

Philosophy of Psychology

Psychology as a Science

What is a science?

Root of *science* is *scio*—to know

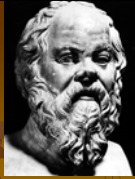
But there are many domains of knowledge that are not considered sciences (although they may make use of science):

- theology
- law
- engineering
- medicine

What makes science different from other domains of knowledge?

What is Science? 2

The Futility of Definition



Goal of a definition:

To specify the conditions needed and that suffice to make something an instance of the kind in question

Test of a definition:

Are there any counterexamples?

- Items that meet the definition by are not instances of the kind in question
- Items that are instances of the kind in question but that fail to meet the definition



Defining GAME

Two definitions from *The American Heritage Dictionary*

"A way of amusing oneself; diversion"

"A sport or other competitive activity governing by specific rules"

Are there ways of amusing oneself that don't count as games?

Are there games that lack competition or specific rules?

Defining *Human Being*

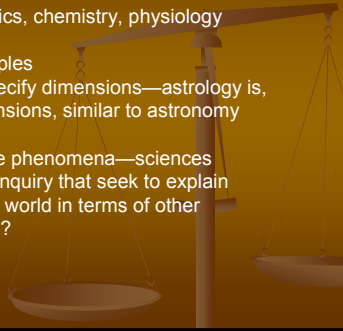


If not a definition, what?

Exemplars—Physics, chemistry, physiology

Similarity to examples
but need to specify dimensions—astrology is,
on some dimensions, similar to astronomy

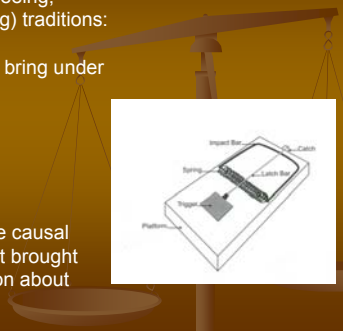
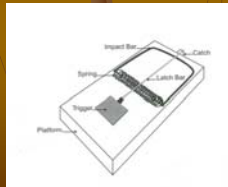
Theories about the phenomena—sciences
involve modes of inquiry that seek to explain
phenomena in the world in terms of other
phenomena and ??



What is Explanation?

Two (sometimes agreeing,
sometimes conflicting) traditions:

- To explain is to bring under
a law
 $f=ma$
 $f=k(m_1m_2/d^2)$
 $PV=nRT$
- To explain is to
characterize the causal
mechanism that brought
the phenomenon about

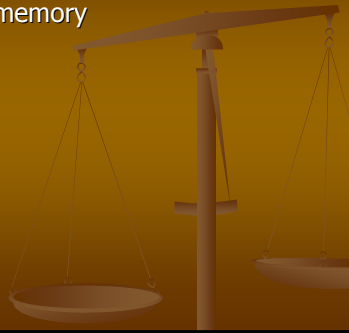


What is Psychology to Explain?



The mind—Not as obvious as you think

- Let's test your memory



Memory is easily misled

Original list:

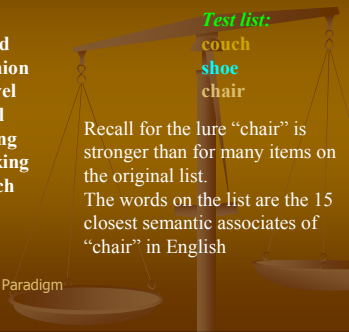
- table
- sit
- legs
- seat
- couch
- desk
- recliner
- sofa
- wood
- cushion
- swivel
- stool
- sitting
- rocking
- bench

Test list:

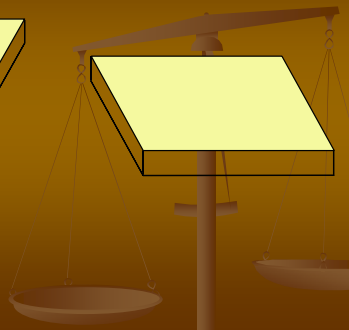
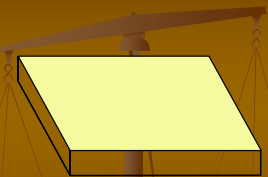
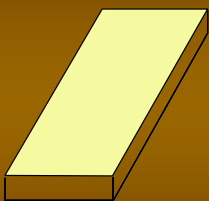
- couch
- shoe
- chair

Recall for the lure “chair” is stronger than for many items on the original list. The words on the list are the 15 closest semantic associates of “chair” in English

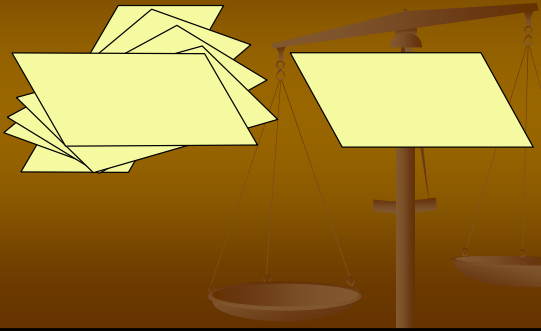
Dees, Roediger, McDermott Paradigm



How reliable is vision?



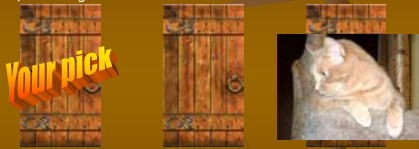
How reliable is vision?



How good is human reason?

Behind one of these doors I have hidden money, behind the other two a cat.

You get to pick which one to open. But before you do, I will open one of the other doors, revealing a cat.



Now I give you a choice: stay with your first pick, or change to the other.

Which is the better option?

<http://www.shodor.org/interactivate/activities/monty3/>

A Bad Doctor's Visit



- You go to see your doctor with a puzzling ailment.
- Your doctor tells you that it is characteristic of a disease that is affecting 1% of the population and if you have the disease, it means certain death.
- There is a simple test she can perform which is accurate 79% of the time (that is, 21% of the time it gives false positives). You agree to the test.
- Now your doctor looks really worried. The test came back positive.
- How worried should you be? How likely are you to die?
- Answer: your risk of death is 8%!

What modes of inquiry does psychology have available?



Research Traditions

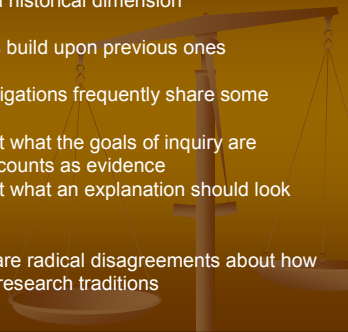
Scientific inquiry has a historical dimension

New investigations build upon previous ones

The successive investigations frequently share some things

- Assumptions about what the goals of inquiry are
- Views about what counts as evidence
- Assumptions about what an explanation should look like

But sometimes there are radical disagreements about how to proceed—different research traditions



Research Traditions in Psychology

17th-19th centuries: ideas, how they are formed, manipulated, etc.

- Rationalism—Descartes
- Empiricism/Associationism—Locke, Hume, Reid, Mill

Analyses of conscious mental states: Wundt, James

Introduction of a dynamic unconscious: Freud

Repudiation of the mental—Behaviorism: Watson, Hull, Skinner

A science of the mental—Cognitive psychology, Cognitive science, and Cognitive neuroscience

