PYSC 333
Psychology of Personality

Session 6 – Social-Cognitive Theory Part 2

Lecturer: Dr. Margaret Amankwah-Poku, Dept. of Psychology
Contact Information: mamankwah-poku@ug.edu.gh

godsonug.wordpress.com/blog
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)

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
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
Cognitive-affective units

a) **Encodings** – *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
b) **Expectations and beliefs – 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) Affects-

• 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) Goals and values - *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) Competencies and self-regulatory systems and plans

- 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
Topic Two

EXPLAINING PERSONALITY
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. Delaying gratification
- 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
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
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.
Explaining Personality

• E.g. a study of adolescents in summer camp associated inability to delay gratification with aggressiveness (Rodriguez 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
Explaining Personality

- 2. Matching of Conditions and Competencies
- 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
Explaining Personality

2. Matching of Conditions and Competencies

- 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. Matching of Conditions and Competencies

• 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
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
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
References

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