PSYC 2001 NOTES
Lecture 1

What is social psychology about?

- The scientific study of how our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are shaped by real or imagined presence of others.

Social psychology vs philosophy

Methods are distinct. social uses empirical methods.

Birds of a feather flock together

- People take comfort finding people that share the same interest

Opposites attract

- Intrigued by the difference

Which one is correct? ….

Hindsight bias - once you know something its hard to see it in a way it wouldn't have been obvious.

Important topics in Social Psychology

- Power of the situation
    - fundamental attribution error: the tendency to overestimate….
    - Kitty Genevose Murder
        - Witness' ignored her murder
    - bystander effect: the more witnesses there are the less likely for someone to intervene.
- Subjective construction of reality
- Internal factors affecting thoughts, emotions, and behavior
    - Motivational
        - Desire to be accurate
        - Desire to feel good about the self
    - Cognitive
        - Heuristics (mental shortcuts or "rules of thumb")
        - Expectations about the social world
- Application to important social problems
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Lecture 2

What are sources of knowing?

- Experience
    - Gain knowledge by direct observation
    - East, direct way to answer questions
    - **Problems:** Experience affects the outcome
- Intuition
    - Gut feeling about what is right or not
    - **Problems:** We have biases in our intuition. Think the easy solution, Think through motivation
- Authority
    - Accepting ideas that came from a respected source. E.g., rules taught us by parents
    - **Problems:** Authority also have to get the information, so if the authority also got the information through biased intuition then it can be a problem.
- Scientific method
    - A way to get information through the measurement of variables
    1) Develop a hypothesis using scientific reasoning
    2) Hypothesis must be tested through empirical methods

Scientific Research Studies

- Descriptive
    - Describe a phenomenon without manipulation
    - Benefit: Good for initial stages of research in an understudied area
    - Drawback: Doesn't specify the relation between variables
    - Y happens
- Correlational
    - Assess association between variables without manipulation
        - E.g., How is bullying affected by the presence of teachers?
    - Correlation coefficient
        - Class attendance example
        - Scouting example
    - Problem: 3rd variable, causal influence
        - 100% of people drink water dies
    - Y happens more when x also happens
- Experimental
    - Control conditions
        - location, time, duration, ...etc
    - Independent variable: (E.g., type of game played)
        - Manipulated by researcher
        - Hypothesized cause

        - Has two or more levels (E.g., violent vs nonviolent game vs reading a book)
    - Dependent variable: (E.g., aggression)
        - Measured by researcher
        - Effect of the cause
    - Actor seizer example (bystander effect)
    - Between and Within methods
        - Between if you are worried about carry over effects. Subjects get suspicious...etc
    - Weapon experiment
        - Independent variable: weapon, puzzle
        - Dependent variable: testosterone
        - Between subject because you can't do both weapon or puzzle
        - Control: either weapon or puzzle group, setting of experiment
    - Y happens because of x
- Ways to assess Y
    - Observational
    - Surveys
    - Behaviour measures
        - choice between options, amount of hot sauce, alerting experimenter of danger
    - Physiological measure
        - measure testosterone, heart rate, ...etc
    - Video example: Run in rain or walk in rain to reduce wetness
        - Better to walk in rain
        - Method: Scientific
        - Research strategy: Experimental
        - X: running, walking
        - Y: how wet
        - Within
        - Control: amount of rain, distance, wind, speed, time
        - Later found to be better to run with proper conditions
- Quality of experiments
    - Control
        - Only vary what you are interested in
        - Reduce noise
        - Confounds: (water amount, speed, height, temp in rain example)
    - Randomization
        - Happens at two points in time
        - Random selection of sample from population of interest
            - Rare to happen, but most often **convenience samples** are used (e.g., 1st year students as test subjects, being at the right place at the right time)

Problems: E.g., if you look at stress at 1st year psyc students it doesn't mean it accurately represents stress for all students. Limited variability
- Why do psychologists keep doing this?
  - Its discreet and convenient
  - Not many differences between general population and students
  - Relation between variables is more consistent in context

- Random assignment to one of several conditions
  - To control for existing difference between participants
  - To control "third-variable" confounds

Lecture 3

Internal vs External Validity

- **Internal validity:**
  - Ensuring that nothing other than X can affect Y
  - By controlling extraneous variables
    - E.g., Walking or running in rain with hair or bald. You aren't sure what affected the amount of wetness.
  - By random assignment
  - By including a cover story

Internal Validity Control

1. Aim to hold everything but the variable of interest constant
2. Measure and statistically control for other potential variables

<u>Example: Testing the number of bystanders on helping</u>

- Participants are placed in waiting room and experiment room. This can affect the outcome which results in a **SYSTEMATIC ERROR**
- Either a man or woman screams depending on which experimenter was available which can affect the outcome which results in a **RANDOM ERROR**.

Internal Validity Randomization

1. Random selection of the sample from a population
2. Random assignment to one of several conditions

<u>Example: Testing the number of bystanders on helping</u>

- Some participants may know more about seizures than others. **RANDOM ERROR**
- All participants are children. **SYSTEMATIC ERROR**

- **External Validity:**

The extent to which results of a study can be generalized to other situations and other people.

1. Aim to make it like everyday life - Experimental realism/Mundane realism
2. Aim to replicate - Repetition with a different population or in a different setting

- Experimental realism
    - Situation is realistic to participants
    - Do they believe it?
    - Do they take it seriously?
    - Does it have an impact on them?
- Mundane realism
    - Similarity of events in the lab to those likely to occur outside the lab
    - Does it affect real world variable?
    - Is it likely to occur outside?
- Milgram experiment: High on experimental realism but low on mundane realism
- Aronson & Mills experiment

The researcher's dilemma

- Impact vs Control
- Lab has more control
- Field has more external validity and generalization
- Solution: do both, lab and field and look for convergence
- Common Critiques (which type of validity?)
    - "You only tested students" **Internal**, not randomized. **External**, not generalized
    - "You can't assess love through a survey!"
    - "I would not have believed the cover story myself!" **External**, realism
    - "Some people might know more about this topic beforehand"

Ethical Issues

- Psychologists want experiments to seem realistic, however, not at the cost of the participants' well-being
- Benefits should be better than the potential risks
- Informed consent
- Minimize deception
- Private & Confidential
- Facebook example
- Aronson & Mills example

Framework for Research Studies

- What was the hypothesis?
- What was/where the independent variable(s)?
- What was/where the dependent variable(s)?
- What were the results?
- What concept did the study provide evidence for?

Lecture 4

Social Cognition

- How people **select**, **interpret**, and **remember** social information to **inform decisions**, make **judgements**, and take **actions**

Autopilot/Automatic Thinking

Schemas

- Mental structures people use to organize their knowledge about the social world
- Influence the information people notice, think, and remember

Kinds of Schemas

1. Objects
    - E.g., visual representation of a chair
2. Psychological constructs
    - E.g., love (if two people kiss each other)
3. Person schemas
    a. Stereotypes about a certain group of people. (Canadians vs Americans)
    b. Self (structure about yourself, what we like, what we dislike, who we like)
4. Event schemas
    a. daily routine
    b. script of action (what you are expected to do and what you expect)

Function of Schemas

- Efficiency
    - Faster processing of information
    - Focus on important information rather than all
- Predictability
    - Predictability of situations
    - Predictability of other's behaviour (swap lane in grocery shop)
- Processing of ambiguous information
- Attention
    - Filter for new acquiring new information
    - Donald Study
- Memory
    - Reconstructive memories
        1. Schema -> Stimulus -> Memory
           Schema affects perception or encoding of new information
        2. Stimulus -> Schema -> Memory
           Schema affects memory

Which Schema is Activated?

- Aspects of the stimulus
- Aspects of the context

- Aspects of the observer
    - Chronic accessibility (general past experience)
        - E.g. Thinking of destiny everywhere all day
    - Goal related accessibility
        - Zeigarnik effect: keep details until goal reached. (Waiters retain all information of an order until completed)
    - Priming (recent experience)
        - read a mental novel
        - mothers vs drunk ad
        - In the bus person staggering around being a nuisance paying fee
        - reading novel makes you think the person has a mental illness
        - seeing the ad makes you think the person might be drunk

Schema activation - Priming

- filling a questionnaire in different settings
    - fill faster near a fast food restaurant
    - fill slower near a normal restaurant

Effects of Schema

- Cognitive Confirmation Biases
    - processing information about particular people in a way that confirms or supports the schema (even if their behaviours are not particularly consistent with the schema)
    - “Shooting Bias” Black vs White
    - Interpret behaviours as consistent
    - Remember behaviours as consistent. Rosenthal & Jacobson
    - Biased Hypothesis Testing

Lecture 5

Availability Heuristics

Representative Heuristics

Anchor Heuristics

- Estimation of numbers based on comparison
- List number higher or lower than 10000 - 9999, 10001
- Judges & the anchor heuristics (Englich & Mussweiler, 2001)
    - 12months vs 34months
- Car mechanics
    - selling car to mechanic
    - price 2800 -> 2500
    - price 5000 -> 3500
    - mechanic estimates a price from the given price

Automatic vs Controlled Processes

Automatic Thought

- Heuristics
- Schemas
- **Unconscious thinking (gut feeling)**
- Dijksterhuis, 2004
    - Study between the above methods to determine the superior process
    - Unconscious wins if the heuristics or schemas are disrupted even slightly

Controlled Thought

- conscious, intentional, voluntary
- can override impulses, scripts
- counterfactual thinking (medal example)
    - occurs when something happens that you dont expect and think of another possible solution.
- the more important the task is, the more likely controlled process takes place

Automatic process - determines a large part of our daily thinking
Controlled thinking - provides checks and balances against systematic errors at the cost of mental resources

How to increase conscious thoughts where it matters?

- Ask open ended questions
- More time

Thought suppression

- can you not just think of the stuff that pop into your mind
    - not exactly
    - think of other specific things to replace the thought

Cultural Differences in Cognition

- eastern vs western
- eastern - holistic thinking
- western - analytic thinking
- seeing the whole vs parts
- people have the same tools for cognition but the environment primes

Lecture 6

Social Perception

Lecture 7

Attribution Theory

- Fritz Heider
    - dispositional
        - something about the person is the cause, such as an attitude, preference, personality
        - does not respond to text because the person is neglectful
    - situational
        - something about the situation is the cause
        - does not respond to text because the phone might be broken

- Correspondent Inferences
    - we make inferences that people's behaviour correspond to their internal states (disposition, intention, preferences)
    - fundamental attribution error
    - perceived act: eating hotdog, inferred disposition: likes hotdog (preference)
    - act: solves hard math problem, inference: must be smart
    - Non correspondent inferences
        - act: eating hotdog, inference: nothing else to eat

- Kelly's Covariation Model
    - There can be many possible causes
        - Person?
        - Stimulus/situation?
        - Combination?
        - Special circumstances?
    - consistency, distinctiveness, consensus
    - discounting (anxiety provoking interview)
    - augmentation (cultural effects)
- Attribution as 2-step process (Gilbert)
    - 1st step: dispositional/internal/person
    - 2nd step: discounting/augmentation/external
- Fundamental Attribution Error
    - tendency to overestimate a persons behaviour on immediate factors and disregard situational factors because it requires too much mental resources.