

Social Psychology

Chapter 1. Introduction to social psychology

Defining social psychology:

1. The scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people (Textbook/Gordon W. Allport)
2. Modern social psychology's core is trying to understand the subjective experience (Daniel Wegner)

Social influence

- The effect that the words, actions or mere presence of other people have on our thoughts, feelings, attitudes or behaviour

Why is social psychology different

1. Social psychologists address many of the same questions that philosophers do but we attempt to look at these questions scientifically
2. Social psychologists devise scientific methods to test our assumptions, guesses and ideas about human social behaviour, empirically and systematically rather than relying on folk wisdom, common sense, or the opinions and insights of philosophers, novelists, political pundits, and our grandmothers
3. The goal of social psychology is to discover universal laws of human behaviour
4. The level of analysis for social psychology is the individual in the context of a social situation – particularly the individual's construal of that situation
 - a. **Construal** – the way in which people perceive, comprehend, and interpret the social world (ie. Other people's behaviour)
 - b. Cousin subjects have different level of focus
 - i. Sociology focus on social class, social structure and social institutions instead of the individual
 - ii. Biology focus on the level of neurons, genes, and physiological processes in brain

The power of the situation

- Individual behaviour is powerfully influenced by the social environment but many people don't want to believe this
- Eg. Milgram's experiment (The fake electric shock experiment)

Fundamental attribution error

- The tendency to overestimate the extent to which people's behaviour is due to internal, dispositional factors and to underestimate the role of situational factors

Behaviourism

- Believes that to understand human behaviour, one need only consider the reinforcing properties of the environment

Gestalt psychology

- Stresses the importance of studying the subjective way in which an object appears in people's minds rather than the objective, physical attributes of the object

Naive realism

- The conviction that we perceive things "as they really are", underestimating how much we are interpreting or "spinning" what we see

Egocentric biases

- People view the world through subjective lens

Human motives

1. The need to feel good about ourselves
2. The need to be accurate

The self-esteem motive

1. Refers to evaluations of their self-worth – that is the extent to which they see themselves as good, competent, and decent
2. Human beings are motivated to maintain a positive picture of themselves. People often distort their perception of the world to preserve their self-esteem

The social cognition motive

1. Social cognition – How people select, interpret, remember, and use social information to make judgements and decisions
2. We do try to be accurate but we typically act on the basis of incomplete and inaccurately interpreted information

Chapter 2. Methodology

Hindsight bias

- Tendency for people to exaggerate, after knowing that something occurred, how much they could have predicted it before it occurred

Formulating hypothesis and theories

1. From previous theories and research. The researcher may believe that he has a better way of explaining people's behaviour
2. Personal observations

Research methods

Observational

1. Aims to describe the nature of a phenomenon
2. Researcher observes people and systematically records measurements/impressions of their behaviour
 - a. Ethnography – Researchers attempt to understand a group by observing from the inside without imposing preconceived notions
 - b. Archival analysis – Examines accumulated documents or archives of a culture

Correlational

1. 2 or more variables are systematically measured and the relationship between them is assessed.
2. Usually through surveys whose participants are hopefully selected through random selection and are representative of the population
3. Aims to predict behaviour through correlation
4. Unable to predict causation as there might be a presence of a 3rd variable and unsure which variable is the cause vs effect

Experimental method

1. Researcher conducts an experiment by assigning participants to different conditions, and ensures that these conditions are identical except for the independent variable
2. The only way to test causality

Ways to conduct good experiments

1. Internal validity – Nothing besides the independent variable can affect the dependent variable
 - a. Accomplished by controlling all extraneous variables and by randomly assigning people to different experimental conditions
2. External validity – Extent to which a study can be generalised to other situations and to other people
 - a. Done by trying to make the experiment realistic
 - b. Try to hide the true purpose from the study to prevent participants from being nice or trying to sabotage the results
 - c. Field experiments – Experiments conducted in natural settings rather than in the laboratory
3. Replication – Repeating a study, often with different populations or in different settings increase validity of experiment (External validity)
4. Meta-Analysis – Studies the results of multiple studies to tell if an independent variable is reliable
 - a. produces trustworthy results as it is the average of multiple studies

Within subject experiment

- Measure the same participants but across time. Compare the before and after to see if something has changed

Between subject experiment

- Split the participants into 2 groups. 1 control group and 1 experimental group

Artifacts

- Any variable other than the manipulation that influences the difference between observations
- Examples include:

- Expectancy effect(Experimenter) – Experimenter treats participants differently depending on what they expect from the control/hypothesis group
- Evaluation apprehension(participant) – People behave differently when watched
- Demand characteristics(participant) – Participants might figure out hypothesis and try to help
- WEIRD people(participant) – Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic

How to avoid participants artifacts

1. Avoid revealing hypothesis
2. Avoid obvious manipulations
3. Avoid obvious measures
4. Test diverse populations

Ethics in research

1. Informed consent – Participants need to agree to participate and have enough information to decide whether to participate
2. Deception – Misleading people about true purpose of participants, only allowed if needed to test a hypothesis about social behaviour
3. Debriefing – Tell people the true purpose, what actually happened, and how to complain or seek help if unwell

Chapter 4. Social perception

1. It is the study of how we form impressions of and make inferences about other people
2. Humans have a fundamental fascination with explaining other people's behaviour as it helps us to understand and predict our own social universe

Nonverbal communication

1. It refers to the way in which people communicate, intentionally or unintentionally, without words, including facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, body position, movement, touch and gaze.

Facial expressions

1. According to Darwin, facial expressions were vestiges of once-useful physiological reaction (Basic emotion theory)
 - a. Eg. fear enhances perception by widening eyes, increased breathing and speeding up eye movements. Useful in a dangerous situation
2. Emotional expressions are mostly universal. All humans can encode and decode the six major emotional expressions.
 - a. Encode – Express nonverbal behaviour like smiling
 - b. Decode – Interpret meaning of nonverbal behaviour
 - c. Six emotions – anger, happiness, surprise, fear, disgust, sadness
3. Affect blends – facial expressions in which one part of face registers one emotion while another part registers a different emotion
 - a. Makes decoding difficult
4. Social function – We are more likely to express emotions in the presence of others

Culture and nonverbal communication

1. Display rules – culturally determined rules about which nonverbal behaviours are appropriate to display
 - a. Eg. American cultural norms discourage emotional displays in men
2. Emblems – nonverbal gestures that have well-understood definitions within a given culture, usually having direct verbal translations
 - a. Eg. middle finger
 - b. Each culture might define its own emblems
3. There are many other types of nonverbal communication besides facial expression. Eye contact, hand gestures, personal space all differ between cultures.

First impressions

1. Thin slicing – Drawing meaningful conclusions about another person's personality or skills based on an extremely brief sample of behaviour
2. Humans form first impressions very fast (sometimes in milliseconds) and with little information. Facial appearance, nonverbal cues, attire are enough.

Lasting impressions

1. First impressions are important and long-lasting due to the primacy effect, schemas and belief perseverance

2. Primacy effect – What we learn first colours how we see the information we learn next
 - a. intelligent-industrious- impulsive-critical-stubborn-envious vs envious-stubborn-critical-impulsive-industrious-intelligent
 - b. The first thing we learn creates a filter through which the subsequent traits are viewed
3. Schema – a cognitive framework or concept that helps organise and interpret information
 - a. We have schemas regarding which traits tend to appear together. We use the first few characteristics to infer other characteristics
4. Belief perseverance – the tendency to stick with an initial judgement even in the face of new information that should prompt us to reconsider

Causal attribution

1. Attribution theory – a study of how we infer the causes of other people's behaviour

Attribution process

1. Humans try to understand other people's behaviour like amateur detectives by piecing together information until they arrive at a reasonable explanation
2. We make either internal or external attributions
3. Internal attribution – inference that a person is behaving in a certain way because of something about the person such as attitude or character
4. External attribution – person behave this way due to the current situation

Covariation model

1. To form an attribution, people examine multiple behaviours from different times and situations, and analyses how the person's behaviour changes across time, place and target of behaviour
2. Consensus information – The extent to which other people behaves the same way towards the same stimulus
3. Distinctive information – How the particular actor responds to other stimuli
4. Consistency information – the frequency which the observed behaviour between the same person and stimulus occurs across time and circumstances
5. While the covariation model portrays people as master detectives, we are not always logical when forming judgements.
 - a. Distort information to satisfy our need for high self esteem
 - b. Use mental shortcuts that lead to inaccurate judgments
 - c. Can also be plain wrong.

Your boss keeps yelling at Hannah. Is it something about who your boss is as a person (internal attribution), or something external to your boss (e.g., Hannah's work ethic or attitude, pressure your boss faces at work, a tragic event in his personal life). The covariation model can help you make this determination using three variables of consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency.

Low Consensus (No one except your boss yells at Hannah)	+	Low Distinctiveness (Your boss yells at everyone)	+	High Consistency (Your boss always yells at Hannah)	=	Internal Attribution	This is something about your boss's personality or values.
High Consensus (Everyone yells at Hannah)	+	High Distinctiveness (Your boss only yells at Hannah)	+	High Consistency (Your boss always yells at Hannah)	=	External Attribution	This is not about your boss, but more likely about Hannah's work ethic or attitude.
Low/High Consensus	+	Low/High Distinctiveness	+	Low Consistency	=	No Attribution	When consensus and distinctiveness are varied, and there's no consistency to a behavior, attributions are difficult to make.

- LLH – Internal attribution
- HHH – External attribution
- AAL – No attribution. *A refers to L/H

Fundamental attribution error(FAE)

1. The tendency to overestimate the extent to which other people's behaviour results from internal, disposition factors, and to underestimate the role of situational factors
2. Perceptual salience – the seeming importance of information that is the focus of people's attention
 - a. When we try to explain behaviour, we focus on the person not the surrounding situation, causing us to ignore the situational factors
 - b. Sometimes we might not even know the situational factors, but the person is always there
3. Two step attribution process – We first make an automatic internal attribution and then only think about possible situational reasons for behaviour
 - a. Step 1 is automatic but step 2 requires more effort, hence more likely to skip and result in fundamental attribution error

Self serving attribution

1. Explains one's success by crediting internal, dispositional factors and blames failures on external, situational factors
2. Occurs due to our need to maintain high self-esteem, even at the cost of accuracy

3. Especially likely to happen when we fail at something and we feel we can't improve at it

Actor observer bias

1. Tendency to engage in FAE when interpreting other people's behaviour, and less when interpreting your behaviour

Belief in a just world

1. A defensive attribution wherein people assume that bad things happen to bad people and that good things happen to good people
2. An extension of the self serving attribution to deal with tragic events such as terminal diseases, and fatal accidents
3. Allow us to be reassured that bad things won't happen to us because we won't be that careless
4. Can result in victim blaming

Bias blind spot

1. The tendency to think that others are more susceptible to attributional biases than we are

Culture and social perception

1. Culture influences our processes of social perception and attribution

Holistic vs analytic thinking

1. Analytic thinking – focus on the properties of objects and pay less attention to context
 - a. More common in individualistic western cultures
2. Holistic thinking – focus on the whole picture, including the object, the context that surrounds the object as well as relationships that exist between them
 - a. Common in collectivistic cultures, such as those of east Asia
3. Everyone can think in both analytic and holistic but thinking in a different thinking style from their norm require more effort

Cultural differences in fundamental attribution error

1. People in individualist culture prefer dispositional attributions, relative to people in collectivist cultures, who prefer situational attributions

Culture and other attributional biases

1. Collectivist cultures are less likely to engage in self-serving bias. But recent evidence is changing that view.
2. Just-world attributions are more common in cultures where wealth is more evenly distributed

Chapter 5. The self

Self-concept

1. The overall set of beliefs that people have about their personal attributes
2. Morality is viewed as central to the self-concept, more so than cognitive processes or desires
3. Self – ability to think of themselves as unique beings
 - a. Tested through the mirror test
 - b. Chimpanzees, orangutan, dolphins, and elephants passed
 - c. Also humans, duh. Self-recognition develops around 18-24 months old

Self-concepts across cultures

1. Independent view of the self – A way of defining oneself in terms of one's own internal thoughts, feelings, and actions and not in terms of the thoughts feelings of other people
 - a. Common in western cultures
2. Interdependent view of self – A way of defining oneself in terms of one's relationships to other people, recognising that behaviour is often determined by thoughts, feelings, and actions of others
 - a. Common in east asian cultures

Self-knowledge

1. People use introspection, observations of their own behaviour and other people to know themselves

Introspection

1. The process whereby people look inward and examine their own thoughts, feelings and motives
2. Self-Awareness theory – the idea that when people focus their attention on themselves, they evaluate and compare their behaviour to their internal standards and values

- a. If their behaviour doesn't match, they try to change their behaviour to match. If they cannot change their behaviour, they will be uncomfortable and try to escape this state
 - b. If behaviour match/exceed, you feel good
 - c. Self-focus enhances morality, focusing on yourself reminds you of your sense of right and wrong
- 3. We can always justify our feelings but our reasons are not always correct
 - a. People's explanations for their emotion often go beyond what they can reasonably know
 - b. Causal theories – theories about the causes of one's own feelings and behaviours. We learn such theories from our culture
 - i. We use these theories to justify our emotions

Observing ourselves

- 1. When introspection does not work, we observe our behaviour to infer attitudes
- 2. Self-perception theory – Theory when our attitudes and feelings are uncertain or ambiguous, we infer these states by observing our behaviour and the situation in which it occurs
 - a. People use the same attributional principles to infer their own attitudes and feelings

James-Lange theory of emotion

- 1. The physiological reaction leads to emotion(ie. Heart beat fast → fear)

Central theory(Cannon-Bard)

- 1. The cognitive processing of the situation leads to emotion (ie. See tiger → fear)

Two-factor theory of emotions(Schachter-Singer theory)

- 1. The idea that emotional experience is the result of a two-step self-perception process in which people first experience physiological arousal and then seek an appropriate explanation (ie. See tiger + heart beat → fear)
 - a. Any reasonable explanation will do, might not be correct, hence implies that emotions are somewhat arbitrary
- 2. Misattribution of arousal – People make mistaken inferences about what is causing them to feel the way they do
 - a. Famous bridge experiment

Free will

1. Causation is perceived when one event quickly follows another
2. The experience of “conscious will” occurs if a thought about an action immediately precedes the action
 - a. Means conscious will can be faked.
 - b. I-spy experiment – subjects are induced to believe that they have selected a figure on a computer screen (when they haven't)

Deindividuation in the dark

1. Phenomenon in which people engage in seemingly impulsive, deviant, and sometimes violent acts in situations in which they believe they cannot be personally identified

Motivations

1. Intrinsic motivation – Desire to engage in an activity because we enjoy it, not because of external rewards or pressures
 - a. Rewards, external surveillance and deadlines can decrease intrinsic motivation. Especially controlling types of rewards.
2. Extrinsic motivation – desire to engage in an activity because of external rewards or pressures, not because we enjoy the task or find it interesting
3. Overjustification effect – tendency for people to view their behaviour as caused by compelling extrinsic reasons, making them underestimate the extent to which is is caused by intrinsic reasons
 - a. If rewarded for previously intrinsically motivated task, may cause them to lose interest

Rewards

1. Task-contingent rewards – rewards for performing a task
 - a. Decreases intrinsic motivation
2. Performance-contingent rewards – rewards based on how well we perform a task
 - a. Increases intrinsic motivation

Mindsets

1. Fixed mindset – the idea that we have a set amount of an ability that cannot change

- a. Not good, gives up easily after setback
- 2. Growth mindset – idea that achievement is the result of hard work, trying new strategies, and seeking input from others
 - a. Anything is possible, attitude much better. But don't just dream, still need to do

Using other people to know ourselves

- 1. Social comparison theory – we learn about our own abilities and attitudes(the self) by comparing ourselves to other people
 - a. We socially compare when there is no objective standard to measure ourselves against and are uncertain about ourself in a particular area
- 2. Whom we compare ourselves to depends on whether we are trying to get an accurate assessment of our abilities, determine the top level or to feel better about yourself
 - a. Upward social comparison – comparing ourselves to people who are better than we are with regard to a particular trait or ability
 - i. To know the top level and to improve
 - ii. But can be quite demoralising
 - b. Downward social comparison – Comparing ourselves to people who are worse than we are with regard to a particular trait or ability
 - i. To boost our egos
 - ii. But we cannot improve this way
 - c. There are other ways to compare, comparing with someone about the same, or with your past performance

Adopting view of others

- 1. Looking glass self – we see ourselves and the social world through the eyes of other people and adopt their views
- 2. Social tuning – the process whereby people adopt another person's attitudes
 - a. Can occur even when meeting for the first time, key is that if we want to get along with that person
 - b. We tend to both auto adopt view of people we like and auto reject views of people we do not

Self-control

- 1. The ability to subdue immediate desires to achieve long term goals
- 2. It's not helpful to avoid temptations by simply trying to not think about them and also doesn't work to simply focus on the long-term goal

Tips for better self control

1. Implementation intentions – Create specific plans about where, when, and how they will fulfil a goal and avoid temptations
 - a. Helps in exerting self control and achieve long term goals
2. Arrange environments to avoid temptations all together
 - a. Put phone in another room
3. Be well rested when trying to exert self control

Impression management

1. The attempt by people to get others to see them as they want to be seen

Bad impression management strategies

1. Ingratiation – using flattery or praise to make yourself likeable to another, often a person of higher status
 - a. Can backfire if sense insincerity
2. Self-handicapping – creating obstacles and excuses for themselves so that if they do poorly on a task they can avoid blaming themselves
 - a. Actively create obstacles that reduce the likelihood of success, like heavy drinking the night before a test
 - b. Or devise ready made excuse to explain their failure
 - c. Risks being disliked by peers, people do not like others who engage in self-handicapping strategies
3. All above are terrible ideas, not good for your long term interest

Culture and impression management

1. All cultures are concerned with impression they make, but specific of concern is different
2. Eg. Asians are particular about saving face and avoiding public embarrassment. East asians got rentals to 哭丧

Chapter 6. Cognitive Dissonance

Theory of cognitive dissonance

1. **Cognitive dissonance** refers to the **discomfort** people feel when **two cognitions conflicts**, or when our **behaviour conflicts with our attitudes**.
2. Especially bad when the dissonant cognitions challenge our self esteem
3. We can reduce our dissonance in 3 basic ways

- a. By changing our behaviour to bring it in line with the dissonant cognition
- b. By attempting to justify our behaviour through changing one of the dissonant cognitions
- c. By attempting to justify our behaviour by adding new cognitions
- 4. Dissonance implies that much of human thinking is not rational but rationalising

Decisions

- 1. After making a difficult decision, we often experience postdecision dissonance
- 2. **Postdecision dissonance** – Dissonance aroused after making a decision, typically reduced by enhancing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and devaluating the rejected alternatives
 - a. Basically, we find ways to justify that we made a correct decision and feel better about ourselves
- 3. The more **permanent** the decision, the stronger the need to reduce dissonance
 - a. Eg. Lowballers create an illusion of irrevocability to pressure customers to buy their product

Justification of effort

- 1. Tendency for individuals to increase their liking for something they worked hard to attain
 - a. If people choose to suffer to attain a goal, they would view the goal as more attractive, even if the goal objectively sucks. Eg. Suffering to get into a frat house.

Counterattitudinal behaviour

- 1. Acting in a way that runs counter to one's private belief or attitude
- 2. **External justification** – reason for dissonant personal behaviour that resides outside the individual. Eg. external reward/punishment
- 3. **Internal justification** – the reduction of dissonance by changing something about oneself (one's attitude or behaviour)
- 4. If external justification is insufficient to justify counterattitudinal behaviour, people will turn to internal justification and will change their attitudes to reduce their dissonance
- 5. Phenomenon
 - a. Small fee to lie about the enjoyability of an experiment, results in more positive view of the experiment
 - b. Requests small acts of kindness from enemy, to get enemy to have more positive attitude
 - c. Dehumanising enemies, especially in war, to justify harming/killing them

- d. Justifying/Emphasising immoral acts depending on your actions

Insufficient punishment

1. The dissonance aroused when individuals lack sufficient external justification for having resisted a desired activity, usually resulting in individual devaluing the forbidden activity
2. Trick to get people to avoid temptation

Hypocrisy induction

1. The arousal of dissonance by having individuals make statements that run counter to their behaviours and then reminding them of the inconsistency between what they advocated and their behaviour. The purpose is to lead individuals to more responsible behaviour

Dissonance across cultures

1. In collectivist societies, dissonance reducing behaviour may be less prevalent
2. Dissonance less likely when justifying own personal misbehaviour, but more likely to occur when behaviour shames or disappoints (in collectivist societies)

Advances in cognitive dissonance theory

Self affirmation

1. The idea that people can reduce threats to their self-esteem by affirming themselves in areas unrelated to the source of the threat

Self-evaluation maintenance theory

1. Theory that you do not want your friends to do well in areas that matter to us
2. The idea that people experience dissonance when someone close to us outperforms us in an area that is central to our self-esteem.
3. This dissonance can be reduced by becoming less close to the person, changing our behaviour so that we now outperform them, or deciding that the area is not that important to us after all.

Overcoming dissonance

1. Dissonance is helpful as it helps us maintain a high self esteem but if we only focus on soothing our ego, we can never improve and may do stupid things

2. Practice mindfulness and try to examine our behaviour critically and dispassionately, to break cycle of action-justification-action

High self-esteem

1. **Narcissism** – combination of excessive self-love and a lack of empathy toward others
 - a. They are bad at reflecting and are disliked by others
2. Self esteem is not necessarily bad. High self esteem serves as a buffer, protecting people from terrifying thought of their own mortality (**Terror management theory**)

Theory of the mind (Lecture 5)

1. The understanding that others have different mental states than us. Eg. If I know something, doesn't mean someone else knows that thing

False belief task

1. To determine whether an organism can attribute different mental states to others
2. Humans pass at 3-4YO but without language about 15 months
3. Down syndrome and normal babies pass at about same rate but autistic children struggle

Autism

1. Refers to a spectrum of disorders varying in degree of severity, Asperger's syndrome at the mild end
2. High heritability, about 3:1 male
3. Disrupts the system responsible for "Theory of mind"
4. Autistic children require about a verbal mental age of 8YO to pass, for normal child it's about 4YO
5. Adults still pass

Simulation theory

1. We understand other people's beliefs by imagining others' actions as our own
2. There's a bit of ego bias to think that other people think the same way as us

False consensus effect

1. Belief that others share your opinion on issues
2. Tendency to see our own behavioural choices and judgements as relatively common and appropriate

Spotlight effect

1. Tendency to overestimate the extent to which our actions and appearance are noted by others
 - a. Ie. No one is going to notice your bad hair day