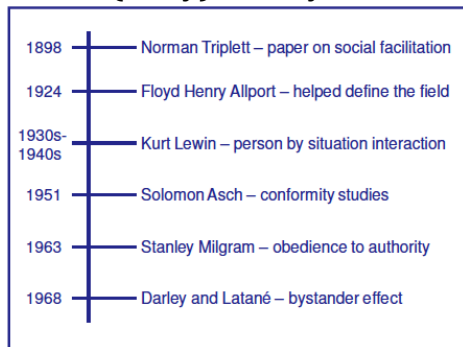


Week 1: Introduction to Social Psychology

What is social psychology?

- Social psychology
 - “[T]he scientific investigation of how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others”. - Allport (1954a), p.5
 - The branch of psychology that studies the effect of social variables on individual behaviour, attitudes, perceptions, and motives
 - Also the study of group and intergroup phenomena
 - Focuses on the individual instead of groups
- Social Cognition:
 - Process by which people select, interpret, and remember social information
- Social Perception:
 - Process by which people come to understand and categorise the behaviours of others

A brief (early) history of the field



- Gordon Allport – Henry’s brother also made a huge difference

Connections to Other Disciplines



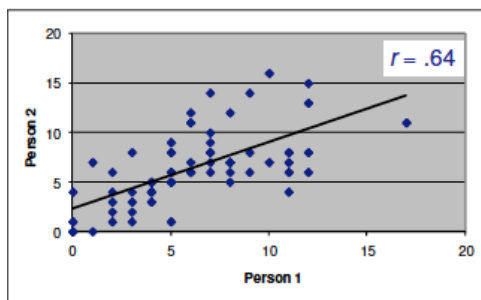
Explaining people’s behaviour

1. The power of the situation
 - Explicit rules, pressures
 - (e.g., parents, peers, laws)
 - Milgram

- Stanford prison experiment
- Social and situational influences
- Subtle influences
 - (modeling, non-conscious processes, etc.)
- 2. Fundamental attribution error
 - In explaining other people's behaviour...
 - Overestimate the influence of internal, dispositional factors
 - Underestimate the influence of external, situational factors
 - In explaining our own behaviour
 - Depends on the outcome
- 3. Construing the situation
 - Gestalt psychology
 - Schemas
 - Motivations
 - The need to be accurate
 - The need to feel good about ourselves

Things to keep in mind...

- Can we explain our own behaviour?
- Explanations for eating behaviour



- Pizza eating experiment

Explanations for eating behaviour

- Hunger = 51.6%
- Close to other meals = 20.5%
- Taste = 18.9%
- Co-eater's behaviour = 2.5% - actual answer!!!

Week 2: Social Cognition

Social Cognition

- Cognition: a way of thinking that is automatic and occurs outside of conscious awareness
- In social psychology, cognition is influenced by social context and cognitions influence social behaviour
- Social Cognition: Process by which people select, interpret, and remember social information. (The way we make sense of information around us)
 - One component = Social Perception: Process by which people come to understand and categorise the behaviours of others

Shifts in focus

Early focus:

- Early focus in social cognition was in cold cognition: Judgments shaped by information processing (e.g., beliefs, expectations, attributions) – computers
- More recently cold cognition has been integrated with hot cognition which refers to the way in which motivation and emotion influences our goals feeling and motives, and how these in turn influence our beliefs, attributes and decisions
- Judgments shaped by motivation and affect
- Also known as motivated reasoning
- Cold cognition – thinking with the head
- Hot cognition – thinking with the heart
- Generally accepted that social cognition includes both
- Cognition, motivation, and affect are the processes underlying social cognition

Waves of research

1. Naïve scientist
 - Thought people act like naïve scientists when trying to understand social world
 - Approach as a scientist would by weighting facts and coming to logical conclusions
2. Cognitive miser
 - Relying on mental shortcuts or heuristics
 - Gave way to notion that people act as motivated tacticians when trying to understand social world
3. Motivated tactician
 - This view recognises that people have many resources and strategies when they make judgements and which resources they use depends on their state when making it
4. Social Neuroscience
 - Uses imaging of brain ie fMRI to find which areas of the brain are associated with different social exchanges, and looks at how damage influences social cognition