

WK 1 - UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS NORMAL

- Normal is an ideal and is hardly to be expected, or to be found.
- A central idiom can be pervasive and widespread, but it should not be taken to be the essential feature of a social group.
- Ernest Gellner believed that 'a common idiom' is necessary to allow individuals to negotiate their position in society.
- Gellner suggests the idioms are mobilised for certain purposes and gains
- Society promotes an image of what is normal – high achievers, what sports to play, what food to eat
- The central idiom of modern society is the idiom of normality
- Context confers meaning > some cultures see depression while others see a good Buddhist
- Normal or Pathological > Margaret Lock 2013 Alzheimer's study where people had symptoms but didn't have tangles in the brain and vice versa.
- Norm = common type or standard
- The idiom of normality is a positive driver of homogeny
- The myth of normality is an obstacle to self-fulfilment
- Abnormal – concept historically entangled with the concept of degeneracy & degeneration
- Degeneracy has more negative connotations
- John Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) compared different races and argued that coloured people were degenerates from the original white colour. > These theories were readily seized on to legitimate racial inequalities, imperial conquests, and colonial exploitation
- Degeneracy is a "morbid deviation from an original type", Max Nordau believed that degeneration was a mental and social disease
- Deviance proliferated around the 1820's
- Degeneration is a term used only for neurological conditions where scientific explanation is absent

WK 2 – RESEARCH METHODS

Social psychology research steps:

1. Form a question
2. Searching the literature
3. Forming a hypothesis
4. Creating an operational definition
5. Collecting and analysing data
6. Proposing or revising a theory

Form a Question

Many start with a question based on observation of a real-world event
Sometimes designed to test established theories (such as examining the predictors of prejudice and discrimination)

Searching the Literature

- Literature review is an account of what other researchers have examined and found on topic, provides a guiding description of materials that are available on the topic
- Useful online databases:
 - PsychINFO
 - PsychLIT
- A literature review examines previous studies on a given topic and attempts to reach an overall conclusion
- It identifies useful articles and other sources of information that are relevant to the topic and that critically appraises them – often uses this approach when different studies have revealed different findings
- The aim is to conduct a review of valid and unbiased studies
- Areas of controversy on the topic are identified and discussed

Form a Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a testable prediction about the conditions under which an event will occur

- Can be tested and is a statement about the expected cause and effect relationship between two variables

Experimental Approach

Testing for a causal relationship, that is the IV causes the DV to change

Quasi-experimental Approach

Samples pre-existing groups and then treats them as if they are different experimental groups

Create an Operational Definition

Describes a specific procedure or measure that you'll use to test your hypothesis

If you have a good operational definition, your measure is valid (measures what it is supposed to measure)

E.g Feelings, need to have operational definition (as it is subjective)

Collecting and Analysing Data

Can be collected through:

- Observation – surveys, pre-existing documents (medical records)
- Experiment
- Media Connections – new approach to collecting data on the internet

Propose or Revise a Theory

Theory: An organised set of principles that explain observed phenomena

- Give a potential explanation
- Explain how or why two events are connected
- Generate questions for future research

Types of Correlational Research Methods

Correlational Research

A research technique that examines the extent to which two or more variables are associated with one another

Observational/ Naturalistic Methods

A research approach that involves the observation and systematic recording of a particular behaviour

Archival Research

A research approach that uses already recorded behaviour (reports, statistics)

E.g Census

Meta-Analysis

A literature review that analyses data from several studies that examine related hypothesis

Used to examine a variety of issues such as attitudes towards rape, gender differences in the attributions people make for success and failure, the link between attitudes and behaviour, the impact of intrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation and the extent to which conformity to social norms varies across cultures

****Note:** Research is still valid even if it doesn't produce statistically significant results

*Analysis is what you do with the data

EVALUATION OF OBSERVATIONAL/NATURALISTIC METHODS

ADVANTAGES	LIMITATIONS
Have internal validity	Presence of observer is likely to influence behaviour
Less vulnerable to criticisms	Biases can influence how they interpret the findings
Easy to conduct	Can't tell which variable causes the other
Observing subject in natural habitat	
Can provide large amounts of data that researchers would never be able to collect on their own	

Inter-rater reliability

The extent to which two or more coders agree on ratings of a particular measure

Types of Correlation

Positive Correlation	Negative Correlation	No Correlation
Both variables are associated – both increase	One variable increases the other decreases	No association

Causal Relationship

Two variables correlate but have no relationship

Self-Report/ Survey Methods

Rely on asking people questions about their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.

- Can be asked in interview or through written surveys