

Egocentricity

We respond socially
also to non-humans

Reeves & Nass 1996

You are more polite when you evaluate a computer / a particular computer program "face to face" than on a different (but practically identical) computer

Results

What does this mean?

When the interaction is rich enough we use our "human mode" also for objects

Possible influences (Gulz)

- Degree of similarity to humans: behaviour, appearance
- Degree of interactivity
- Communicative modalities
- Behaviour pre-rendered or generated in real time depending on input

Good or bad?

"Pessimists... frown at the limited cognitive processing skills of people. I take a different view: Polite responses to computers represent the best impulse of people, the impulse to err on the side of kindness and humanity".

Egocentricity

A trait normally ascribed to children

Diverse desires

- Mr. Jones choosing between carrots and cookies.

Diverse beliefs

- Linda looking for her cat

Knowledge access

- The plastic dog hidden in the drawer



But remember

Ross, Greene & House, 1977

What did you learn?

Specifically, we shall report research demonstrating that laymen tend to perceive a "false consensus" – to see their own behavioral choices and judgments as relatively common and appropriate to existing circumstances while viewing alternative responses as uncommon, deviant, or inappropriate.

Ross, Greene & House, p. 280

Choices of self and others in hypothetical situations

	Percentage self agree	Percentage others agree
Supermarket story agree	66%	76%
not agree	34%	57%
Term paper story agree	80%	67%
not agree	20%	46%
Traffic ticket story agree	46%	72%
not agree	54%	52%
Space program story agree	40%	48%
not agree	60%	39%

Those who choose the response think it is more common than those who do not choose it

Personal descriptions applicable to self and to others

Questionnaire topic	Mean estimates of those who place themselves in the category	Mean estimates of those who do not place themselves in the category
Personal traits and views <i>E.g. shy etc.</i>	60%	50%
Personal preferences <i>E.g. like brown bread etc.</i>	46%	40%
Personal characteristics <i>E.g. male etc.</i>	55%	49%
Personal problems <i>E.g. think about dying etc.</i>	47%	34%
Personal activities <i>E.g. watch TV etc.</i>	36%	33%
Personal expectations <i>E.g. marriage by 30 etc.</i>	58%	52%
Political expectations <i>E.g. woman in Supreme court etc.</i>	60%	35%

The hypotheses

- Subjects who “choose” a particular hypothetical response will rate that response as more probable for “people in general” than will subjects who “choose” the alternative response.
- Subjects who “choose” a specified response will use less extreme and less confident trait ratings in characterizing a “typical” person making that response than will subjects who “choose” the alternative response.

The sandwich board sign

“The experimenter makes it clear that you are not compelled to participate if you are unwilling, but that he would obviously prefer that you go along with his request to wear the sign and make the necessary observations. Subjects who decide not to participate, he explains, will be missing the chance to learn something interesting and help the research project but they nevertheless will receive credit toward their course requirement.”

Real choice (study 4)

Sandwich board sign	Rater's own choice	%	Estimates of consensus:	
			Wear sign	Not wear sign
Eat at Joe's	Wear sign	70%	61%	39%
	Not wear sign	30%	43%	57%
Repent	Wear sign	50%	64%	36%
	Not wear sign	50%	23%	77%
Combined	Wear sign	60%	62%	38%
	Not wear sign	40%	33%	67%

Other explanations?

“It is possible, of course, that subjects’ actual decisions in Study 4 about whether or not to wear the sandwich board were influenced by their assumptions about the modal response of their peers. If so, it is worth emphasizing the costs of such conformity, for example, facing an uncomfortable stroll on campus wearing a sandwich board or, alternatively, confronting a disappointed experimenter, were far from inconsequential for the subject”

What are the consequences if egocentricity is indeed common?

Egocentricity

- Consequences for how you work as designers?
- Consequences for how we act for others?
- Consequences for what we expect to be common?
- Consequences for how successful our actions are?

Other examples of egocentricity

- Camerer et al 1989
- Attributors but not targets know the actual earnings of companies, and have to predict targets' estimates of these earnings. Mean attributions differ from both actual earnings and targets' mean estimates.
- Important because it is a typical economic choice

Other examples

- Van Boven & Loewenstein (2003)
- Attributors that have recently exercised are more likely to predict that lost hikers are more bothered by thirst than hunger than attributors asked before exercise.

Are there ways of counteracting egocentricity?

Is egocentricity necessarily a bad thing?

- How different are we?
- When it is important to be aware of our differences?
- How *should* we judge the beliefs, desires etc. of other people?

Is egocentricity necessarily a bad thing?

Why are we egocentric?

Keysar

- Attributors but not targets know that a paper bag contains a roll of tape. Attributors spontaneously orientate towards the bag when targets refer to 'the tape' despite a videotape being clearly visible to both.
- Why do we do this?

Why are we egocentric?

- One explanation: We use ourselves to understand others – by assuming that they are as we are we can solve many of the difficult issues connected to understanding others' minds
- Simulation theory

Why are we egocentric?

- We aren't necessarily egocentric per se. We just have to use whatever information we have available when we try to predict what others think or do.
- The "rational" explanation

Why are we egocentric?

"We argue that, absent other information, using one's own response to a situation as an observation of size could be an effective use of data and could lead to an increase in the accuracy of predicting others' behavior".

Dawes & Mulford (1996)

The logic

- Is it more likely that what you like or think is something that other people tend to like or think or is it less likely?

The logic

- If it is more likely (which it is!) then what you like or think is likely to be similar to what others like and think

"... if those asked to make estimates of proportion of endorsement are not in some systematic way different as a group from other group members, the resulting correlation (which is symmetric) between individual endorsements and proportions should lead statistically coherent subjects to make higher estimates for items they endorse than for those they don't".

(Dawes, 1989, p. 13)

Ross et al on differences

“Obviously, the man who would walk a tightrope between two skyscrapers, launch a revolution, or choose a life of clerical celibacy recognizes that his choices would be shared by few of his peers and are revealing of his personal dispositions. It is contended, however, that he would see his personal choices as less deviant and revealing than would those of us who do not....”

Egocentricity?

Does “proper” egocentricity exist?

- Engelmann and Strobel (2000) asked sixteen about their behaviour
- Do you occasionally free-ride on public transport?
- Guess what other participants had answered
- Inform them about 4 others’ answers
- They gave their own response too *little* weight
- Conflicting evidence exists, however.

Egocentricity?

- Do we get access to information apart from that pertaining to ourselves?
- From where?
- Is it good information?

We encounter those that are similar to ourselves

- We tend to like the people we meet often
- We tend to like those that are similar to us
- People that meet often even appear to *become* more similar over time.

Spotlight effect

- We tend, however, to think that we are more important / noticeable than we really are

Barry Manilow effect

Another aspect related to how we relate our beliefs to those of others and ourselves

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=CO0qwl5k9R4

Festinger and Carlsmith

Tell next participant about it

"So, if you would be willing to do this for us, we'd like to hire you to do it now and then be on call in the future, if something like this should ever happen again. We can pay you a **dollar (twenty dollars)** for doing this for us that is, for doing it now and then being on call. Do you think you could do that for us?"

The girl, an undergraduate hired for this role, said little until the S made some positive remarks about the experiment and then said that she was surprised because a friend of hers had taken the experiment the week before and had told her that it was boring and that she ought to try to get out of it. Most Ss responded by saying something like "Oh, no, it's really very interesting. I'm sure you'll enjoy it."

Interview after this

Thus, if the overt behavior was brought about by, say, offers of reward or threats of punishment, the magnitude of dissonance is maximal if these promised rewards or threatened punishments were just barely sufficient to induce the person to say "not X." From this point on, as the promised rewards or threatened punishment become larger, the magnitude of dissonance becomes smaller.