PYSC 333
Psychology of Personality

Session 6 – Social-Cognitive Theory Part 2

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Session Overview

- Walter Mischel, is another Social-Cognitive theorist, who propounded the Cognitive-Affective Personality System (CAPS) theory

- Mischel believed that personality results from how an individual perceives him/herself in a given situation

- Mischel identified five cognitive-affective units which influences how an individual interprets, processes and reacts to environmental cues

- Mischel also used two factors to explain personality and predict behavior; 1) delaying gratification, and 2) ability to match cognitive-affective units with situational demands

Session Goals and Objectives

At the end of this session, you should be able to

- Outline Mischel's view of what accounts for an individual's personality

- Define cognitive-affective units

- Describe each of the five cognitive affective units

- Discuss how Mischel explains personality

- Describe how consistency in behaviour is determined

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Cognitive-affective Units

- Explaining personality

Reading List

- Carducci, B. J. (2009). *The Psychology of personality*
(2nd ed.). Chichester: John Riley & Sons Ltd (Ch 10)

- Larsen, R. J., & Buss, D. M. (2008). *Personality psychology: Domain of knowledge about human nature* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill. (Ch 12)

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Social-Cognitive approach

- 1. George Kelly (1905-1967)

- *His personal construct theory describe personality in terms of cognitive processes*

- Julian Rotter (1916- 2014)

- *Defined personality processes that are related to successful and unsuccessful personality adjustment*

- 2. Walter Mischel (1930- date)

- *The Cognitive-Affective Personality System (CAPS) theory*

Walter Mischel (1930 - date)

- Behaviour is governed by both cognitive and situational factors

- Personality does not form as a result of underlying traits

- It results from how a person perceives him/ herself in a given situation

- The core of Mischel's viewpoint is what he called the *cognitive affective units*

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Walter Mischel (1930 - date)

- Mischel (1999, 2000, 2004), describes cognitive-affective units as

- *the personal qualities that influences the way an individual processes information in the environment which generates complex patterns of behaviour in reaction to it* (in Carducci, 2009)

Walter Mischel (1930 - date)

- Mischel identified five cognitive-affective units
- a)   Encodings
- b)   Expectancies and belief
- c)   Affect
- d)   Goals and values
- e)   Competencies and self-regulatory plans

Topic One

COGNITIVE-AFFECTIVE UNITS

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Cognitive-affective units

a) <u>Encodings</u> – *How do you see it?*

- Involves strategies a person uses to organise, store and transform information he/ she receives/ posses

- E.g. a trained detective might see the information at a crime scene differently from a journalist or a professional photographer or a witness

Cognitive-affective units

b) <u>Expectations and beliefs</u> – *what will happen?*

- An individual's actions is quite often influenced by what he/ she believes the actions will produce

- This could be

  – i. Behaviour–outcome expectations

  – ii. Stimulus-outcome expectations

  – iii. Self-efficacy

Cognitive-affective units

c) <u>Affects-</u>

- The feelings and emotional reactions that influence one's thoughts and behaviour in different situations

- E.g. when you get your results slip and you have performed extremely well, this may uplift your emotional state

- When you are upset from home and go to work

Cognitive-affective units

- d) <u>Goals and values</u>- *What is it worth?*

- One's desire/ preference for certain kinds of reinforcers over others and how these desires/ preferences impact one's behaviour

- E.g.- selecting a low-paying but exciting job over a well-paying but boring job

- A lot of differences in behaviours reflect differences in individuals' goals and subjective values (Carducci, 2009)

Cognitive-affective units

- e) <u>Competencies and self-regulatory systems and plans-</u>

- Competencies refers to what the individual knows and what he/she can do- it could be

- cognitive competencies– i.e. the amount and type of information the person possess

- or behavioural competencies- i.e. differences in one's ability to perform certain behaviours

Cognitive-affective units

- Self-regulatory systems– internal standards and codes that guides a person's behaviour

- Self-regulatory plans– the specific actions a person decides to take to achieve a desired outcome

- These plans play an important role in how a person copes with life's problems

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Topic Two

EXPLAINING PERSONALITY

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Explaining Personality

- Mischel used two personality processes to help explain personality and predict behaviour (Carducci, 2009)

- 1. Ability to delay gratification

- 2. Matching of cognitive-affective units with situational demands

Explaining Personality

- 1. <u>Delaying gratification</u>

- The tendency to forgo a smaller reward which is immediate, for a larger reward in the future (Carducci, 2009)

- Mischel & Ebbesen (1970) investigated this process of delaying gratification in children and adolescents

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Explaining Personality

- Children had the option to receive a small reward (crackers) immediately or a larger reward (lots of candy) later

- Findings- delayed gratification was more challenging if the reward was visible to the child, and if the child was thinking about this reward

Explaining Personality

- The ability to delay gratification could be increased by use of various behaviours and cognitive strategies

- Mischel (1990) noted delay of gratification as a core component of successful personality adjustment

- Inability to delay gratification could result in a variety of addictive and antisocial behaviours

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Explaining Personality

- E.g. a study of adolescents in summer camp associated inability to delay gratification with aggressiveness (Rodrigrez et al, 1989)

- The ability to delay gratification was associated with favourable consequences for adolescents (Carducci, 2009)

Explaining Personality

- Shoda, Mischel and Peake (1990)

- The academic and social competencies of adolescents who exhibited the ability to delay gratification at preschool and those who lacked a delay in gratification

- Delayed gratification was associated with higher score   on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

Explaining Personality

- Such individuals were rated by their parents as being:

- Matured, better able to cope with stress and frustration, more likely to use reason and more likely to think and plan ahead (Shoda, et al., 1990)

- Delayed gratification has been associated with coping with stress to increase academic performance

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Explaining Personality

- 2. <u>Matching of Conditions and Competencies</u>

- Trait theory is limited in its usefulness

- Personality theorist should not explain behaviour in terms of personality traits, but instead, focus on situational factors

- Situational differences should determine behaviour and not underlying traits

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Explaining Personality

- 2. <u>Matching of Conditions and Competencies</u>

- E.g. one who is friendly at work but reserved with strangers

- Behaviour is then a function of the situation

- How friendly a person behaves will be determined by the situation and not personality traits

Explaining Personality

- 2. <u>Matching of Conditions and Competencies</u>

- Mischel (1999) presented a contextualized view of personality as expressed in "if . . .then . . . " propositions :

- If situation A, then the person does X, but if situation B, then the person does Y (Larsen & Buss, 2008)

Explaining Personality

- Thus the person and situation interact to produce behaviour

- To predict behaviour, know about the cognitive person variables and the situation the individual is facing (Bernstein et al, 2000)

- Termed *Person X Situation* interactionism

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Explaining Personality

- Different individuals can be influenced by the same situation in different ways (Lahey, 2001)

- E.g. A friend who is loud when she is with you may be extremely shy in a social setting where other people are present

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Explaining Personality

- ~~E.g. A friend who is loud when she is with you may be extremely shy in a social setting where other people are present~~

- Thus, a person's personality can only be described in "if … then" terms (Mischel & Shoda (1999)

- E.g. *If* a person feels welcome in a group, *then* she is outgoing and interactive

Explaining Personality

- Consistency in behaviour in different situations is determined by:

- The extent to which the "if .... then" analysis of different situations require a similar behaviour to be displayed (Mischel, 1999; 2004; Mischel & Morf, 2003; Mischel & Shod, 1995)

- E.g.- a comedian is more likely to be consistent with his behaviour across situations where exhibiting this skill is appropriate

Explaining Personality

- The comedian's behaviour may appear inconsistent

- However, when Mischel's "if … then" logic, is applied, one can see a high degree of consistency (Carducci, 2009)

- Consistency of humorous behaviour across appropriate situations and

- Consistent in lack of humorous behaviour across other situations inappropriate for comic

END OF SESSION 6- PART 2

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References

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- Carducci, B. J. (2009). *The Psychology of personality* (2nd ed.).

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