

Andy Hertel
Introduction to Social Psychology

**Psychology 3201:
Introduction to Social
Psychology**

Elliott Hall Room N119
Wednesday, September 12
2:30-4:25 PM

Today

- Social psychology as a science
- Theory

CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE FIELD AS A
SCIENTIFIC ENDEAVOR, RATHER THAN
A LESSON IN HOW TO DO SOCIAL
PSYCHOLOGY

Today

- Are these scientific statements? Are these theoretical statements?
 - God caused the earthquake
 - High ACT/SAT scores are associated with high college GPA's
 - Samuel conforms to his peers in order to increase his self-esteem

Basic Tenet of Social Psychology

- We are both products and producers of the social environment
 - Dynamic relation between the social environment and us as individuals is a function of features of the social environment and our individual mental construals

What is Social Psychology?

- "Social psychology involves the use of scientific methods to explore the ways in which a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others."
 - Gordon Allport (1954)
- Note: both a WHAT and a HOW definition

What is Social Psychology?

- "Social psychology involves the use of scientific methods to explore the ways in which a person's **thoughts, feelings, and behaviors** are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others."
 - Gordon Allport (1954)
- WHAT: study of affect, behavior, and cognition (the ABCs of social psychology)

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What is Social Psychology?

- “Social psychology involves the use of scientific methods to explore the ways in which a person’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the **actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.**”
 - Gordon Allport (1954)
- **WHAT:** focus on situational forces, especially other people

What is Social Psychology?

- “Social psychology involves the use of **scientific methods** to explore the ways in which a person’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.”
 - Gordon Allport (1954)
- **HOW:** the use of scientific methods

What is Social Psychology?

- “Social psychology involves the use of **scientific methods** to explore the ways in which a person’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.”
 - Gordon Allport (1954)
- **HOW:** the use of scientific methods
...and **WHAT**

Social Psychology as a Science

- Implications of the use of the scientific method
 - Philosophical perspective
 - Truth
 - Epistemology

Social Psychology as a Science

- Implications of the use of the scientific method
 - Philosophical perspective
 - Truth
 - Being in accordance with fact or reality
 - Epistemology
 - Theory of knowledge
 - The nature, origins, and limits of knowledge

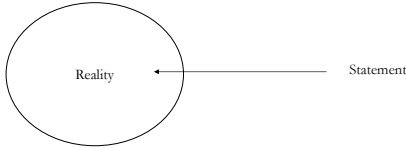
Social Psychology as a Science

- Truth
 - Correspondence vs. Coherence

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Social Psychology as a Science

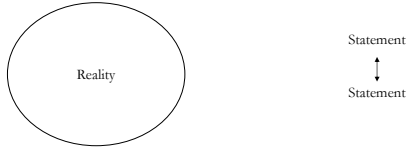
- Truth
 - Correspondence
 - Statement is true to the extent that it corresponds with reality (the external world)



A circle labeled "Reality" is on the left. To its right is the word "Statement". A horizontal arrow points from "Statement" to the circle.

Social Psychology as a Science

- Truth
 - Coherence
 - Statement is true to the extent that it is coherent (logically) with other statements



A circle labeled "Reality" is on the left. To its right, the word "Statement" is written above a vertical double-headed arrow, which is above another "Statement" label.

Social Psychology as a Science

- Epistemology
 - Empiricism vs. Rationalism

Social Psychology as a Science

- Epistemology
 - Empiricism
 - Knowledge is gained through sensory experiences, or observation of events that are founded in an external reality
 - "Truth is out there" – in that which is observable and measurable
 - Bottom-up processing

Social Psychology as a Science

- Epistemology
 - Empiricism
 - Knowledge is gained through sensory experiences, or observation of events that are founded in an external reality
 - "Truth is out there" – in that which is observable and measurable
 - Bottom-up processing
 - Rationalism
 - Knowledge is gained through reason and logical thinking
 - We can't trust our sensory experiences, or observations
 - Top-down processing

Social Psychology as a Science

- Determinism
 - The belief that there is a causal antecedent of every event
 - The past determines the present and future

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Social Psychology as a Science

- Cause/Effect
 - Constant conjunction
 - One always causes the other
 - Antecedent
 - Cause precedes effect
 - Contiguity
 - Cause and effect located near to one another in space
 - Necessary conjunction
 - There is only one cause

Social Psychology as a Science

- Reductionism
 - The belief that all phenomena have simpler and more encompassing underlying phenomena
 - Simpler = more basic/fewer constructs and assumptions
 - One unified unchanging thing from which all else derives
 - Ockham's razor

Social Psychology as a Science

- Determinism and Reductionism
 - The belief that there is a natural order to the world that we are attempting to identify

Social Psychology as a Science

- Scientific approach
 - Logical Positivism vs. Realism

Social Psychology as a Science

- Scientific approach
 - Logical Positivism
 - Scientists should develop a coherent sense of the world, but only trust in that which is observable
 - Correspondence and Coherence
 - Empiricism and Rationalism

Social Psychology as a Science

- Scientific approach
 - Logical Positivism
 - Scientists do not have direct access to reality and can only develop a coherent sense of the world, but should only trust in that which is observable
 - Correspondence and Coherence
 - Rationalism and Empiricism
 - Realism
 - Scientists have direct access to the reality of the world through observation
 - Correspondence
 - Empiricism

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Social Psychology as a Science

- In general, use of the scientific method implies that social psychologists adhere to a correspondence theory of truth and an empiricist approach to knowledge, and are rooted in determinist and reductionist beliefs
 - Not coherence, rationalism

Social Psychology as a Science

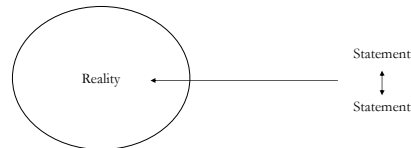
- “Social psychology involves the use of **scientific methods** to explore the ways in which a person’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.”
 - Gordon Allport (1954)
- HOW: the use of scientific methods
...and WHAT

Social Psychology as a Science

- Without the use of the scientific method, social psychology is not social psychology
- Current body of social psychological knowledge is restricted to findings based off of the scientific method

Social Psychology as a Science

- Caveats
 - Pragmatism
 - Statement is true to the extent that it both corresponds with reality and is logically coherent with other statements



Social Psychology as a Science

- Caveats
 - Empiricism/Rationalism
 - We test rational statements of empirical observations
 - If...then

Social Psychology as a Science

- Caveats
 - Logical Positivism
 - Scientists do not have direct access to reality and can only develop a coherent sense of the world, but should only trust in that which is observable
 - Correspondence and Coherence
 - Rationalism and Empiricism

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Social Psychology as a Science

- Caveats
 - Abelson
 - Statistics as principled arguments
 - McGuire
 - Perspectivism
 - All statements are true and not true at the same time

Social Psychology as a Science

- Benefit
 - Commonality across Social Psychologists
 - Standard for progress

Theory

- Philosophical perspectives on truth and epistemology, as well as determinist and reductionist beliefs, influence how we define and think about theory

Theory

- Role of theory
 - Theory helps to guide and organize knowledge
 - Helps us to determine what might be
 - Helps us to understand what has occurred

Theory

- Definition
 - Guesses about the nature of the world

Theory

- Definition
 - Guesses about the nature of the world
 - A statement of a relationship between two or more phenomena

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Theory

- Definition
 - Guesses about the nature of the world
 - A statement of a relationship between two or more phenomena
 - Statement about causal relationships among abstract constructs whose validity is not conclusively proven
 - Has application beyond a single event, situation, or thing
 - Incorporates elements of description, prediction, and explanation

Theory

- Elements
 - Description
 - The way things are or have been
 - “Adolescent girls smoke more than adolescent boys”
 - Denoted by terms such as correlated with, associated with, predicts, is related to

Theory

- Elements
 - Prediction
 - What will happen in the future
 - “Adolescent girls in Minnesota are more likely to smoke than adolescent boys in Minnesota”
 - Denoted by terms such as correlated with, associated with, predicts, is related to

Theory

- Elements
 - Explanation
 - The causes of phenomena
 - “Perceptions of invulnerability increase the use of cigarettes”
 - Denoted by terms such as causes, determines, produces, changes, affects

Theory

- Critical features of theory

Theory

- Critical features of theory
 - Parsimony
 - Efficient number of variables

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Theory

- Critical features of theory
 - Parsimony
 - Efficient number of variables
 - Precise
 - Identifies specific relationships

Theory

- Critical features of theory
 - Parsimony
 - Efficient number of variables
 - Precise
 - Identifies specific relationships
 - Productive
 - Generates testable hypotheses

Theory

- Critical features of theory
 - Parsimony
 - Efficient number of variables and statements, and simplest curve
 - Precise
 - Identifies specific relationships
 - Productive
 - Generates testable hypotheses
 - Falsifiable
 - Can be rejected

Theory

- Correspondence and Theory
 - “Statement about causal relationships among abstract constructs whose validity is not conclusively proven”
 - Truth not within relation between statements themselves
 - Belief that it must account for what happens in the external world

Theory

- Empiricism and Theory
 - “Statement about causal relationships among abstract constructs whose validity is not conclusively proven”
 - Observation necessary in order to prove validity

Theory

- Determinism and Theory
 - “Statement about causal relationships among abstract constructs whose validity is not conclusively proven”
 - Explanation is equated to specifying causal relationships

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Theory

- Reductionism and Theory
 - Parsimony
 - Efficient number of variables and statements, and simplest curve
 - Generalizability
 - Has application beyond a single event, situation, or thing

Theory

- Current social psychological theories are limited to those that adhere to beliefs in correspondence, empiricism, determinism, and reductionism

Theory

- Caveats
 - Pragmatism
 - Coherence

Theory

- Caveats
 - Pragmatism
 - Coherence
 - Empiricism as Rationalism

Theory

- Caveats
 - Pragmatism
 - Coherence
 - Empiricism as Rationalism
 - Beauty, depth, and elegance of theoretical formulation
 - Intuitive appeal

Theory

- Caveats
 - Falsifiability