PSY2SOC – Social Psychology
Notes

Introduction – Week 1

Hindsight bias

- Knew it all along
- The belief that an event is more predictable after it becomes known than it was before it became known
- Inability to go back in time and remember how uncertain you were before you knew the answer

What is social psychology?

- The scientific study of how individuals think, feel, and behave in social context
- The scientific attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined (e.g. what would my mother think if she saw me right now?), or implied (e.g. security cameras) presence of other human beings
- Focused on the individual
- Behaviour is a function of the person and the environment

Fundamentals of social psychology

- Construction of reality
    - Reality is socially constructed
    - Expectations, motives, group membership, cultural differences shape reality
- Pervasiveness of social influence
    - Social factors influence even our most private thoughts

5 core social motivations (BUCET)

- Belonging
    - Strong stable relationships with others
- Understanding
    - Make sense of reality and predict the future
- Controlling
    - Need to feel competent and effective in dealing with the social environment
    - Feeling of having control over your experiences (get more rewards than punishments)
- Enhancing self
    - Need to feel good about ourselves or improve ourselves
- Trusting
    - See the social world as a benevolent place

3 processing principles (social cognition)

- Conservatism
    - Our views of the world are slow to chance
    - This can create a self-fulfilling prophecy
- Accessibility
    - The most readily available information has the most impact
    - Effected by recency and frequency
- Superficial vs depth
    - Superficiality: relying on the most accessible information (top down automatic processes)
    - Depth: processing information much more extensively

Research methods – Week 2

Scientific theory

- Constructs (abstract concepts)
- Causal relations
- General in scope
- Should lead to a testable hypothesis
    - Abstract concepts need to be operationalised
    - Need to define constructs more specifically
    - Independent variables are presumed causes
    - Dependent variables are presumed outcomes

Construct validity

- The experimental manipulations really manipulate the conceptual variables they were designed to manipulate
- The measures used in a study really measure the conceptual variables they were designed to measure

Testing hypotheses

- Observational research
- Archival analysis (diaries, newspapers)
- Survey research
- Experimental research
- Ethnographic study
    - The experimenter is a participant or observant
    - Uses interviews or qualitative case studies
    - Provides rich qualitative data
- Quasi-experimental design
    - Comparing groups that occur naturally in the population
- Triangulation
    - Using laboratory studies in combination with field studies

Aronson & Mills (1959)

- 63 Uni women invited to a study on “psychology of sex” that focused on “dynamics of the group discussion process”
- Participants were told that some had found it “embarrassing”.
- Participants randomly assigned to control, mild, or severe initiation groups.
- Listened in to the “actual” discussion. (Very boring)
- Reported how much they like the discussion.

Internal validity

- Degree to which the independent variables caused the effects obtained on the dependent variables
- Control groups are important in ruling out alternative explanations for results
    - Experimenter needs to be blind to the condition that participants are in
- Confounding variable
    - Variable other than the independent variable that varies between conditions

External validity

- The degree to which there can be reasonable confidence that the results of the study would be obtained for other people and in other situations
- Representative samples
- Setting in which research was conducted

Mundane realism

- The extent to which the research setting resembles real-life setting of interest
- Increases external validity

Experimental realism

- The degree to which the experimental setting and procedures are real and involving to the participant

Progress in research

- First generation
    - Demonstrate phenomena
- Second generation
    - Find moderators
    - Variables that tell us when or for whom an effect occurs; boundary conditions
- Third generation
    - Find mediators
    - Variables that tell us why an effect occurs; processes
- Fourth generation
    - Interventions

The Self – Week 3

3 components of the self (Baumeister 1998)

- Reflexive consciousness
    - We are aware of ourselves as objects
- Interpersonal nature
    - We learn who we are from others and change across contexts
- Executive function
    - The self is an active agent and decision maker

Self-content: the phenomenological self

- Spontaneous self-concept
- How do we describe ourselves at any given moment?
    - Does this influence how we think, feel, or behave
- 3 types of self-concept
    - Individual self
        - Unique characteristics that distinguish the self from others
    - Relational self
        - Relationship with people
    - Collective self
        - Person's memberships in groups
- Distinctiveness
    - Guides spontaneous self-descriptions
    - Self-descriptions tend to be focused on things that differentiate you from others around you
- Organisation of self-content
    - The act of thinking about oneself would result in the creation of self-schemata (cognitive generalisations derived from experience

Schema accessibility

- Recency and frequency guide accessibility of schemas
- Schemas can be made accessible by situational cues
- Individuals can be schematic or aschematic (they either think in those terms or not)
    - Different traits can be stored schematically or aschematically (in the same person)
    - Traits that are organised schematically are easily linked to memories that support this view of ourselves
- Being schematic usually means self-views are held with importance and certainty
- Thinking about oneself in the same terms repeatedly can result in chronic accessibility

Function of self-schemas

- Process information about the self easily
- Retrieve self-knowledge quickly
- Resist counter-schematic information
    - Ignoring comments that do not match our self-beliefs

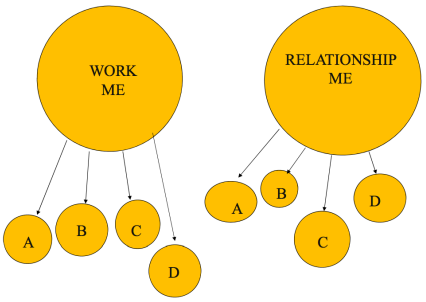
- Predict future behaviour by self
- Guide attention
- Assist interpretation
- Facilitate recall

Working self-concept

- Not all self-knowledge is available for thinking about the self at any one time
- The working self-concept derives from the set of self-conceptions that are presently active in thought and memory
- Continually active and shifting
- Situational primes, recency, frequency, chronic accessibility

Self-complexity

- Assessing the number of self-dimensions people use can determine how self-complex they are. Dimensions could represent situations, relationships, etc.
- People who have more self-dimensions tend to have more psychological and physical health
- If you only have one self-dimension, anything that goes wrong affects the whole self, and it is difficult to remain positive about yourself
- Self-affirmations in another self-aspect can help us to cope with problems in a different area, but only if we are self-complex



Independent vs. interdependent selves

- Independent
  - Like to be different
  - Happy to be singled out for praise
  - Linked to individualist cultures
- Interdependent
  - We feel responsible for the happiness of those around us
  - Linked to collectivistic cultures