

# **CHALLENGING OR REINFORCING SOCIAL PREJUDICE?**

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# AGGRESSION IN ANIMALS

- i. stereotyped motor behavior (flank marking)
- ii. offensive reaction to ‘ intruders’ in cage
- iii. maternal (protective) aggression
- iv. sexual competition
- v. others

# **AGGRESSION IN HUMANS**

- **i. conviction of violent crime**
- **ii. fighting in prison**
- **iii. delinquency (including truancy and drug use)**
- **iv. violent rage (verbal or physical)**
- **v. anger, irritability, verbal aggression**
- **vi. hitting a doll**
- **vii. diagnosis of Antisocial Personality or Oppositional Defiant Disorder or Childhood Conduct Disorder**

- **viii. score on psychological testing instrument**
  - a. B-D Hostility Inventory**
  - b. Aggression subscale of Child Behavior Checklist**
  - c. Gray and Cloninger personality dimensions  
(impulsivity, anxiety, reward dependence)**
  - d. Others**

# Sexual Orientation--Kinsey

- **Exclusively heterosexual**
- **Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual**
- **Predominantly heterosexual, more than incidentally homosexual**
- **Equally heterosexual and homosexual**
- **Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual**
- **Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual**
- **Exclusively homosexual**

# **Sexual Orientation -- Whalen, Geary, and Johnson**

## **Orthogonal dimensions**

- **degree of arousability,**
- **frequency of sexual interaction,**
- **number of partners,**
- **sexual identity of partner**
- **aspects of partner other than sexual identity.**

# Gender

- **Variation in physical aggression**
- **Variation in risk aversion**
- **Variation in empathy and sociability**
- **Variation in childhood gender-stereotyped behaviors**
- **Variation in cognitive abilities**
  - **Verbal**
  - **Mathematical**
  - \*
  - \*
  - \*

# Construction of object of inquiry

- **Semantic process**
  - selective elimination,
  - re-aggregation.



**In behavioral research on aggression, sexual orientation, gender difference, others**

**3 aspects interact in the semantic process**

- the shared context of origin, our folk psychology,**
- the requirements for creating a studiable object of inquiry, and**
- ontological presuppositions, especially individualism.**

## **Shared context of origin**

- **Our interest in behavior lies primarily in the domain of our moral lives and discourse**
  - why did so and so do thus and such?
  - what makes so and so act like that?
- **Folk psychological system of classification and explanation of action that coordinates with our practices of moral judgment.**

# Creation of studiable object

**A) Isolation of phenomena that can be studied,  
i.e.**

- **reliably identified,**
- **re-identified as of a particular type,**
- **whose frequency can be measured.**

**B) behaviors decontextualized,**

- **event types**
- **represented as participating in natural regularities.**

**C) recontextualized,**

- **classified with other phenomena.**

# Shared ontological presupposition

## Methodological individualism:

### 1. The behavior of groups or populations

- aggregate of behaviors of individuals and
- thus best studied at the individual level.

### 2. Causation internal to the individual

# CONCLUDING POINTS

- 1. The actual object of research, the phenomenon investigated, is not identical to the common abstract object.**

**Research produces at best partial knowledge of a limited subset of the behaviors of interest.**

- 2. Conflation of the common abstract object with a studiable object obscures the particularity and possible limited generalizability of the empirical studies.**
- 3. The focus on the common abstract object marginalizes alternative (non-individualistic) approaches.**

## **4. Reinforces belief in inherent group differences**