

Lecture One

Tuesday, 28 February 2017 4:30 PM

Introduction

What is Social Psychology?

A sub-discipline of psychology that investigates social and human interaction

Classic Definition of Social Psychology

“The scientific investigation of how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others.” - Allport (1954, p. 4), cited on Vaughan & Hogg (2010, p. 2)

Areas of social psychology we'll be looking at:

- social cognition and attribution;
- culture;
- self and identity;
- attitudes and persuasion;
- conformity and other forms of social influence;
- group processes and group decision-making;
- prejudice and intergroup behaviour;
- aggression;
- attraction and close relationships; and
- prosocial behaviour.

Aspects of this Definition

- Uses scientific methods & aims to develop general principles
- Has own fundamental concepts just like other disciplines
- How people behave in response to, or presence of, others - Implied presence of others can be just as important as actual presence

Thoughts, feelings, behaviour can be at multiple levels:

- Intrapersonal (within individual)
- Interpersonal (between individuals - eg. dyads, families)
- Intragroup (within teams/groups)
- Intergroup (between groups, including large-scale social categories such as ethnic groups)

How does Social Psychology Differ from the General Discipline of Psychology?

- A sub-discipline of psychology - Also concerns processes that occur in the human mind - BUT seeks to develop an understanding of, and explain SOCIAL behaviour
- Not as individualistic – combination of self & others important
- Very wide range of methodologies used
- Can be interdisciplinary & often used in other sub disciplines
- Has been influential in relation to public policy – e.g., desegregation decision in US
- More politicised than some sub disciplines

Methods Available to Empirically Test Hypotheses

Experimental

- A hypothesis test to see effect of something on something else
- Involves intervention & manipulation of independent variable/s against background of random assignment to conditions, to see effect on dependent variables

- Important to have conditions identical except for IV manipulated
- Try to avoid confounding - i.e., where two or more independent variables covary in such a way that it is impossible to know which has caused the effect
- Allows conclusions about cause

Non-experimental

- Do not involve the manipulation of independent variables against background of random assignment to conditions
- Usually correlational & cannot draw conclusions about cause
- Not all proposed IVs can be manipulated –may be unethical to do so or may be impossible to do
- May be a third variable that explains the relationship between an IV and DV

Types of Experimental Methods

The laboratory experiment

- Aiming to test theories under artificial conditions.
- Intentionally low on mundane realism/external validity
 - i.e., not intended to be exactly same as circumstances encountered in everyday life.
- Should always be high on experimental realism/internal validity
 - i.e., the psychological impact of manipulations should be high.

The field experiment

- Conduct experiment in more naturalistic setting.
- High external validity, but less experimental control.
- Random assignment can be difficult & can be difficult to get accurate measures

Some Sources of Bias in Lab Experiments

- Confounding: Where two or more independent variables covary in such a way that it's impossible to know which produced changes in the dependent variable
- Experimenter effects: Experimenter inadvertently gives cues about the hypotheses & thereby affects behaviour - Can minimise with double-blind procedure (i.e., experimenter unaware of condition they are running)
- Subject effects/participant bias
 - Subject role: e.g., "good participant", "negative participant", "apprehensive participant"
 - Demand characteristics: features of an experiment that seem to 'demand' a particular response – e.g. that makes participants aware of what the experimenter expects to find or how participants are expected to behave

Experimental Methods Aren't Perfect

There can be many sources of bias in that arise in experiments:

- Confounding: Where two or more independent variables co-vary in such a way that it's impossible to know which produced changes in the dependent variable
- Experimenter effects: Experimenter inadvertently gives cues about the hypotheses & thereby affects participant behaviour.
- Can minimise with double-blind procedure (i.e., experimenter unaware of condition they are running) ➤ Subject effects/participant bias
- Subject role: e.g., "good participant", "negative participant", "apprehensive participant"
- Demand characteristics: features of an experiment that seem to 'demand' a particular response – e.g., that makes participants aware of what the experimenter expects to find or how p

Non-Experimental Methods

Archival research

- Involves analysis of data collected by others
- Useful for investigating large-scale phenomena

Case studies

- In-depth analysis of a single case/event
- Useful for study of rare behaviour & for generating hypotheses
- Difficult to generalise & can have experimenter bias

Survey research**Field studies**

- Observe behaviour in field (no manipulation)- naturalistic
- But lack of objectivity, poor generalizability, & experimenter presence can impact results.

Important Ethical Principles in Research

- Protect from harm – emotional, physical, reputational
- Respect privacy – usually remove identifying information from data
- Minimise deception
- Informed consent
- Debriefing

Seminar One

Wednesday, 8 March 2017 11:54 AM

Introduction

Key Contacts

Assessment Tasks

AT1: APA style lab report (2000 words) - 45%

Due Wednesday 19 April by 7pm via CloudDeakin assignment folder

AT2: Team-based learning activity (500 words) - 10%

Due Wednesday 17 May by 7pm via CloudDeakin assignment folder

Involves reflection on team-based decision-making activity done in Week 8 seminar

If can't attend seminar, you'll need to organise your own team to do the activity in your own time (e.g., in the Blackboard Collaborate room, which is available 24/7)

AT3: Examination (2 hours) - 45%

During examination period

Practice exam & exam hints will be provided close to end of trimester

Team-Based Learning Activity

- The TBLA was created not only to assist you to develop effective teamwork skills but to also improve your understanding of the social psychological processes that occur in groups and teams
- The TBLA requires you to apply social psychological research on group processes (covered in Weeks 6 & 7) to a real-life team-based decision-making situation
- In your seminar during week 8 you will be required to complete a decision-making activity, first on your own and then as part of a team (the 'team activity')
In the TBLA you reflect upon your team decision-making and how effective (or not) it was, and the group processes that occurred, and how they may have affected your decision-making
- To give you practice in team work, and to form a team for the TBLA, most seminars will include a team activity

Research Ethics Activity

- Behaviour of researchers when collecting data
- Treatment of participants
- Ethical considerations most common in experiments but can be seen in non-experimental research
- We follow ethical guidelines when we do research, and must get approval from an ethics review board (human research ethics committee) before commencing ethics
- There can be lots of unanticipated consequences so you really need to constantly think through your studies from an ethical perspective, even if granted ethical approval

Five Key Principles are:

- Protect physical and psychological welfare of participants
- Respect for privacy
- Minimise use of deception
- Informed consent
- Debriefing