Motivation & Emotion

Personality, motivation & emotion: Individual differences in happiness, arousal, and control

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Individual differences in happiness, arousal, & control

Why do different people have different motivational and emotional states even in the same situation?

Personality characteristics:

Individual differences in happiness, arousal, and control

Three motivational principles
- Happiness
- Arousal
- Control

Reading:
Reeve (2009)
Ch 13
(pp. 367-390)

Outline – Individual Differences in Happiness, Arousal, and Control

- Happiness
  - Extraversion & happiness
  - Neuroticism & suffering
  - Extraverts & neurotics

- Arousal
  - Performance & emotion
  - Insufficient stimulation & underarousal
  - Excessive stimulation & overarousal
  - Credibility of the inverted-U hypothesis
  - Arousal seeking
  - Affect intensity

- Control
  - Perceived control
  - Desire for control

Happiness & Personality

Personality as typology

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 369)

Figure 13.1: Personality Characteristics as Understand within a Normal Distribution versus a Typical 32.
Based on Reeve (2009, Figure 13.1, p. 359)

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 366-367)
Personality types vs. traits

- Relatively few people are at either end of a personality characteristic (most people are mid-way)
- Beware of typologies' oversimplification

For example:
Focus on “extraversion” (as a trait) rather “introverts vs. extraverts” (as a typology).

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 368-369)

The big 5 personality traits

- The “Big 5” superordinate traits are well supported by a wide variety of research.
- Measures
  - NEO (Costa & McCrae, 1980s)
  - IPIP – freely available
- Some disagreement about the naming of these traits.

The Big 5 according to Costa and McCrae (1985):
- Neuroticism
- Extraversion
- Openness to Experience
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness

Tip: Remember as NEOAC rather than OCEAN because it conveys order of variance explained.

Adapted from McCrae & Costa (1986, p. 1002)

The big 5 personality traits: Labels

Personality traits → motivation, emotion, and behaviour

Personality traits:
- cause people to react differently to different situations, e.g., positively or negatively
- cause people to approach and avoid different situations
- determine choice and alteration of situations, e.g., approach, avoid, or modify situation

Based on Deckers (2010, pp. 210-212)
Are you happy?
Do you experience +ve emotion frequently?
How intense and deep is the happiness that you experience?
Do you feel vital and alive?

Are you unhappy?
Do you suffer emotionally?
How intensely do you experience negative emotions?
Is your typical day an emotional roller-coaster?

Happiness and unhappiness are related, but separate, dimensions

Big 5 personality factors & happiness

Personality & happiness

Extraversion & happiness

Neuroticism & happiness

Happiness
Unhappiness
Happiness set point
Unhappiness set point

Extraversion

Those with stronger extraversion have a greater capacity to experience positive emotions and a stronger and more sensitive Behavioral Activating Systems (BAS).

Eagerness to approach potentially rewarding situations

Extraverts are more sociable than introverts
Extraverts exhibit greater social dominance than introverts
Extraverts are more venturesome than introverts

Neuroticism

Those with stronger neuroticism tend to experience more frequent and intense negative emotions and a stronger and more sensitive Behavioral Inhibition Systems (BIS).

Eagerness to avoid potentially punishing situations

Greater avoidance behaviour and emotional distress (than emotionally stable individuals)
Happiness economics

- HE = Quantitative study of happiness, positive and negative affect, well-being, quality of life, life satisfaction etc., typically combining economics with other fields such as psychology and sociology.
- HE has grown substantially since the late 20th century, for example, by the development of methods, surveys and indices to measure happiness and related concepts.
- e.g., World Database of Happiness - http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/

Happy Planet Index

- Environmental efficiency of supporting well-being (Ratio of happiness to resource consumption (sustainability))
- Countries shaded by their position in the HPI (2006)
- Highest-ranked countries are bright green
- Lowest are brown

Natural happiness and synthetic happiness

- Natural happiness: Occurs when you get what you want.
- Synthetic happiness: Occurs when you accept that you didn't get what you want.
- Synthetic happiness is as real as natural happiness
- e.g., in dating, you look to get what you want, in marriage, you find a way to like what you've got.

Easterlin paradox (1974)

- Within a given country people with higher incomes are more likely to report being happy.
- However, in international comparisons, the average reported level of happiness does not vary much with national income per person, at least for countries with income sufficient to meet basic needs.

Why are we happy? Dan Gilbert

Video (21 mins 20 secs):
http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_asks_why_are_we_happy.html
Arousal

- Arousal levels mostly reflect how stimulating the environment is
- People engage in behaviour to ↑ or ↓ their level of arousal:
  - When underaroused, people seek out opportunities to ↑ their arousal levels, because
    - ↑s in environmental stimulation are pleasurable and enhance performance whereas
    - ↓s are aversive and undermine performance
  - When overaroused, people seek out opportunities to ↓ their arousal levels, because
    - ↓s in environmental stimulation are aversive and undermine performance whereas
    - ↑s are pleasurable and enhance performance

Performance & arousal

- The Hebbian curve became popular in the 1950s

Insufficient stimulation & underarousal

Sensory deprivation:
An individual’s sensory and emotional experience in a rigidly unchanging environment.

Human beings harbour motives for counteracting insufficient stimulation and underarousal.

Insufficient stimulation & underarousal

Heron’s sensory deprivation study
The brain and nervous system prefer a continual and moderate level of arousal generated by environmental stimulation.
Excessive stimulation & overarousal

Humans are motivated to counteract excessive stimulation and overarousal.

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 377)

Sensation seeking

Personality characteristic related to arousal and reactivity.

Related to the extent to which a person’s central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) requires change and variability.

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 379)

Sensory isolation tanks

- Sensory isolation tanks minimise external stimulation
- Relaxing
- Restorative
- Facilitate higher consciousness

“Over the last 25 years I have exhausted numerous addictions and relationships in pursuit of the very sensation - or state of being actually - that the floatation tank gave me in one hour. No drug-induced euphoria, no sexual or romantic high, no nicotine or food fix, nor any spiritual venture ever brought me as close to my desired destination as the float tank did. This illusively defined ‘destination’ became much clearer to me after floating in the tank. It’s a truly remarkable and freeing experience.”

- Annie C - http://www.samadhitank.com/

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 379)

Credibility of the inverted-U hypothesis

- Neiss’s criticism
  - Descriptive rather than explanatory
  - Does not apply to everyday affairs in which arousal level changes relatively little.
- Revelle, Amaral, & Turriff’s experiment (1976)
  - The inverted-U hypothesis applies nicely to everyday sources of stimulation – e.g., caffeine and time pressure.

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 377-379)

Sensation seeking & sensory deprivation

- Zuckerman was a graduate student in sensory deprivation studies.
- Became interested in subjects who:
  - hated deprivation
  - couldn’t tolerate low levels of stimulation
  - wanted new experiences

Based on Reeve (2009, p. 379)
Sensation seeking

- Sensation seeking determines how a person reacts to a situation or event.
- Sensation seeking determines the situations and activities a person chooses.

Sensation seeking – Biological basis

- SSs have ↓ levels of monoamine oxidase (MAO) (enzyme that metabolises monoamines, such as serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine)
- SSs tend to have relatively ↑ levels of dopamine → their biochemistry favours approach over inhibition
- SSs tend to have relatively ↓ levels of serotonin → their biochemistry fails to inhibit them from risks and new experiences

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 379-381)

Who was higher in sensation seeking?

Steve Irwin  Princess Diana

Sensation Seeking Scale
(SSI; Zuckerman)

- Thrill and adventure seeking (action gamblers)
- Seek experiences outside the conventional lifestyle (travel, friends, art)
- Disinhibition: release of inhibitions, escape the pressures of daily life. (escape gamblers)
- Low tolerance for boredom, repetition and sameness.

SS and addiction

Sensation seeking is correlated with:
- Alcoholism
- Gambling

Perhaps SS is common in all addictions
Perceived control

In order to perceive that one has control over a given situation...

1. The self must be capable of obtaining the available desired outcome.

2. The situation in which one attempts to exercise control needs to be at least somewhat predictable and responsive.

Affective reactions to good and bad events by affect-intense and affect-stable individuals

Perceived control beliefs

High perceived control vs. Low perceived control

- Goal setting
- Task choice
- Effort
- Concentration
- Persistence in the face of difficulty
- Positive emotional states
- Problem-solving strategies
- Performance

Self-confirming cycles of high and low engagement

Perceived control beliefs High vs. Low

Actual outcomes

Engagement vs. disaffection
Desire for control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiration level</th>
<th>Response to challenge</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Attributes for success and failure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High DC vs. Low DC</td>
<td>Select harder tasks; set goals more realistically</td>
<td>React with greater effort</td>
<td>Work at difficult tasks longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High DC benefit</td>
<td>Higher goals are achieved</td>
<td>Difficult tasks are completed</td>
<td>Difficult tasks are completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High DC liability</td>
<td>May attempt goals too difficult</td>
<td>May develop performance-inhibiting reactions</td>
<td>May invest too much effort</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Influence of desire for control during achievement-related performance (Burger, 1985)

Based on Figure 13.7, Reeve (2009, p. 387)

Summary

- Two personality characteristics related to happiness:
  - Extraversion → BAS → Happiness
  - Neuroticism → BIS → Unhappiness
- Two personality characteristics related to arousal:
  - Sensation seeking
  - Affect intensity
- Two personality characteristics related to control:
  - Perceived control
  - Desire for control

Based on Reeve (2009, pp. 388-389)

References


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Upcoming lectures

- Individual differences
  - Unconscious motivation (Ch 14)
  - Growth psychology (Ch 15)
- Summary & conclusion (Ch 16)