

LECTURE ONE – WEEK ONE 25/07/16

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MORALITY

Personality & Social Psychology

- Method for thinking big questions about the self and social world from a scientific perspective
- Conflict, morality, persuasion, relationships, liking, loving, evolution, emotion, self-control
- Thinking about these issues with a grounding in empirical research
- Two broad approaches:
 - o **Personality psychology** – attempts to understand the self/social world with an emphasis on how stable individual differences influence behavior, thought, feeling.
 - o **Social psychology** – attempts to understand the self/social world with an emphasis on how the situation shapes behavior, thought, feeling.

Similarities and differences between domains:

- Similar questions, different approaches
 - o Cross-situational stability (personality) vs. situational contingency (social)
 - Person vs. situation (e.g conflict)
 - Personality – are certain people more prone to conflict than others
 - Social – are certain situational factors likely to lead to conflict?
- Both are grounded in empirical research
 - o Collect data and analyze with quantitative statistical techniques
- Broad disciplines with fuzzy boundaries
 - o Blend into other areas (biological, cognitive, developmental)
 - o Blend into each other

WEEK ONE

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MORALITY

(Assignment Content)

Psychological vs. philosophical

- **Philosophy: linguistic analysis**
 - o Conceptual analysis
 - o Normative, prescriptive (ought, value)
 - Definition of morality: code of conduct/set of rules pertaining to right/good vs wrong/bad, held by an individual or group
- **Psychology: empirical regularities or facts about moral judgment and behavior**
 - o Aim to uncover psychological mechanisms underlying moral judgment and behavior
 - o Naturalized approach
 - o Descriptive (is, fact)
 - Psychological definition of morality: different approach
 - Response-dependent: what counts as moral is that set of phenomena to which people have “moral” responses
 - But what counts as a moral response?

Moral/conventional distinction

- ❖ Turiel et al. (1987) and the moral/conventional task
 - Violations of rule – violations of a norm
 - One child hits another
 - One child pushes other off swing
 - Child wears dress to school
 - Child talks out of turn in class
 - Asked: wrong/serious, punishable, authority dependent, general in scope (temporally and geographically), how is the wrongness explained (rights, harm, justice)

The signature moral response

- ❖ Signature Moral Response (SMR)
 - Serious, wrong, bad. Punishable
 - **Authority independent**
 - General in scope, universal
 - **Appeals to harm**
- ❖ Signature Conventional Response (SCR)
 - Less serious, less wrong, less bad
 - Less punishable
 - **Authority dependent**
 - Local in scope
 - **No appeals to harm**
- ❖ The key distinguishing feature of stimulus: harm or welfare [also rights and justice]
 - If **involves harm – or justice/rights – then SMR**

CHALLENGES:

Haidt, Koller & Dias (1993)

- ❖ Non-harm violations evoke the signature moral response
- ❖ Some people judge these transgressions as:
 - Authority independent
 - General in scope

Kelley, Stich, Haley, Eng & Fessler (2007)

- ❖ Not all harms evoke the signature moral response
 - Authority dependence
 - Local in scope
 - Military training of elite American commandos – simulated abuse by energy forces. Bruises/injuries. Pentagon bans physical abuse in military training. Still threatens trainees.

Harm can be authority-dependent and local in scope

- ❖ Wrongness of some harms is dependent on what an authority says

