

Behavioral Decision Theory Is It Everywhere You Want to Be?

What are suitable domains of application for BDT?

In principle—seemingly all human judgment

In research practice—not so easy

Three research projects: Misalignment, augmentation, coordination

1. Causal Judgment-Misalignment with BDT

Initial research idea: Causal explanations are a function of the comparison or “background” case against which the event is considered.

Research approach: Within BDT Heuristics and Biases Style

-Algorithmic, Conscious/directed, “Bias”

Impact, readership, contribution: Social Psychology—not BDT, not marketing

Why the drift from BDT or Marketing to Social Psych?

-Journals and readership

Who is doing the work, where are they placing it, what are they reading, and what conferences are they attending?

Especially important a) if research goal to advance the world's knowledge (vs. score publication points) and/or b) since schools are now placing greater emphasis on citation counts over pubs

-Consumer Behavior and Consumer Behavior Research do not span the same domains

Something counts as “marketing” not because consumers do it but because people who identify themselves as marketing researchers study it.

-Relevance (even existence) of optimal model

Research impact around demonstration of human failing per se versus pure description (an older issue)

Lesson? Home area will be determined in large part by the research paradigm of others who work in the area.

Read what they write, *read what they read*, attend their conferences.

2. Evaluating Claims of Magic—Augmentation of (overly) naïve BDT

How do people assess attributions for specific events that point to magic or the supernatural?

How do consumers assess product and service satisfaction in these domains?

“Simple”BDT

-nothing special about the domain of magic or the supernatural; magical beliefs are examples of more familiar judgmental errors

-interesting topic to me but little progress, until...

“Informed” BDT (especially by anthropology)

-an effect for domain such that the “rules” of evaluation are context specific

-rules of evaluation are derived from people’s beliefs about how magic “works” and how it differs from how science “works”

tests that are perceived as appropriate for science are not necessarily appropriate for magic

Lesson: Judgment occurs in cultural context. Read.

Three examples of how to evaluate magic claims:

Combing data--covariation

Belief about how magic works: Magical forces may act on our plane of existence but only sometimes due to capricious entities, varied forces on other planes, failed efforts to harness

Implication: A-only rules okay for magic but not science

Case selection

Belief about how magic works: Magic works on the basis of themes and concepts. It is not literal

Implication: Selection of data for covariation tests are made on the basis of conceptual similarity, not strict surface similarity

Parsimony/disconfirming evidence

a) Belief about how magic works: Faith matters. Magical effects can only be brought about by the faithful.

Implication: Scientific studies with careful controls that show no effects are irrelevant for tests of magic

b) two systems of explanation that may compete

Implication: Science and magical explanations compete on the basis of quality within their models—bad/strained science does not outrank good magic

3. Choice and satisfaction *in public*—Coordination with BDT

Examples:

-variety seeking in private and in public

-enjoyment (for example of a movie) consumed alone or with another

Challenge here: Understanding and contributing to the literature when research finding is stated in terms of practical effect as opposed to psychological process

Problem especially pronounced in marketing

-field “likes” practical statements

-but forces articulation of findings in terms of variables that may operationalize different constructs of relevance in different processes

Most relevant when BDT research takes on variables that are also manipulated by social psychologists, information processing paradigm researchers, cognitive psychologists

May increase in importance as work on automaticity gains momentum in marketing

Example: Variety Seeking in Public

-Public = other people who can see what you do, judge you as more interesting if you consume more variety, and you care about that → more variety seeking

here “public” serves to activate another component of the utility function (social standing in addition to own consumption pleasure)

any other factor that enters the utility function, and is large relative to own consumption pleasure could have same effect—learning goal?

-Public = “mere presence” that may increase anxiety, drive, and habitual responses → less variety seeking

here “public” serves to activate agitation and arousal that decrease control and center response on the readily accessible

any other factor that decreases control and increases learned drive could have same effect—caffeine, unrelated worry?

Lesson: Read past practical positioning; write clearly to distinguish the effect from the process.