

Interpersonal Relationships

Week 1 notes (chp 1 & 2)

Relationships

→ How do we know if someone is in a relationship?

- Frequency of contact
- Duration of contact
- Diversity of interactions
- Direction of influence
- Strength of influence

Intimate Relationships

- Partner is special and unique
- Desire, sexual desire and lust for partner
- May include physical intimacy

Why Intimate Relationships Matter?

1. Survival of our species
2. Universal
3. Powerful
4. Affect our health and physiology

Natural Selection

- Our current traits = by product of evolution
- Our fitness was increased by developing need for intimacy
- Ancestors selected mates that helped provide support and nurturing of offspring

Universality

→ fischer (1989)

- Across 100 countries, 90% of ppl experienced intimate relationships
- Found that romantic love was nearly universal
- Everyone has the machinery for love and intimacy
- Time, culture and other circumstances allow or hinder its expression

→ Cultural Differences

- China & US show many similarities such as intense desire and longing for partner
- US → analysis of songs indicates love that is happy
- China → analysis of songs indicates love that is suffering, pain, and sadness

Powerful Emotions

- Love and hate
- Source of greatest happiness and worst misery

Health Effects

- Our health is intertwined with our relationship quality
- Children's health and future outcomes tied to the quality of parental relationship
- Long-term lingering effects of negative family experiences
- Cycle can continue

- Divorce rates increasing

Need for Affiliation

- Humans are wired to seek out others
- Esp. true during difficult times → fear, loneliness, uncertainty

Variables and Hypothesis

- **Variables:** characteristics that change or have diff values for diff ppl (wealth, health status, weather, age)
- **Construct:** an abstract idea

Homeostasis of Social Contact

- Affiliation motivation can be thought of as a homeostatic process
- Sometimes we need the company of others and then sometimes we need to be alone
- Too much of one will push people to seek the other and push themselves away

Need for Intimacy

- Motivates us to seek out deeper relationships that are not driven by fear and uncertainty
- People high on need for intimacy → put more emphasis on depth of few relationships
- People high on need for affinity → more trusting and confiding in relationships
- McAdams & Vaillant → “ppl high on need for intimacy are happier w their jobs and more satisfied with their marriages than those low on this need”

Alternative to Affiliation and Intimacy

- Need to belong → argue that we evolved to seek out relationships
- evidence;
- 1. Humans form relationships easily
- 2. Infants imprint on the caregivers well before they know the benefits
- 3. People are in distress when these bonds are broken

4. People stay in abusive relationships

Support for Belongingness

- Many health benefits of relationships
- Marriage reduces stress-induced health problems → lower chance of heart-attack incidence, fewer immune system problems, higher chance of survival from cancer

Parsimony Principle

: simpler explanation is probably the correct one

- If a simple theory can explain the phenomenon, then there is no need for a more complex theory or several theories to explain it

Predictive Power of a Hypothesis/Theory

- Need-based theories we reviewed so far are problematic
- Affiliation, intimacy and belongingness theories are all developed through observing behaviour

From Sociology

→ George Homans 4 principles of forming relationships

1. People w equal status more likely to interact
2. People interact w others similar to them
3. More interactions = more liking
4. More interaction and more liking = more likely to become a friendship

Marriages Today

- More inclusive → gay rights movements in many countries have resulted in marriages being legalized for gay men and women
- People get married much later in life (30s)
- Increases in divorce have resulted in more stepfamilies

Singles

- Since 1970 → 28% of ppl were divorcees, widowers or single
- Since 2002 → 40% of ppl considered single

Modern Relationships

- Very different from ones even 10 yrs ago
- Advent of online dating has changed the playing field and poses new challenges for researchers who study relationships

Why have Relationships Changed?

→ Levinger (1994)

1. Increased independence or autonomy and drive toward consumerist society
2. Women breaking out of the owner property relationship and expect more equality
3. Economic freedom has helped women choose to leave marriages more freely (more choice when independent)

How have Relationships Remained the Same?

- Need for love has not gone away
 - Intimate relationships unfold in very predictable ways
1. **Sampling stage:** look for compatibility w another
 2. **Bargaining stage:** determine if longevity is possible
 3. **Commitment stage:** marriage, children, house
 4. **Dissolution stage:** breaking down of relationship

How do we Study Relationships?

Do we need to study love & relationships?

- Useful to understand what causes formation and dissolution of relationships
- Formation of relationships changes from generation to generation
- Many different ways of forming & dissolving relationships

Scientific Method

→ Love, happiness and satisfaction is intangible, so how do we measure it or define it?

- Compare it w tangible things like weight, height, number of siblings, etc.
- Intangible concepts are defined as **constructs** that are studied (humans have constructed these abstract ideas)

Exercise

→ Variable related to intimate relationships:

- Love
- Jealousy
- Attraction
- Satisfaction

Multiple Methods for Studying Relationships

- Intangible constructs are not unique to relationship research
- Infinite number of ways to study each construct
- Need to operationalize the construct (define it in a way that can be measured indirectly)

- Objectivity of measurement of variables increases as we operationalize them

Scientific Method Cont'd

- Tests hypotheses which are predictions about relationship between variables

→ Steps

1. Observation or prediction from a theory
2. Formulate hypothesis
3. Make prediction based on hypothesis
4. Test prediction → via data collection
5. Analyze results, form conclusion, accept/reject hypothesis
6. Revise if necessary and communicate results to others

Sources of Data for Relationship Research

→ Archives

- Statistical records → Stats Canada collects census data
- Survey archives
- Written records → diaries, letters and other personal accounts
- Mass communications → newspapers, radio transmissions, TV broadcasts, films

→ Analysis of Archival Data

- Researcher must decide on;
 1. Sampling strategy & which medium being sampled
 2. What kind of coding will be used
 3. Establish inter-rater reliability
 4. Analyze the data

→ Pros & Cons of Archival Data Research

1. Pros

- Study naturally occurring phenomena

2. Cons

- Little control over objectivity and accuracy of data
- Data may be incomplete or missing
- Difficult to determine causality

Naturalistic Observation

- Advantage: participants are unaware of the researcher and thus behave naturally
- Problem: very **little** control of the environment or the variables, which reduces confidence in findings

Lab Observations

→EX: Dyadic Interaction Paradigm (Ickes, 1982)

- Videotape interactions between 2 people while waiting for study to start
- The interactions while waiting for researcher are of interest
- Involves deception because participants are unaware they are being studied during that time
- Asks participants to report on video of themselves

→ Pros & Cons of Lab Observations

1. Pros

- Naturalness is preserved
- Control of environment

2. Cons

- Causality cannot be established easily

Interviews and Surveys

- Consists of “just asking people”

→ Interviews

- Very rich data
- Very costly

→ Surveys

- Questionnaires, either structured or open-ended
- Low cost; anonymity may result in more truthfulness

Disadvantages of Interviews & Surveys

- Psychological findings say that subjects are **not** good at understanding their own behaviours
- Self-report data may be unreliable → people may lie

Extraneous Influences on Responses

→ Confounds

- Certain variables that can affect or changes the outcome of a study
- Ex: weather has been shown to affect responses to questionnaires;
 - a. When its sunny, ppl tend to focus on positive experiences, vice versa w gloomy weather
 - b. Schwartz & Clore (1983) found the difference in relationship satisfaction differed by 15% between the 2 weather conditions, with the sunny weather producing more satisfaction

Wording of Questions

- Leading questions
- Halo effect: answers to the first few questions can “colour” your responses to subsequent questions
- Can be a challenging task

Interpretation of Data

- The relationship between variables is studied through correlations
- Causality is hard to deduce from these methods

Research Design

- Cross-sectional; assessment/observation on a single thing or time
- Longitudinal: assessment/observation over a long period of time

Experiments

- Manipulation
- Control
- Random assignment
- Comparison
- Dependent variable: effect or outcome the researchers want to understand
- Independent variable: the aspect of experiment the researcher manipulates
- Control: holding constant all aspects of the experimental situation that are not being manipulated
- Random assignment: the assurance that every participant has an equal chance of being assigned to any condition of an experiment

Data Collection

- In experiments → A participant is a single person
- In relationship research → a lot of data comes from dyads (dyads: 2 people interacting)
- Reconstructed experience: recalling events from memory
- Exemplary experience: idealized responses
- These methods prone to producing poor quality data

New Approaches to Studying Relationships

- Speed dating: controlled but realistic environments (increase external validity of experimental approach)
- Online collection tools

Meta-Analysis

- Review of current findings from many scientific articles

