Journal of Experimental Social Psychology

1. Most Downloaded

How many likes did I get? Purpose moderates links between positive social media feedback and self-esteem.

Abstract

Sociometer theory asserts that self-esteem is calibrated to one's perceived relational value. Accordingly, positive feedback should boost self-esteem because it signals acceptance by others. Yet, the extent to which self-esteem is sensitive to positive feedback may depend on individuals' sense of purpose. In two studies ($N = 342$), we tested purpose in life as a source of self-directed and prosocial motivation and predicted that having greater purpose would lessen sensitivity to social media feedback. Study 1 revealed that the number of likes individuals received on their Facebook profile pictures was positively associated with self-esteem. Study 2 replicated these findings experimentally by manipulating the number of likes individuals received on self-photographs posted to a mock Facebook site. In both studies, links between likes and self-esteem were diminished for those with greater purpose. Implications for purpose as a moderator of the self-esteem contingencies of positive social feedback are discussed.

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2. Recent Article

Using independent covariates in experimental designs: Quantifying the trade-off between power boost and Type I error inflation

Abstract

The practice of using covariates in experimental designs has become controversial. Traditionally touted by statisticians as a useful method to soak up noise in a dependent variable and boost power, the practice recently has been recast in a negative light because of Type I error inflation. But in order to make informed decisions about research practices like this one, researchers need to know more about the actual size of the benefits and costs of these practices. In a series of simulations, we compared the Type I error rates and power of two analytic practices that researchers might use when confronted with an unanticipated, independent covariate. In the baseline practice, a researcher only analyzes the effect of the manipulation on the dependent variable; in the flexible-covariate practice, she analyzes both the effect of the manipulation on the dependent variable and the effect adjusting for the unanticipated covariate. We show that the flexible-covariate (vs. baseline) practice inflates Type I error by a small amount, and that it boosts power substantially under certain circumstances. The flexible-covariate practice tends to be most beneficial when the covariate is strongly correlated with the dependent variable in the population, and when the experimental design would have been only moderately powered (40%–60%) without including the covariate in the analysis. We offer concrete recommendations for when and how to use independent covariates in experimental designs, and contextualize our findings within the movement toward quantifying trade-offs in choosing among research practices and optimizing the choice of practice within a given research context.

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3. Most Cited

Detecting outliers: Do not use standard deviation around the mean, use absolute deviation around the median

Abstract

A survey revealed that researchers still seem to encounter difficulties to cope with outliers. Detecting outliers by determining an interval spanning over the mean plus/minus three standard deviations remains a common practice. However, since both the mean and the standard deviation are particularly sensitive to outliers, this method is problematic. We highlight the disadvantages of this method and present the median absolute deviation, an

alternative and more robust measure of dispersion that is easy to implement. We also explain the procedures for calculating this indicator in SPSS and R software.

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4. Open Access Article

Emotion expression modulates perception of animacy from faces

Abstract

Discriminating real human faces from artificial can be achieved quickly and accurately by face-processing networks, but less is known about what stimulus qualities or interindividual differences in the perceiver might influence whether a face is perceived as being alive. In the present studies, morphed stimuli differing in levels of animacy were created. Participants made judgements about whether the face appeared animate at different levels along the morph continuum. The faces varied in terms of emotional expression (happy vs. neutral) and gender. Male faces were judged to be animate at a lower threshold (i.e., closer to the inanimate end of the continuum) than female faces. Animacy was also perceived more readily in faces with happy expressions than neutral. These effects were observed across two separate studies involving different participants and different sets of stimuli (animate faces morphed with dolls or those morphed with computer generated faces). Finally, the influence of interindividual variability in personality traits on animacy perception was examined. This revealed that an externally oriented cognitive style, a component of alexithymia, was associated with lower thresholds for perceiving animacy, for animate faces morphed with dolls. The findings are discussed in relation to inter- and intra-individual variability in animacy perception and social interaction.

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