

The Self, Pt. 2

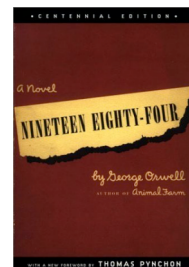
**Psy 240; Fall 2006
Purdue University
Dr. Kipling Williams**

The Totalitarian Ego

- Inspired by:
 - Greenwald, A. G. (1980). The totalitarian ego: Fabrication and revision of personal history. *American Psychologist*, 35, 603-618.
- George Orwell's 1984 describes a totalitarian society.
- The protagonist is Winston Smith, whose job it is to rewrite history to be consistent with his government's current policy.



Tony Greenwald



Three Cognitive Biases

- Totalitarian mechanisms for the organization of knowledge
 - Egocentricity
 - Beneffectance
 - Cognitive conservatism

Psy 240: Williams

3

Egocentricity

- Self perceived as more central to events than it is.
 - Memory revolves around self
 - Events are encoded and recorded such that self is remembered as a leading player in the past (sort of like Forrest Gump).
 - Self is perceived as the axis of cause and effect.

Psy 240: Williams

4

Beneffectance

- Self is selectively perceived as being responsible for desired, but not undesired, outcomes.
 - Taking responsibility for successes.
 - Dispositional attributions
 - Denial of responsibility of harming.
 - Situational attributions.
 - In group tasks, self is perceived as contributing more to the group's success, but less if the group fails.
 - Vicarious beneffectance:
 - Higher group identification when one's group is successful; lower when it is unsuccessful (BIRGing; Cialdini et al, 1976).



Psy 240: Williams

5

Cognitive Conservatism

- Resistance to cognitive change
 - Assimilation
 - Fitting new information into old schema's
 - Confirmation bias
 - Search for information that confirms preconceptions.

1 5 13 17 25 29???

Psy 240: Williams

6

Selective Attention

- Seeing and hearing what we expect to see and hear.
- Power of first impressions

Psy 240: Williams

7

Expectancy Confirmation

A
BIRD
IN THE
THE HAND

Psy 240: Williams

8

Expectancy Confirmation

Count the Fs:

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULTS
OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY
COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE
OF YEARS.

Psy 240: Williams

9

Selective Memory

- Greenberg, Williams, & O'Brien
 - Harsh to lenient order
 - Lenient to harsh order

Psy 240: Williams

10

Self-fulfilling Prophecy

- Evoking expected responses in others
 - Snyder, Tanke, Berscheid
 - Snyder & Swann

When We Do Change

- We re-write history
 - Leading questions
 - Crash vs. Hit
 - Did you see:
 - Any broken glass?
 - The broken glass?

When We Do Change, We Think We Didn't

- I-knew-it-all-along
 - Perception that we did not, in fact, change.
- I've always felt this way
 - After attitudes have been changed as the result of an experimental manipulation.

Are These Biases Functional?

- Inspires confidence
- Maintains self-esteem
- Encourages persistence and not giving up.
- Depressed individuals less likely to show evidence of cognitive biases.
- But, if extreme, they can be dysfunctional...