Psy 101, Section 003H

Course webpage:  msu.edu/~ema/psy101
Instructor:  Dr. Erik Altmann

What is psychology?
• Study of behavior and mental processes
  – Behavior is directly observable
  – Mental processes are not directly observable
    • Need behavior to make inferences about them
    • Knowing mental processes, we can predict behavior
• Interpreting behavior accurately is difficult
  – It’s ambiguous: Many possible interpretations
  – It’s situational: Depends on context
  – It’s variable: Differs across people and time

What is this?

We see what we want to see

Trump’s Bad Week?
To Supporters, It Went Just Fine

by Sabrina Tavernise
It was a week of turmoil, but it seemed to prove an
immutable rule of this presidency: People see what
they want to see.

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Psychological research

• Involves a research question and a research design
  – Just like any other research
  – But the questions and designs are very diverse
    • Behavior and mental processes are very diverse
• To illustrate, a tour of the MSU Psych department...

MSU Psychology programs

• Behavioral Neuroscience
• Clinical*
• Cognition & Cognitive Neuroscience*
• Ecological-Community
• Organizational
• Social/Personality*
  * - Found in most psych departments

Behavioral Neuroscience

• Focuses on model systems
• Juli Wade
  – How do hormones and genes contribute to the development of behavioral and anatomical differences between the sexes...
    ... in zebra finches and lizards?

Clinical

• Focuses on psychopathology
• Brooke Ingersoll
  – What are developmental signs of autism? What are useful interventions?
• Kelly Klump
  – What are genetic, neurobiological, and environmental causes of eating disorders? How do these factors interact?

Cognition & Cognitive Neuroscience

• Focuses on mechanisms of thought
• Erik Altmann
  – How do task interruptions affect rates and types of error?
• Zach Hambrick
  – Is there a role for talent in skilled performance? (yes)
    Does cognitive training work?
    (there’s no good evidence)

Ecological-Community

• Focuses on needs of real-world communities
• Rebecca Campbell
  – How do legal, medical, and mental-health systems respond to the needs of rape survivors?
Organizational

• Focuses on *work performance in organizations*
• Steve Kozlowski
  — How do trainees interact with training technologies? How do teams adapt to long-duration missions?

Social/Personality

• Social: Focuses on the *individual in a social context*
• Personality: Focuses on *stable characteristics of the individual*
• Joe Cesario
  — How does a person’s race and class, and dangerousness of the neighborhood, influence an observer’s assessment of danger?

Other branches of psychology

• School, counseling, educational psychology
  — At MSU, housed in College of Education
• Human factors (engineering) psychology, human-computer interaction
• Neuropsychology
• Forensic psychology
• Behavioral economics, neuromarketing
• ...

Textbook

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