#ubcpsyc325
PSYC 325 with Dr. Rawn
Psychology of Self in Social Media

Please have the article ready. Skim others' ideas on Piazza as a refresher.

Syllabus: http://blogs.ubc.ca/psychsocialmedia

Meetings: Tuesday & Thursday 11-12:20, BUCH A201

Target Reading

- Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Roberts, L. R., & Eckles, K. (2014). Social comparison, social media, self-esteem. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 3*, 206-222.

- "Primary Investigator" on this paper
  - Jason Rose, University of Toledo
  - https://utsocialpsychology.wordpress.com/
  - First author Erin Vogel is a 4th year PhD student

Agenda

- Introduction
  - Relevant concepts
  - Refresher on the paper
- Exploring our own upward and downward comparisons
  - Does this task influence our state self-esteem?
  - *Conduct a repeated measures study*
- Design an intervention to help people buffer themselves against upward comparisons
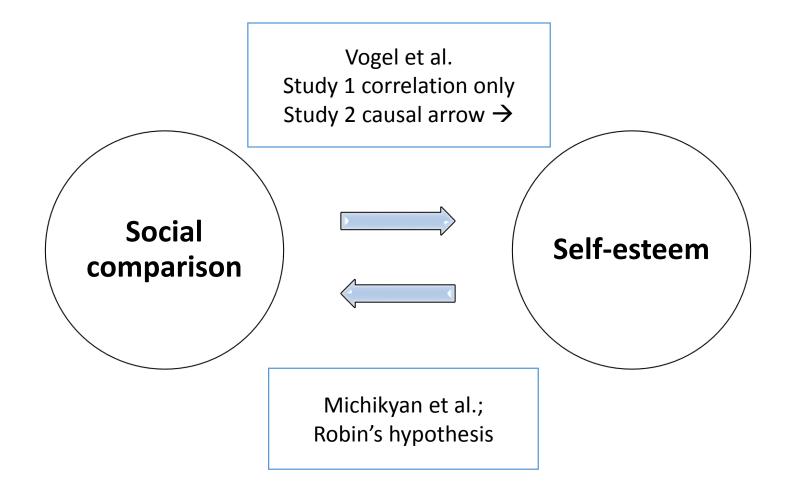
Introducing our key concepts for today…

Self-Esteem

- "someone's evaluation of self be it positive or negative; is stable and developed over time however can also be fluid, fluctuating everyday" – Daisy L.

- State and trait

Social Comparison

- ***"Social Comparison*** is the act of comparing oneself to the behaviours/attitudes/appearance (basically any aspect) of someone else. This is done to fulfill a variety of different functions such as; self-evaluation, affiliation needs, decision-making, inspiration, and well-being needs. *Social comparison has two directions: Upward and Downward."* –Jemma

Relationship between self-esteem and social comparison

Vogel et al.
Study 1 correlation only
Study 2 causal arrow →

Social comparison

Self-esteem

Michikyan et al.;
Robin's hypothesis

Exploring the Causal Direction

- "However I have a hunch that ***self esteem may affect social comparison more than the authors may have let on***. **I think that people with low self esteem probably make a LOT more social comparisons, or react more negatively to them, compared to people with a healthier self esteem.** While we may all be exposed to successful, popular people on Facebook, I think people with lower self esteem are more likely to personally compare themselves to these people and feel worse, whereas people with healthier self esteem probably don't necessarily think to make that kind of comparison, or if they do, it probably doesn't make them feel bad about themself. I also think that people who make a lot of downward social comparisons to feel good about themselves (e.g. wow, you've really done nothing since high school, ha ha. I'm so much better off than you are) are probably pretty insecure as well." – Robin

Other recent relevant findings…

- Michikyan et al.
  - LSE more likely to present self online in order to deceive, compare, impress others
- Kramer et al.
  - Emotion contagion: valence of what shows up in Facebook feed influences emotions
  - *Potentially similar overall process*
- Greitemeyer et al.
  - SE is predicted by number of birthday greetings and tone (pos/neg) of last three posts on wall, but not number of FB friends
  - *Predictors of SE*
- Gonzales & Hancock
  - Public self-presentations of introversion or extraversion led to small shifts in identity toward that trait
  - *Potential link: might see small shifts over time that spiral toward lower or higher trait self-esteem?*

For our next discussion, please sit in a group with 3 other people you don't know yet. Introduce yourself.

Exploring our own sources of social comparison

- In Vogel et al. Operational definitions of upward and downward social comparisons weren't excellent. How might we improve them?

- Does talking about upward and downward social comparisons influence our self-esteem?

- Repeated measures design
  - What does upward social comparison look like for us?
  - *Time 1 State Self-esteem measure*
  - What does downward social comparison look like for us?
  - *Time 2 State Self-esteem measure*

Exploring our own sources of social comparison

1. Discuss examples of potential sources of *upward* social comparisons for you.
   - For you, what do upward social comparisons look like on social media?
   - For you, what do upward social comparisons look like *offline*?
   - Consider both quantitative indices (e.g., # of likes) and qualitative indices (e.g., what people post)
   - If you're willing to share specific examples, please do.
   - Come up with a specific list of characteristics of upward social comparisons. What signals upward?
2. State Self-Esteem measure

Let's measure our state self-esteem

- Same measure as in Vogel et al.
- Fully anonymous, and option to select "prefer not to answer" for any or all items. This is for our classroom purposes only. I will not publish these data.

- **https://survey.ubc.ca/s/Psyc325StateSE/**

- *First page is for Time 1. Don't close it.*

Exploring our own sources of social comparison

3. Discuss examples of potential sources of **downward** social comparisons for you.
    - What do downward social comparisons look like on social media?
    - What do downward social comparisons look like *offline*?
    - If you're willing to share specific examples, please do.
    - Come up with a specific list of characteristics of downward social comparisons. What signals upward?

4. State Self-Esteem measure

downward social comparison triggers

- got a job @ McDonalds
- paragraph of #hashtags
- acceptance 4y after you did
  achievement
- Story about someone with a bad problem
- ex got fewer likes than me
- under 50 plays a FB game

- obsessive posts about something "weird"
- someone you don't like has something bad happen
- badly taken selfies

Let's measure our state self-esteem

- Same measure as in Vogel et al.
- Fully anonymous, and option to select "prefer not to answer" for any or all items. This is for our classroom purposes only. I will not publish these data.
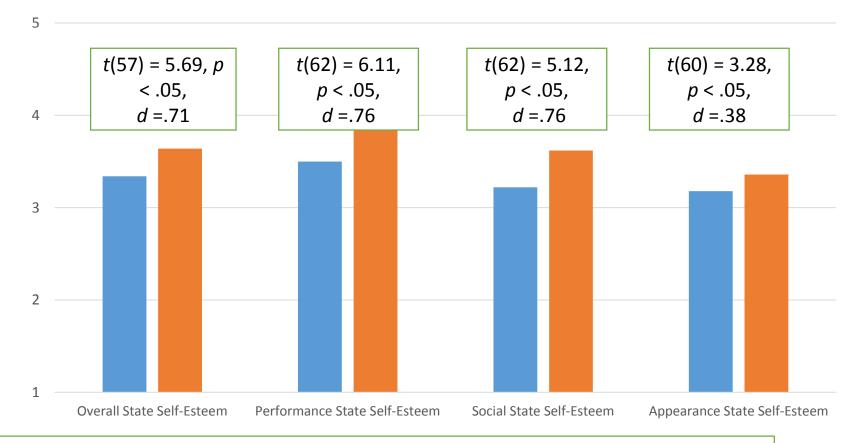
- **https://survey.ubc.ca/s/Psyc325StateSE/**

- *Second page is for Time 2. Then a few questions about your Facebook use (drawn from article). Then Submit. Thanks!*

While I'm analyzing data...

- Scoring: Items 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 are reverse-scored.

- Sum scores from all items and keep scale as a continuous measure of state self esteem.

- The subcomponents are scored as follows: Performance Self-esteem items: 1, 4, 5, 9, 14, 18, 19. Social Self-esteem items: 2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20. Appearance Self-esteem items: 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 16.

Results: State self-esteem was lower after spending 15 minutes discussing upward social comparison targets than after spending 15 minutes discussing downward social comparison targets.

$t(57) = 5.69, p < .05, d = .71$

$t(62) = 6.11, p < .05, d = .76$

$t(62) = 5.12, p < .05, d = .76$

$t(60) = 3.28, p < .05, d = .38$

Overall State Self-Esteem   Performance State Self-Esteem   Social State Self-Esteem   Appearance State Self-Esteem

Conclusion: Discussing examples of upward versus downward social comparisons influenced state self-esteem in the predicted direction. What are some alternative explanations?

"It appears, then, that people might be comparing their realistic offline selves to the idealized online selves of others, which may be detrimental for well-being and self-evaluations." (pg. 207)

The sentence that seemed to resonate the most, based on Piazza posts.

How might we design an intervention to help people buffer themselves against making upward social comparisons when viewing others' online content?

Choose a target group (e.g., tweens versus emerging adults versus people with long-term illnesses).

Be ready to briefly present your idea. Paper is available if you'd like to draw it out.