

Social Psychology Area Exam

Part One: March 18, 2015

Today's questions will focus on the underpinnings of social psychology, including theory and method. Tomorrow will focus on more concrete concepts and ideas.

1. The syllabus for the foundational Social Psychology graduate seminar in our department is organized in three sections – Symbolic Interaction, Group Processes, and Social Structure and Personality – with specific theories or concepts embedded in each section. Is this representative of sociological social psychology? What are the benefits of this approach? What are the drawbacks? Given your understanding of the literature now, would you do it differently? If yes, how? If no, why not?
2. Some might say that Sociological Social Psychology peaked long ago, with little new insight in the last couple decades. We disagree, of course! Choose three of the following areas where you feel there have been significant and important advances in the past 20 years:
 - Attribution
 - Emotion
 - Exchange Theory
 - Experimental Methods
 - Identity Theory
 - Legitimacy
 - Justice
 - Status Characteristics

Explain these new insights, where you think they emerged from, and why you feel they are significant. Looking ahead, what directions do they point future research toward?

3. Respond to one of the following:
 - a. How is sociological social psychology sociological? Is there any other "social psychology" than a "sociological social psychology"? Choose a theoretical perspective that you believe supports your position and explain how it does so.
 - b. A little over five years ago, an argument erupted among attendees of the Social Psychology section's business meeting at an ASA conference. A group of prominent members was upset over a tagline that Gary Alan Fine, the then editor, had added to *Social Psychology Quarterly* – The Journal of Microsociologies. They felt it didn't fit their research. Those on the other side, including Gary, argued that the tagline was inclusive and better captured the field today. Take a side in that debate. Are social psychology and microsociology one in the same? How so? If they aren't, what's the difference between them? If you're so inclined, is there a title that you feel would fit the journal (which was once titled "Sociometry") today?

Social Psychology Area Exam

Part Two: March 19, 2015

1. Choose three of the following concepts and provide a thorough, yet brief, discussion of each, including 1) the concept's origin and definition, 2) an example of research employing the concept, 3) and a discussion of its importance in current social psychological thought.
 - a. Cognitive Dissonance
 - b. Frame
 - c. Impression Management
 - d. Looking Glass Self
 - e. Power
 - f. Schema
 - g. Self-Concept
 - h. Self-Efficacy
 - i. Trust

2. Over the years, social psychologists have often focused on the importance of institutional or social structural factors as forces that account for variations in the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals. Choose one important relationship in which some feature of social structure (e.g., race, class, gender) **OR** a particular institutional setting (e.g., the family, workplace, school setting) has been demonstrated to operate as an independent variable shaping a specific type of attitude, belief, or behavior displayed by individuals. For the relationship you choose: 1) identify the most pertinent and prominent empirical studies that have been conducted on the topic; 2) describe the theoretical frameworks they use, hypotheses they test (if any), etc.; 3) summarize the principal results they report and general conclusions that were reached; 4) offer a critique of the theoretical and methodological aspects of the studies; and 5) assess the significance of the studies and evaluate the basic contributions they have made to the existing line of research.

3. The effects of labelling may have a harmful and potentially long-lasting impact on adolescents who are involved in delinquency. What can be done to lessen this impact on the adolescent's self-concept, identity, and behavior? Provide theoretical justification to support any approaches that you suggest and discuss in detail how they would work.

4. Choose one of the following:
 - a. We have a number of students in the program who are interested in the sociology of education. If we were to design an upper level course, for advanced undergrad or graduate students, that connected the two areas, how might such a course be organized? What theories or concepts would we cover? What readings would be required? What empirical findings would be of interest and import?
 - a. Social psychology has a lot to offer educators. Discuss tangible ways – with specific theories, concepts, and empirical findings – that social psychology might be used to inform pedagogy.