

## Tools for Studying Intimate Relationships

Dr. Jody Davis, Spring 2012  
Ch 2

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## Introduction

- Early Philosophers
  - *If you marry wisely, marry your equal.* (Ovid)
  - *By all means marry; if you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.* (Socrates)
  - *He that is not jealous is not in love.* (St. Augustine)
  - *Man is by nature a social animal.* (Aristotle)

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## Causal Conditions

- **Personal causal conditions:**  
Characteristics of individual that affect the relationship

- Physical characteristics
- Attitudes
- Education
- Personality
- Other dispositions

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- Ex: What causes John's satisfaction level in his relationship with Mary?

- John's tendency to be satisfied in any relationship

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- **Relational causal conditions:**  
Characteristics of relationship between individuals that affect the relationship


- Similarity of values, attitudes, interests
- Physical proximity
- Norms, rules, shared understandings

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- Ex: What causes John's satisfaction level in his relationship with Mary?


- Whether Mary calls if she stays out late with friends (b/c this is a relationship norm)

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- **Environmental causal conditions:**  
Characteristics of physical and social environment that affect the relationship
  - Comfort of environment (e.g., temperature, crowding)
  - Presence of alternative partners
  - Other factors that have nothing to do with the two people themselves

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- Ex: What causes John's satisfaction level in his relationship with Mary?
  - Mary's best friend just got divorced and wants her to spend more time with her than with John.


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### Group Activity


- John is not willing to move to New York when Mary receives a job offer there. Why not?
  - Personal cause (about John)
  - Relational cause (about John & Mary)
  - Environmental cause (about something other than John & Mary)

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- The Advice Peddlers (read in Bradbury & Karney, pp. 40-42)
- Three Kinds of Questions (read in Bradbury & Karney, pp. 44-46)


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### Prediction of Relationship Phenomena

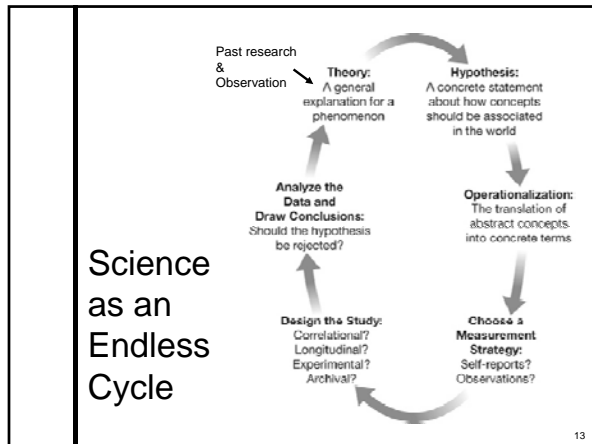
- Predictions tailored to unique circumstances of individual
  - Almost impossible!
- Predictions about what causes relationship outcomes on average

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- "Anything seems commonplace, once explained."
  - - Dr. Watson to Sherlock Holmes
- Hindsight Bias

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## Some Themes of Science

- Collaborative
- Creative
- Focus on what's observable/testable
- Skeptical AND Open-minded
- Require evidence
- Not dependent on authority
- Simplicity first, then synthesis
- Never-ending!

Note: This information will not be on the test

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## Theory and Hypotheses

- Theory: Integrated set of principles that explains and predicts observations
- Generally testable
  - if not, then philosophical rather than empirical
- Very broad compared to hypothesis
- Can never be proven – why not?

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## Examples of Theories

- People's behavior is motivated by what would increase their genetic survival
- Similarity attracts

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## Hypothesis

- Specific hypothesis (testable prediction) is derived from broad theory. Ex:
  - two or more variables will be related, or
  - two or more groups will be different

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## Choosing a Measurement Strategy

- **Psychological Construct** – abstract idea we want to learn about (e.g., love)
- **Operational definitions** make abstract concepts measurable and observable
  - Think of operational definitions for . . .
    - Love
    - Satisfaction with dating relationship
    - Jealousy
    - Conflict in a relationship

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- **Construct validity** – whether the operational definition represents the psychological construct
- Self-report Measures (read in Bradbury & Karney, pp. 51-58)
- Observational Measures (read in Bradbury & Karney, pp. 60-64)
- Multiple-method Approach

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## Correlational Research

- Study naturally occurring associations among variables (e.g., ask Ps to report their satisfaction or how often they kiss their partners)
  - No random assignment
- **Positive correlation:** as one variable increases so does the other
- **Negative correlation:** as one variable increases the other one decreases

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- **Pros of Correlational Research**
  - Use when manipulation impossible or unethical
  - Useful for prediction
    - Strength and direction of relationship
- **Cons**
  - No information about whether causal relationship between two variables
    - Third variable problem

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## Third Variable Problem

Three possible causal explanations for any correlation

Correlation Does Not Imply Causation!

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Survey results: Positive correlation of amt of coffee and amt of sex

Many possibilities

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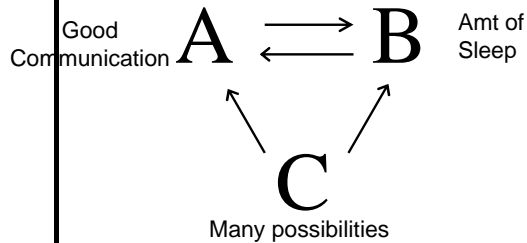
## Turn into an experimental study ..

Participants

Do individuals who drink more coffee really have more sex?

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Survey results: Positive correlation of good communication with partner and amount of sleep



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- **Longitudinal research:** Study the same people over time
  - Ex: Recruit 30 married couples and measure satisfaction at time of marriage and then 3 yrs later.

- **Cross-sectional research:** Study different people at one point in time
  - Ex: Recruit 30 married couples; 15 at time of marriage and 15 who've been married 3 yrs. Measure satisfaction.

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## Experimental Research

- **Dependent variable (DV)**
  - dependent on influence of experiment
  - variable being measured in an experiment
- **Independent variable (IV)**
  - variable that researcher manipulates in an experiment
  - cause of change in the dependent variable

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## Example

- Experimental Question: Do couples become less satisfied because they run out of new things to do with each other?
- DV: Satisfaction with relationship (measured by scale and by persistence in relationship)
- IV: Try new things once a week for one month vs. don't try new things

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## Example

- What would hypothesis be for our example?
- Couples who try new things once a week will score higher on the satisfaction scale and will be more likely to persist in the relationship compared to couples who don't try new things

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## Random Assignment

- Each P has equal chance of being in each level of IV
  - minimizes pre-existing differences between individuals assigned to different groups
  - before experimental manipulation, want groups to be equivalent

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## Example

- Should we let couples decide which group to be in?
- How can we randomly assign them?

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- **Levels:** the conditions or groups of your IV
- **Control group:** not exposed to experimental treatment
- **Within-participant:** each P experiences all levels of IV
- **Between-participants:** each P experiences only one level of IV

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## Example

- How many IVs do we have?
- What is/are the levels of the IV(s)?
- Is there a control group?
- Should the IV(s) be within or between?

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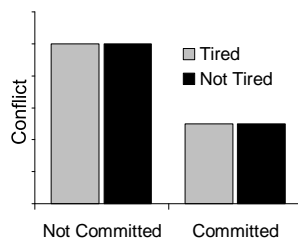
## Group Activity

- What DV are you interested in? What relationship behavior/outcome would you like to predict?
- What IV(s) is/are you interested in? What could cause the outcome?
- How would you design an experimental study? Can you randomly assign Ps? What is your hypothesis?

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## Main Effect

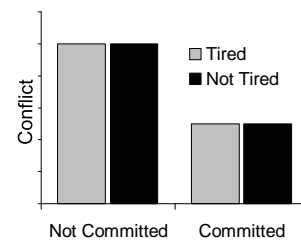
- When an independent variable (IV) has an effect on the dependent variable (DV)



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## Main Effect

- Main effect for commitment
- Committed Ps had less conflict than not committed Ps



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## Interaction

When the effect of an IV depends on the level of another IV

Commitment Level	Tired	Not Tired
Not Committed	High	Low
Committed	Medium	Medium

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## Interaction

Interaction of commitment with tired

- Tiredness didn't affect conflict when committed
- When not committed, more conflict when tired than when not tired

Commitment Level	Tired	Not Tired
Not Committed	High	Low
Committed	Medium	Medium

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## Another Interaction

Interaction of commitment with tired

- When not committed, more conflict when tired than when not tired
- When committed, more conflict when not tired than when tired

Commitment Level	Tired	Not Tired
Not Committed	High	Low
Committed	Low	High

Note: You will not be tested on this information

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## Group Exercise

- DV Sat with vacation
- 2 IVs
  - Location (beach vs. ski)
  - Temp (hot vs. cold)
- Possible main effect for each IV
- Possible interaction

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## Group Exercise

- DV: Satisfaction with bear
- IVs: Size (big vs. small) and Color (brown vs. black)
- Possible main effect for each IV
- Possible interaction

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- Archival Research (read in Bradbury & Karney, pp. 78-80)
- Statistical Analyses (read in Bradbury & Karney, pp. 86-87)

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