arousal facilitates the performance of the dominant responseArousal impairs the performance of the non-dominant responseEvidence for <i>mere presence theory</i>		Sink ball when ALONE	Sink ball when in PRESENCE OF OTHERS	Good players	71%	85%	Poor players	36%	21%
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Distraction-conflict theory

- Baron, Moore & Sander (1978) – **Distraction-conflict Theory**
 - » **The presence of others may influence our performance because they are cognitively distracting**
i.e. takes our attention away from the task and impairs our performance