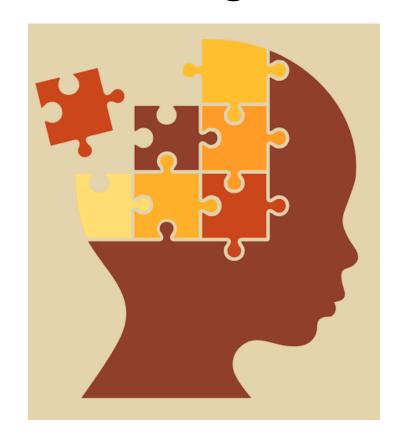
Thinking about Social Phenomena Constructing Puzzles



Lecture dt. Jan 16, 2020

Open the 'black box'

- The 'billiard ball' model: Event E occurs if X1, X2, etc. precedes
- Why? What is it about X1, X2 etc. that leads to E?

MECHANISM

Opening the 'black box'

Chain smokers more likely to get cancer

Correlation between **smoking** and **cancer**

Either because

- A. Smoking itself causes cancer
- B. People with genes predisposed to cancer also have genes predisposed to nicotine addiction, i.e. genes cause cancer (through addiction)

Assume that <u>unemployment</u> is correlated with <u>violence</u>

That is, unemployment leads to violence, or some other factor leads to violence, where unemployment plays a role

Assume that <u>unemployment</u> is correlated with <u>violence</u>

Positive association

 Opportunity cost low for youth to voluntarily join armed groups (e.g. Paul Collier's work on civil wars)

Assume that unemployment is correlated with violence

Positive association

- Opportunity cost=trade-off low for youth to voluntarily join armed groups (e.g. Paul Collier's work on civil wars)
- Economic threat (real or perceived): can reduce opportunity cost to join armed groups; punishment
- Material benefit: paid to join

Assume that <u>unemployment</u> is correlated with <u>violence</u>

Negative association

- Opportunity cost to join armed groups is high: risk of death
- Punishment possible by voting for a populist party; why participate in violence?

Monday's puzzle

A group of children are asked to estimate the size of coins from memory. Children from poorer backgrounds overestimated the size of the coins to a greater degree than the more affluent children.

Analyze.

Monday's puzzle

Bruner, J. S., & Goodman, C. C. (1947). Value and need as organizing factors in perception. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 42(1), 33–44

Confirmation bias

Looking for evidence that confirms what we believe.

"We are what we believe we are": Lewis Carroll

Readings for Thursday

Elster, J. Chapter 2 ('Mechanisms')

Varese, F., & Yaish, M. (2000). The Importance of Being Asked: The Rescue of Jews in Nazi Europe. *Rationality and Society*, 12(3), 307–334.