



PSYC3017

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Exam Study Notes

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Lectures Two & Three: The Replication Crisis (“Replicagate”)

Social Psychology in Crisis

Jacob Cohen (1962)

- Created the first power analysis of psychological research
 - o Created effect size: *Cohen’s d*
- Trying to estimate the power of finding evidence for their hypothesis in the primary journal of that time
 - o Used a year’s worth of research papers
- Results:
 - o Very low power to detect small effects (18% power)
 - o Modest power to detect medium effects (48% power)
 - o Good power to detect large effects (83%)
- Despite modest power, most articles did report significant results
 - o “It seems obvious that investigators are less likely to submit for publication unsuccessful than successful research, to say nothing of a similar editorial bias in accepting research for publication.”
 - o Both researchers and publishers unlikely to publish unsuccessful research

Stapel (2011)

- Was revered in the field of Social Psychology and became dean of university (2010)
- The secret life of emotions (2008)
 - o Primed participants with fear/disgust using photos to determine whether feelings we’re unaware of still nevertheless affect us
 - o Measured word fragment completion with relevant emotional words
 - Participants primed with fear or disgust completed more fear- or disgust-related words
 - Participants had more affect-related completions even after very little exposure to primes
 - o Follow-up test unrelated to previous prime: Strange food/scary movie test
 - Primed with disgust chose the scary movie test following exposure
 - Avoiding stimuli that might evoke disgust
 - Primed with fear chose the strange food test following exposure
 - Avoiding stimuli that might evoke fear
 - o Paper was eventually retracted – Stapel *faked* his *data*!
- Due to faked data, lost his job, degree (his PhD) and his reputation/honour
 - o Became persona non grata throughout the country
 - o He became synonymous with lying and cheating

Bem (2011)

- Published in premier social psychology journal: “Feeling the future: Experimental evidence for anomalous retroactive influences on cognition and affect”
 - o Experimental evidence for precognition
- Study 1
 - o Choosing where the erotic picture will show up on the screen prior to the randomised computer algorithm decided which side to show the image
 - o Result:

- Across all 100 sessions, participants correctly identified the future position of the erotic pictures significantly more frequently than the 50% hit rate expected by chance
 - 53.1%
 - Non-erotic pictures did not significantly differ from chance
- 9 studies conducted
 - All studies, except for one, found significant evidence for precognition
- Fall-out in the field followed publication
 - Wagenmakers et al. (2011) addressed Bem's (2011) precognition study:
 - Exploration vs. confirmation
 - The statistics used reflected an exploratory approach using a two-tailed t-test rather than a confirmation one-tailed t-test
 - Bayesian test
 - Suggest there was no evidence for ESP from the data presented in Bem's study
 - Focus on the faulty processes of publishing studies:
 - Issues with the process of peer-review
 - What tests the reviewer should have done of the paper
 - Self-correcting science
 - Idea that, once published, study will be replicated and either find evidence for/against Bem's results
 - Data sleuths
 - Francis (2012)
 - Suggested publication bias in the work of those specific authors or journals
 - Series of p-levels presented in certain published studies can't occur by accident → believed other studies had been conducted but not published
 - Created new statistics that measured "p hacking"
 - Probabilities across different studies should exist on their own distribution
 - Basis of p-hacking: Probability of distribution of probabilities
 - Violates probability of the distribution if almost all studies find a significant p
 - Condemning evidence for QRPs
 - Replicability Index ("R index")
 - P is evaluating the inflation of the replicability based on the power of the experiments to find significant results
 - Money priming studies:
 - Individuals primed with money show greater support for inequality and discrimination (Caruso et al., 2013)
 - Result couldn't be replicated in later studies
 - People tend to display more self-reliance, self-focus

Questionable Research Practices ("QRPs")

- False-Positive Psychology (Simmons et al., 2011)
 - Main study that initiated focus on QRPs
 - **False-positive psychology**: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant (researchers' degree of freedom)

- Hypothesis: Listening to “When I’m 64” makes people feel younger (N=20)
 - Counterintuitive and nonsensical
- ANCOVA (father age)
- Researchers’ degrees of freedom: Simulation studies with no population effect
 - Choosing DVs to maximise ability to “discover” significant effects
 - Can change sample size until reaching significant, publishable effects
 - Using covariates of other related individual differences to find significance
 - Reporting selective conditions – add or drop conditions without reporting
- Results
 - Using two related DVs but only reporting one → doubles probability of getting significant results
 - Same practice followed with each other degree of freedom and found similar effects (increasing sample, controlling covariates, etc.)
 - Each improved chance of finding significance despite there being no effect in the population
 - If you combine those QRPs, can get significant results without effecting the population
 - 60% of those studies will give you significant results if you use the questionable practices (despite no effect and not faking data)
- Other elements of QRPs that can be manipulated to increase probability of significance:
 - Type 1 error rate
 - Outlier strategies (whether to include outliers or not)
 - Picking at data (e.g. adding participants)
 - Stopping data collection (stop once desired results are found)
 - Impactful publications desire counter-intuitive studies
 - Not publishing non-significant results because they won’t be published
 - Selective reporting
 - Choosing conditions and DVs, and not reporting all aspects of the study

Registered Replication Report (RRR)

- The first RRR: “Many labs” study (investigating variation in replicability)
 - 36 labs, N = 6,344, 13 classical studies
 - Started a new genre of registered replication report that appear in *Perspectives of Psychological Science* (one of the premier journals)
 - Results:
 - Classical studies underestimated the real effect size (replications found much stronger effects than the original studies reported)
 - The original report of effects in most studies fell within the replication report range
 - Some studies overestimated the effects (didn’t fall within expected range)
- “Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science” (2015) in *Science*
 - 23% of Social Psychology studies were able to be replicated
 - Single replications that had much larger samples
 - 48% of Cognitive studies were able to be replicated
 - Overall, 36% of psychology studies able to be replicated

How to Fix Issues with Replication

- Open Science Framework (OSF)
 - *Direct replications* that are *pre-registered*