

Psychology of Action

Objective

This seminar deals with the explanation and prediction of behavioral acts. The focus is on behavior and on theories that seek to relate psychological constructs to actual behavior. Attitude theory will be examined as a key exemplar of such concerns. The larger concern, however, is with the philosophical, theoretical, and empirical issues involved in relating psychological constructs to behavior and on the need to treat behavior itself as a theoretical construct.

Outline

1 Theoretical approaches to explaining behavior and overview of attitude theory

Core Reading: Psychology of Attitudes, Eagly and Chaiken, chapters 1-4

2 Reasoned action theory

Key Readings: (1) Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior, Fishbein and Ajzen, pp 288-384 (2) The directive influence of attitudes on behavior, Ajzen, The Psychology of Action, 1996 (3) Whither fact, artifact, attitude: Reflections on the theory of reasoned action, Herr, Journal of Consumer Psychology, 1995.

3 Accessibility Theory

Core Readings: On the power and functionality of attitudes: The role of Accessibility, Fazio, Attitude Structure and Function, 1989 (2) Multiple Processes by which attitudes guide behavior, Fazio, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 1990, (3) Attitudes as object evaluation associations: Determinants, consequences, and correlates of attitude accessibility, Attitude Strength, 1995.

4 Representation theory and action identification theory

Core Readings: (1) Attitude representation theory, Lord and Lepper, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 1999, (2) Dynamics of action identification, Vallacher and Kaufman, The Psychology of Action, 1996.

5 Goal and motivation theory

Core Readings (1) Goals as knowledge structures, Kruglanski, The Psychology of Action, 1996. (2) A theory of goal systems, Kruglanski et al, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 2002 (3) Feelings and their motivational Implications, Schwarz and Bohner, The Psychology of Action, 1996 (4) Beyond Accuracy: Defense and impression motives, Chaiken Sorolla, and Chen, The Psychology of Action, 1996

6 Automaticiy and unconscious processing theory

Core Readings: (1) Implicit social cognition: Attitudes, self-esteem, and stereotypes, Greenwald and Banaji, Psychological Review, 1995 (2) Automaticiy in action, Bargh and Barndollar, The Psychology of Action, 1996., (3) Beyond behaviorism: On the automaticity of higher mental processes, Bargh and Ferguson, Psychological Review, 2000.

7 Behavior as a Construct

Core Reading: Behavioral Patterns, Calder and Malthouse, in progress.

8 Philosophical issues

Core Readings: (1) Traps and gaps in action explanation: Theoretical problems of a psychology of action, Greve, Psychological Review, 2001. (2) The Illusion of Conscious Will, Wegner, 2002 , (3) Freedom Evolves, Dennett, 2003, pp 63-93.

9 Qualitative approaches to explaining behavior

Assignments

1. Student presentations for each class marked with an asterisk.
2. An extended literature review of one of the theoretical approaches discussed.
3. A paper proposing a theoretical idea and an empirical test.