



13



Social Functionalism

Philip E. Tetlock
Katrina Fincher

Most social acts have to be understood in their setting, and lose meaning if isolated. No error in thinking about social facts is more serious than the failure to see their place and function.

—SOLOMON E. ASCH (1952/1987, p. 61)

Social functionalism is arguably less a theory than a point of view that sensitizes us to the interpersonal and institutional settings within which intrapsychic processes of long-standing social-psychological interest unfold. Once we get into the habit of looking at the world through a social-functional set of lenses, it is easy to spot social-functional disputes popping up across a variety of classic social-psychological research programs, from conformity studies that tried to disentangle normative from informational influence (do people go along with the group because they fear ruptured relationships and social censure or because they realize that there has often proven to be wisdom in the crowd?) to studies of person perception and causal attribution (when is the “fundamental attribution error” a sign that people are flawed intuitive scientists who overrely on simple heuristics and when is it a sign that people are tough intuitive prosecutors determined to minimize situational excuse wiggle room?) to studies of attitude change in forced compliance paradigms (when is it real attitude change driven by dis-



sonance reduction and when is it the self-presentational posturing of intuitive politicians?).

A listing of such debates could easily fill this chapter, each debate—in essence—being an explanatory turf war between social-functionalism and intrapsychic formulations that has stimulated empirical efforts to demarcate boundary conditions (Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985). Our goal here is certainly not to argue that social functionalism can explain everything. As critics of functionalism have long known, it is all too easy to fall into the trap of finding a function for virtually any pattern of behavior (Boring, 1953; Boring, Watson, & Campbell, 1963). Functionalist explanations reduce to hollow labeling exercises without support from intrapsychic theories that clarify exactly how functionalist goals and mind-sets become engaged or disengaged in particular situations—and how people (consciously or unconsciously) choose among coping strategies in pursuit of these goals.

We divide this how-to chapter on social-functionalism theorizing into three sections. The first section notes the variety of social-functionalism theories currently in circulation, with special emphasis on our favorite form of functionalism—the complementary triad of the intuitive politician, prosecutor, and theologian. The second section identifies key questions that any social-functionalism theory should address: Which interpersonal or societal goals are people trying to achieve—and why? When are these goals (and associated mind-sets) likely to be switched on or off? What types of behavioral, cognitive, and affect-regulation strategies do people deploy to achieve these goals? And how successful are they—both objectively and subjectively? The third section explores a serious shortcoming in much social-functionalism theorizing: the frequent failure to flesh out in detail the perceptual-cognitive-affective mechanisms that make it possible for people to switch from one functionalist mind-set to another. Using the example of intuitive-prosecutor models of responsibility attribution and punitiveness, we examine some of the perceptual and cognitive mechanisms that make it possible for observers of norm violations to shift seemingly seamlessly from empathizing with the pain of a fellow human being to ignoring or sometimes or even relishing it.

Forms of Social Functionalism

There is substantial evidence from cultural, developmental, social, and personality psychology that people have a deep evolutionarily rooted and neurologically hardwired drive to seek inclusion and to avoid exclusion from valued groups (Ainsworth, 1989; Barash, 1977; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hogan & Blickle, 2013; Leary, 1990). Social functionalism builds on the premise that human beings are indeed deeply social creatures. It takes as its starting point the idea that human beings have managed to adapt and continue to adapt to an extraordinary range of cultural-historical environments and poses the launching-pad question: How is this possible? How do people

need to be psychologically structured to survive and thrive in collectivities regulated by complex accountability relationships, norms, and values?

Scholars have proposed a variety of candidate answers, including: psychodynamic theories that posit needs for elaborate defense mechanisms to cope with tensions between basic biological urges and the demands of the social order (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), to just-world and system-justification-style theories that posit a need to believe that we live in a nonarbitrary moral-political world and to endow that world with legitimacy (Jost, Kay, & Thorisdottir, 2009; Lerner & Lerner, 1981) to existentialist theories that posit a need to seek symbolic immortality via identification with the more transcendental aspects of the social order, such as the law, nationalism, and religiosity (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003).

Tetlock (2002) proposed an integrative social-functionalist framework that includes three complementary functionalist metaphors: people as intuitive politicians, as intuitive prosecutors, and as intuitive theologians (see Table 13.1). Building on the work of eminent sociologists—Durkheim, Weber, Mead, Parsons—as well as recent advances in cross-cultural psychology (Fiske, 2004), the first order of theory-construction business was listing the psychological prerequisites of social order—in particular, the adroitness with which the vast majority of the population manages to shift from being targets of the accountability demands from others to being sources of accountability demands on others (see Aberle, Cohen, Davis, Levy, & Sutton, 1950).

Tetlock's triad of theories is designed to capture the most basic social-functional orientations that the vast majority of people, under the right activating conditions, adopt toward the social world. As objects of accountability pressures from others, people strive—like intuitive politicians—to establish, maintain, and enhance their social identities vis-à-vis significant

TABLE 13.1. The Triad of Functionalist Frameworks

	Motives	Adaptive challenge	Illustrative coping strategies
Intuitive politician	Social approval activated by evaluative audiences	Maintain or enhance social standing	Attitude shifting as a function of accountability pressures
Intuitive prosecutor	Retributive impulses activated by norm violations	Preserve social order	Punish norm violators in proportion to offenses
Intuitive theologian	Sacred value protection activated by threats to the sacrosanct	Social cohesion	Moral outrage at taboo trade-offs

constituencies in their lives. A key function of thought becomes internalized dialogue in which people try to anticipate objections to possible lines of action and to craft responses. As transmitters of accountability pressures onto others, people try—like intuitive prosecutors—to detect cheaters and free riders who seek the benefits but shirk the responsibilities of membership in the collective. A key function of thought now becomes anticipating and closing loopholes in accountability regimes that unscrupulous members of the collective might otherwise exploit. Finally, as beings capable of reflecting on the accountability regimes within which they live, love, and work, people are posited to be intuitive theologians who have an existential need to believe that the rules governing their social world are not just the arbitrary preferences of currently dominant interest groups but rather are anchored in sacred values that confer legitimacy on collective practices. A key function of thought becomes protecting sacred values from secular encroachments.

Core Requirements of Social-Functionalist Theories

Since McDougall (1908) and Murray (1938) published their lengthy and seemingly rambling lists of needs, social functionalism has been a suspect theoretical enterprise in the eyes of many psychologists (Boring et al., 1963). And social functionalists still need to take special pains to show that they are not peddling thinly veiled tautologies. We propose five features of social-functional frameworks that would-be theorists should aspire to build into their own formulations—and that discerning consumers in the marketplace of ideas should assess in deciding how much epistemic credibility to confer on such formulations:

1. Does the framework focus on fundamental adaptive challenges that arise whenever human beings are locked into complex patterns of interdependence? The quest for “fundamental” challenges could easily take us all the way back to the challenges facing our hominid ancestors on the savannah plains of Africa and the need for bonding as well as cheater-detection mechanisms (Cosmides, 1989). But social functionalism does not have to come in evolutionary-psychology form (see Ketelaar, Chapter 11, this volume). Sociocultural theorists are content to explore the role of the target class of behavior in helping people in modern societies survive and thrive in the here-and-now—and in promoting social solidarity and stability.

Although social functionalism can be agnostic on the degree to which our social needs and coping strategies are products of natural and sexual selection that are now wired into our DNA, parsimony dictates at minimum that we should prefer to focus on those challenges likely to arise in a wide range of cultural-historical settings (Pepitone, 1976)—even if the forms of behavior and triggers of behavior are highly culture-specific (see Eom & Kim, Chapter 16, this volume). For example, sacred acts and rituals exist in

all societies even though what is deemed sacred can vary dramatically—as can official manifestations of moral outrage and moral cleansing in response to violations of the sacrosanct.

However we ultimately choose to define “fundamental,” the adaptive challenge starting point needs to be conceptually rich enough to serve as a Lakatosian hard core (see Gawronski & Bodenhausen, Chapter 1, this volume) from which it is possible to launch competing middle-range theories that make testable predictions about the situational triggers and adaptive challenges that activate functionalist mind-sets, the exact goals people are trying to achieve, and the coping strategies that people use in pursuit of goals. The intuitive politician metaphor, for instance, can be a starting platform for tightly specified and falsifiable formulations that depict the intuitive politician variously as totally unscrupulous (prepared to do or say whatever it takes to please the audience or constituency of the moment) to totally conviction-driven (prepared to do whatever he or she thinks is ideologically correct, regardless of impact on the audience. These competing middle-range theories make different predictions (among other things) about whether the mere presence of an evaluative audience should be sufficient to change the attitudes people endorse.

The intuitive prosecutor and intuitive theologian metaphors can play a similar role in theory construction. Intuitive prosecutors can range from ruthless retributive personalities (prone to reject all excuses) to determined defenders of procedural justice (preferring to let the guilty to go free rather than violate due process). These competing theories make competing predictions (among other things) about how open people are likely to be to extenuating conditions surrounding a norm violation.

Figures 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3 illustrate in schematic form the logical progression from a crude undifferentiated hard-core metaphor, such as the politician, prosecutor, or theologian, to increasingly precise testable middle-range theories that take varying stands on how people implement the functional imperatives of the hard core. The figures also underscore how hard it is to falsify a functionalist hard core. Confronted by dissonant evidence, defenders of the research-programmatic hard core have a multilayered, protective belt of defenses sketched in Figure 13.4. Potential lines of defense include challenging the degree to which the operational definitions of key constructs adequately capture those constructs; challenging the tightness of the logical links between the middle-range theories and the hypotheses “derived” from them; and, after repeated efforts to rescue a particular middle-range theory have failed, deciding to abandon that theory but simply shift to a different middle-range theory equally consistent with the hard-core premises of the research program.

Table 13.1 sketches the three core questions that, at minimum, any social-functionalist theory should address: core motives, adaptive challenges for activating those motives, and coping strategies for achieving desired end states. The answers to these questions provide the key conceptual ingredi-

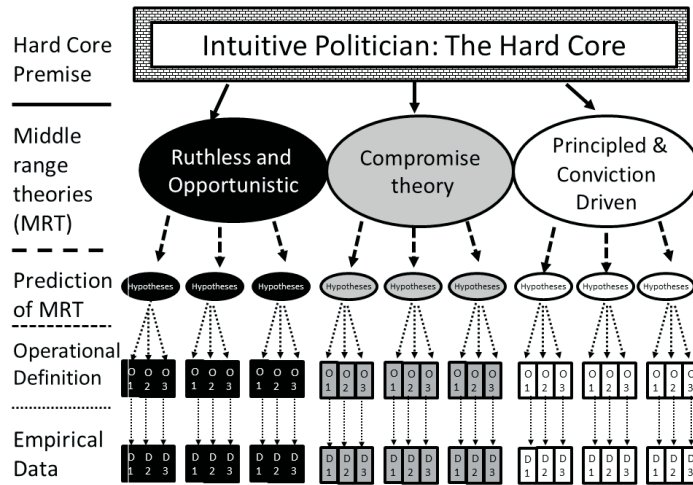


FIGURE 13.1. Functionalist logic of the intuitive politician. The figure illustrates the gap between hard-core assumptions and empirical data. The protective belt gives defenders of the research program many interpretive options before concluding that the hard core itself needs to be revised (e.g., criticizing the operational definitions, the logical links between predictions and the middle-range theory, and the middle-range theory itself).

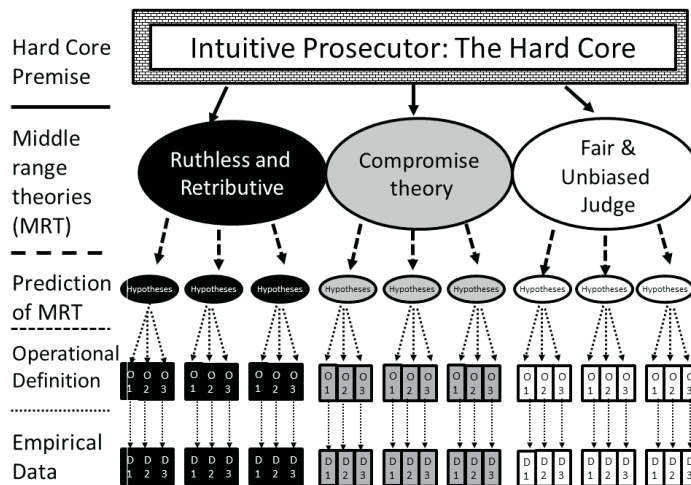


FIGURE 13.2. Functionalist logic of the intuitive prosecutor. The figure brackets the three layers of the protective belt of the intuitive prosecutor research program: the capacity to deflect dissonant data by criticizing operational definitions, the logical links between predictions and theories, and the theories themselves.

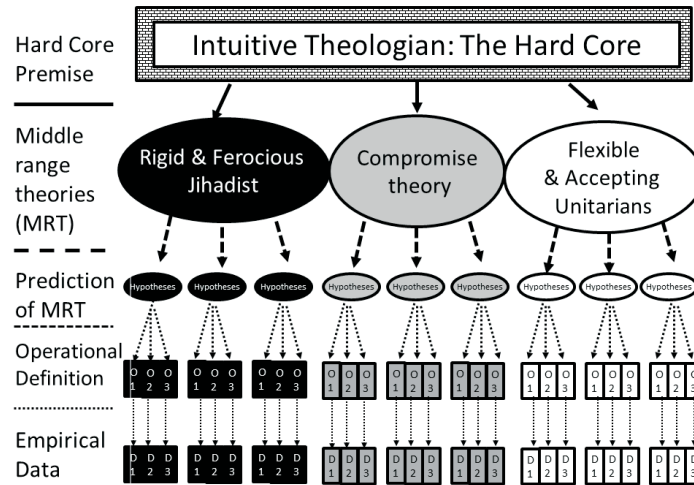


FIGURE 13.3. Functionalist logic of the intuitive theologian. The figure brackets the three layers of the protective belt of the intuitive theologian research program: the capacity to deflect dissonant data by criticizing operational definitions, the logical links between predictions and theories, and the theories themselves.

ents for cooking up middle-range theories of varying flavors but consistent with the hard-core theme of the research program.

Defenders of functionalist hard cores always have the option of positing individual difference boundary conditions on when one middle-range theory or another applies. For instance, within the intuitive politician program, it seems reasonable to acknowledge that the highly flexible variant of the intuitive politician better fits people who score high on certain types of personality measures (e.g., Snyder's, 1974, high self-monitors), whereas the conviction-constrained politician better fits low self-monitors who are more concerned with self-verification and affirmation than they are with accommodating social pressures of the moment. One could construct parallel arguments linking existing personality variables and typologies to the partly competing and partly complementary middle-range theories of the intuitive prosecutor or theologian (see Cervone, Caldwell, & Mayer, Chapter 8, this volume).

2. Do researchers working within the framework recognize the need to strike the right epistemic balance between commitment to developing middle-range theories consistent with the hard core and willingness to acknowledge when these efforts have run out of steam?

Given the variety of middle-range theories that can be derived from each social-functionalist hard core, it becomes virtually impossible to falsify the hard core itself. If one type of intuitive politician/prosecutor/theologian

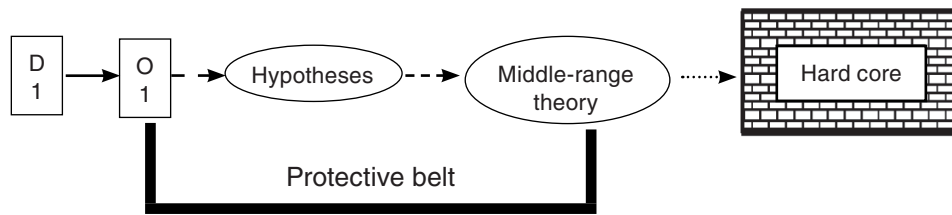


FIGURE 13.4. Illustration of the increasingly tenuous links between concepts and data within the Lakatosian framework. As one moves toward the most abstract concept, the hard core, the links fade.

(or any other functionalist theory) middle-range theory does not fit, determined defenders of the research program can always spin off another.

Social functionalists thus confront a delicate balancing act here: They need to be enthusiastic enough about the functionalist hard core to develop and test middle-range theories, but they also need to recognize when perseverance shades into dogmatism. For instance, what would it take to convince me that people are not intuitive politicians who respond to accountability manipulations to manage impressions, but rather the behavior in question is best captured by a nonsocial form of functionalism (people as intuitive scientists or statisticians) or by a type of theory that is purely process focused and seemingly does not rely on any functionalist assumptions (e.g., associationist models of priming).

3. Has the framework proven, in McGuire's (1983) phrase, to be "heuristically provocative"? The proof of the pudding of any research program is its capacity to generate novel and useful discoveries. Middle-range theories can be successful in one of two basic ways—and theories that can claim neither are prime candidates for abandonment. An empirically progressive middle-range social-functionalist theory should (1) stimulate discoveries of empirical boundary conditions on well-established effects that would not have been recognized if theorizing had been confined to mainstream intrapsychic frameworks. For instance, we might discover that an effect only holds up under conditions of anonymity or public scrutiny—or only when people think the researchers possess methods for detecting deception; (2) stimulate discoveries of normative boundary conditions that lead us to reconsider classifications of earlier discovered effects as adaptive or maladaptive. For instance, is the dilution effect (Nisbett, Zukier, & Lemley, 1981) a sign that people are flawed intuitive statisticians who too quickly lose confidence in the predictive power of diagnostic cues when the experimenter also provides nondiagnostic cues or a sign that people are attentive conversationalists who rely on usually reliable conversational norms to decode social interaction (Tetlock, Lerner, & Boettger, 1996).

4. Does the framework address the vexing problem of integrating conflicting psychosocial functions? An old saying—adopted by cybernetic learning theorists—is that we never have had enough until we have had more than enough. It is easy for people to overshoot in the pursuit of one or another functionalist objective: the cloyingly ingratiating intuitive politician, the relentless intuitive prosecutor, or the jihadist intuitive theologian. The more interesting observation, however, may not be that overshooting happens but that it does not happen all the time. People often seem to come up with cleverly subtle ways of reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable. Compare, for instance, the absolutist-sounding priorities of the intuitive theologian (pay any price and bear any burden to defend sacred values) and the pragmatic mind-set of the intuitive economist (in a world of finite resources, trade-offs are inevitable—and everything has a shadow, if not explicit price). Intuitive theologians don't want to admit that they attach dollar valuations to human life, so they feel a need to invent a host of ways of obfuscating the fact that they have done just that (e.g., Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000).

Remarkably little is yet known about when the pursuit of one self-regulatory objective has negative externalities that impede other objectives. In political theory, negative externalities offer the classic justification for empowering government to regulate the conduct of its citizens (to paraphrase John Stuart Mill, your freedom to swing your arm ends where my nose begins). Likewise, in psychological theory, negative intrapsychic externalities have offered the classic justification—since Freud—for some system of mental governance or executive control to adjudicate conflicts between compartmentalized functions. This fourth requirement has proven a serious blindspot in our initial social-functionalist theorizing—to which we turn in the final section of this chapter.

5. Does the framework tackle the thorny issue of how successful or unsuccessful people are in achieving their functional objectives? Defining success raises complex conceptual issues: success in whose eyes? A purely subjective definition would be: "I am successful whenever I truly believe myself to be successful." An objective definition of success would require a measurable impact in the external world. For instance, I am successful whenever audiences perceive me the way I want to be perceived or whenever I have been seen by others as having played a key role in upholding the normative order. Well-specified functionalist theories should take stands on when subjective and objective metrics of consummating functional goals are likely to converge and diverge, a test that virtually all currently fail.

Functionalist theories should also allow for the possibility that people are not always aware of their goals or of the full social impact of their actions. Merton's (1949/1968) analysis of the latent and manifest functions of social practices provides a useful reminder of how often mismatches can occur between the functions we think we are advancing and those we are advanc-

ing. Manifest functions serve ends that people expect and intend, whereas latent functions serve ends that are neither expected nor intended. The manifest function of a rain dance may be to produce rain, whereas the latent function may be to reinforce group identity by encouraging group members to engage in a common activity. A promising underdeveloped area for social-functionalism theorizing concerns the potential connections between the latent–manifest distinction and the implicit–explicit distinction in early-21st-century attitude theory. Explicit attitude measures should be fully up to the task of assessing manifest functions, but implicit measures may be essential for tapping into the latent associations between, say, rain dances and social solidarity (Fincher & Tetlock, 2013a). Functionalist theorists should make more efforts to distinguish conceptually and operationally between the latent and manifest functions of social conduct. When does tearing off the manifest mask disable the latent function as well? And when are people quick simply to don another mask?

Filling a Common Gap in Social-Functionalist Theorizing

In this section, we use social-functionalism work on intuitive-prosecutor middle-range theories to illustrate what we see as the most serious deficiency in current social-functionalism theorizing. Understanding punitiveness requires middle-range theorizing that bridges individual and societal levels of analysis. Putting aside whether authoritarian-personality theorists were right that punitiveness is just masked aggression (a dispute over manifest vs. latent functions), most people in everyday life insist there is—holding the physical acts of coercion constant—a real, not illusory, difference between being arrested and kidnapped—or between being murdered and executed. Unlike personal vendettas, punishment is subject to institutional constraints and rules. “Punishment” refers to penalties imposed in a ritualized fashion by *legitimate* third parties, and is so determined and enacted by human beings working within complex institutional structures.

That said, there is also a good deal of evidence that people as intuitive prosecutors want to punish wrongdoers for more than the officially approved (in Western societies) reasons of specific and general deterrence. Most of us seem to harbor a deep-rooted preference to inflict pain on wrongdoers commensurate with the harm they have done to individual victims as well as to society as a whole (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Darley, Carlsmith, & Robinson, 2000). A social-functionalism analysis of the intuitive prosecutor therefore needs to grapple with the interplay between intrapsychic retributivist drives and institutional constraints.

Tetlock et al.’s (2007) model of the intuitive prosecutor posits that people seek to defend social orders that they endow with legitimacy. The model builds on the evolutionary-psychological notion that there is a moralistic streak in human nature that predisposes people to value, as an end in itself,

the punishment of norm violators. The possibility of punishment increases cooperation and enables the emergence of stable cooperative equilibria in public goods games (Fowler, Johnson, & Smirnov, 2005)—crucial outcomes for small-group survival in states of nature. And despite the personal costs, people in an extraordinary range of societies often proactively seek to defend the social order against norm violators (Henrich et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2009).

The three key assumptions of the model (from which hypotheses are derived) are:

1. The fairness postulate: Most people see themselves as fair-minded, anchor this self-image in the adherence to shared norms of fair play, and are roused to retributive wrath when others display contempt for these norms (Lerner, 1980; Miller & Vidmar, 1981).
2. The bias postulate: As creatures of bounded rationality with imperfect cognitive self-control, people often fall prey to judgmental biases that cause them either to overweight or underweight relevant criteria (Gilovich, Griffin, & Kahneman, 2002).
3. The self-correction postulate: When people catch themselves straying from their own private standards of good judgment, they try to correct themselves (and self-correction is easiest in repeated-measures settings that facilitate monitoring the cues they are using) (Petty, Wegener, & White, 1998).

Blending these assumptions, the fair-but-biased-yet-correctible model (FBC; Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock et al., 2007) hypothesizes that observers shift into the prosecutorial mind-set to the degree they have been induced to believe, or were dispositionally predisposed to believe, that: (1) norm violations are widespread; (2) violations are intentional; (3) violators are flaunting their contempt for shared values; (4) violators are routinely escaping punishment; (5) the social order is legitimate; and (6) the norm violations offend shared moral values. Observers disengage from the mind-set when reassured that (1) norm violations have been punished by legitimate representatives of the collectivity; and (2) the goals of retribution, incapacitation, and general deterrence have been satisfied.

Grounding these ideas in specific social settings forces us to think much harder than we normally would about boundary conditions. For instance, the model resolves the tension between the procedural-justice and punitiveness postulates by drawing on intrapsychic theories of motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990) and positing that people will bend rules to reach desired conclusions (favoring one party over another) only when they feel they can do so by generating convincing justifications that they have not done so (linking to work on attributional ambiguity). Naked discrimination and nastiness is apparently unacceptable in most cultures wealthy enough to fund psychological research programs.

This notion helps to explain, among other things, the reasonably well-established phenomena of hyperpunitiveness and hypopunitiveness (Fincher & Tetlock, 2013a). Hyperpunitiveness arises, for example, when people declare that they have an in-principle aversion to corporal punishment of norm violators but they assign certain categories of norm violators to violent prisons as long as they can attribute their decisions to other factors (a phenomenon that it was possible to demonstrate by linking social-functional theory to an attributional ambiguity paradigm—Fincher & Tetlock, 2013a). An example of hypopunitiveness arises when people declare that they support basic principles of procedural justice but they selectively apply these principles to favor plaintiffs or defendants with whom they sympathize. We suggest that the tension between societal rules and individual case-specific information is often resolved by strategically creating attributional ambiguity that allows individuals to act in line with their punitiveness and forgiveness drives without directly violating impartiality (Fincher, Skitka, & Tetlock, 2013).

Social-functional theorizing on intuitive prosecutors is far from complete, however. We know little about the cognitive processes, the “transistors” (to invoke a physical science metaphor) that enable efficient switching between mind-sets. For example, work on the intuitive prosecutor has almost completely ignored the deep response conflict between empathy and retributivism. On the one hand, a large body of both behavioral and neurological evidence suggests that we are social creatures who find it painful to see fellow human beings in pain—and are often willing to make substantial sacrifices to help them. On the other hand, people in the prosecutorial mind-set become insensitive to the pain inflicted on norm violators—or perhaps even relish the pain. The question arises: How can people shift so readily into a harm–norm–violators mind-set, instead of being paralyzed by countervailing empathic responses or moral dissonance?

To perform their norm-enforcement duties, intuitive prosecutors need a switching mechanism that allows them to move seamlessly between empathic and punitive mind-sets. We offer three examples of such bridging operations (the list is far from exhaustive but illustrates the types of careful conceptual and empirical work that needs to be done).

1. It is one thing to document hypopunitiveness or hyperpunitiveness and quite another to clarify whether people genuinely believe that they are being faithful to their formally declared principles of justice (true dissonance reduction) or whether people are engaging in strategic impression management designed to conceal moral hypocrisy and thus protect their social identities in the eyes of various audiences. These competing interpretations can be tested using well-established techniques designed to convince research participants that the researchers have the wherewithal to detect their true attitudes (Fincher & Tetlock, 2013a). The true dissonance reducers should feel no need to back down from their prior stances.

2. One could argue that the distinction between self-deception and other-deception in punitiveness judgments does not matter much if the two are behaviorally equivalent. Linking social functionalism to another intrapsychic formulation, learning theory (Rescorla, 1988), raises the possibility, however, that the two are not behaviorally equivalent; it is more difficult for people to adjust their decisions in response to policy feedback when, as dissonance theory implies, they have so thoroughly rationalized their choices as to be unaware of the true drivers of those choices. Fincher and Tetlock (2013a) show that intuitive prosecutors who are also dissonance reducers are at great risk of slipping into punitiveness traps in which they fail to throttle back punitiveness when they are confronted with evidence of false-positive convictions of the innocent; instead they become all the more punitive when they are confronted with evidence of false-negative acquittals of the guilty.

3. As noted earlier, social-functional theories of the intuitive prosecutor ultimately have to answer the question: How can people shift from being empathic intuitive politicians, eager to bond with their fellow citizens and ready to feel their pain, into punitive intuitive prosecutors? One candidate intrapsychic mechanism is that, once people classify an individual as a threat to the social order (the Durkheimian collective conscience), they automatically stop processing the person as an object or they perceptually “dehumanize” the target individual—at least to some degree. Presumably, the degree of dehumanization would be a function of the intensity of the retributive feelings activated by the norm violation. Objectification and dehumanization are much more likely for serial child killers than for shoplifters—but it may even occur to some degree for the shoplifter (a twinge of satisfaction at seeing a “cheater” or “thief” being led away in handcuffs for at least a brief incarceration timeout).

The crucial bridging task is to specify exactly how varying degrees of objectification and dehumanization occur—and how to tap into these cognitive-affective transformations of our reactions to the target individual. Here, social-functional theorizing needs to become more psychologically nuanced than the earlier Tetlock formulations. Sadists aside, few people welcome the thought of an innocent citizen being subjected to the status-degradation ritual of being seized, shackled, and jailed (Goffman, 1959/2002). And few people welcome the thought of an actual shoplifter being seized by the owner of the store (with the implicit threat of lethal force if resisted) and incarcerated (that would smack of vigilante justice and feel more like a kidnapping than an arrest). It is only when a legitimate authority takes custody of a known norm violator that the functionalist preconditions for activating some degree of objectification and dehumanization of the target individual are satisfied.

The hardest work, however, lies ahead. The social-functional theorist now needs an intrapsychic model that specifies not only *when* objectification

and dehumanization unfold (once functional activating conditions are satisfied), but also *how* this cognitive-affective transformation can be conceptualized and operationalized. We suspected, correctly, that few observers would be willing to acknowledge in a self-report survey (even if they had introspective access) that they view someone being arrested or even convicted as closer to an animal or physical object than as a fellow human being with conscious feelings deserving of respect.

Here the hard bridge-building work arises. Social functionalists need to connect their frameworks with more intrapsychic frameworks for detecting far-from-fully-conscious cognitive-affective shifts of how we see each other. The key link proved to be to neuroscience and perceptual work on how people process information about the human face.

In a series of studies, Fincher and Tetlock (2013b) have found evidence that dehumanization or objectification alters a fundamental perceptual process: the well-replicated facial-inversion effect, an effect that will require a digression. Neurocognitive researchers have long suspected that there is something special about the human face: brain-damaged patients show specific face recognition impairment (prosopagnosia); newborns preferentially orient toward stimuli with face-like first-order relations; babies react to facial distress; and certain regions of the brain are dedicated to facial pattern recognition. It turns out that specialized facial processing is particularly vulnerable to orientation effects. Many studies have observed a face-inversion effect: 180-degree rotations of faces impair recognition much more than 180-degree rotations of comparably complex objects—an effect often seen as support for the view that human beings process each other's faces configurally (as wholes), not on a feature-by-feature basis. An inhibition of the face-inversion effect would thus suggest that individuals are perceptually no longer processing the face as human and are instead relying on other types of processing—the face is perceptually dehumanized.

Fincher and Tetlock (2013b) repeatedly find that participants are more likely to show reduced face-inversion effects for the faces of norm violators—and that those who show reduced face-inversion effects are more supportive of imprisoning, beating, and even killing norm violators and members of threatening outgroups. This perceptual dehumanization suggests that social-functional mechanisms of norm enforcement—which enable cooperative equilibria inside groups—are deeply internalized in the individual psyche.

Concluding Thoughts

Like many social functionalists, we sympathize with a recurring critique of experimental social psychology, one that has popped up over the last 60 years, from Solomon Asch (1952) to Paul Rozin (2001, 2006, 2009), with numerous variations in between (Gergen, 1973; Pepitone, 1976). In this view, social psychologists have skipped over the descriptive naturalistic phase

of research and moved too quickly into controlled laboratory paradigms. Systematic description is foundational in science. As Paul Rozin carefully documents, in biology both *The Origin of Species* (Darwin, 1859/2009) and *The Molecular Structure of Nucleic Acids* (Crick & Watson, 1954) are largely descriptive. The description of the adaptive radiation of animals and plants provided a basis for a theory of evolution. The descriptive studies of cross-species regularities in nucleotides were key clues to discovering the molecular structure of DNA.

In our view, psychology, like biology, should not be embarrassed to build on naturalistic observations. It is no accident that all advanced societies have specialized institutions that regulate and define ground rules for conducting political competition, exercising prosecutorial discretion and expressing theological commitments to transcendental values. Given how many times these institutional forms have been invented and reinvented—over thousands of years and across six continents—it strikes us as likely that these institutions are essential to life in complex collectivities. And it strikes us as a good idea to use these clues—offered in abundance by our colleagues in historical sociology, cultural anthropology, and comparative politics—in designing psychological theories of people as social beings. Social psychology is an interstitial field, wedged between the biological and social sciences, and social psychologists should feel as free to borrow concepts and findings from our macro colleagues as we do from our micro colleagues.

REFERENCES

- Aberle, D. F., Cohen, A. K., Davis, A. K., Levy, M. J., & Sutton, F. X. (1950). The functional prerequisites of a society. *Ethics*, *60*, 100–111.
- Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D. J., & Sanford, R. N. (1950). *The authoritarian personality*. Oxford, UK: Harpers.
- Ainsworth, M. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, *44*, 709–716.
- Asch, S. E. (1952). *Social psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barash, D. P. (1977). *Sociobiology and behavior*. New York: Elsevier.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, 497–529.
- Boring, E. G. (1953). A history of introspection. *Psychological Bulletin*, *50*, 169–189.
- Boring, E. G., Watson, R. I., & Campbell, D. T. (1963). *History, psychology, and science: Selected papers*. Oxford, UK: Wiley.
- Carlsmith, K. M., Darley, J. M., & Robinson, P. H. (2002). Why do we punish?: Deterrence and just deserts as motives for punishment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 284–299.
- Cosmides, L. (1989). The logic of social exchange: Has natural selection shaped how humans reason? Studies with the Wason selection task. *Cognition*, *31*, 187–276.
- Crick, F. H., & Watson, J. D. (1954). The complementary structure of deoxyribonucleic acid. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. Series A. Mathematical and Physical Sciences*, *223*, 80–96.
- Darley, J. M., Carlsmith, K. M., & Robinson, P. H. (2000). Incapacitation and just deserts as motives for punishment. *Law and Human Behavior*, *24*, 659–683.

- Fincher, K. M., Skitka, L. J., & Tetlock, P. E. (2013). The dark side of procedural justice: Its power to mask both hyper- or hypo-punitiveness. *Manuscript in preparation*.
- Fincher, K. M., & Tetlock, P. E. (2013a). Brutality under cover of ambiguity: Covert retributivism and punitiveness traps. *Manuscript in preparation*.
- Fincher, K. M., & Tetlock, P. E. (2013b). Perceptual dehumanization of faces is activated by norm violations—and facilitates norm enforcement. *Manuscript in preparation*.
- Fiske, A. P. (2004). Four modes of constituting relationships: Consubstantial assimilation; space, magnitude, time and force; concrete procedures; abstract symbolism. In N. Haslam, (Ed.), *Relational models theory: A contemporary overview* (pp. 61–146). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Fowler, J. H., Johnson, T., & Smirnov, O. (2005). Egalitarian motive and altruistic punishment. *Nature*, 433.
- Gergen, K. J. (1973). Social psychology as history. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 26, 309.
- Gilovich, T., Griffin, D., & Kahneman, D. (Eds.) (2002). *Heuristics and biases: The psychology of intuitive judgment*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, E. (2002). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Garden City. (Original published 1959)
- Greenberg, J., & Jonas, E. (2003). Psychological motives and political orientation—the left, the right, and the rigid: Comment on Jost et al. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 376–382.
- Henrich, J., McElreath, R., Barr, A., Ensminger, J., Barrett, C., Bolyanatz, A., et al. (2006). Costly punishment across human societies. *Science*, 312, 1767–1770.
- Hogan, R., & Blicke, G. (2013). Socioanalytic theory. In N. D. Christiansen & R. P. Tett (Eds.), *Handbook of Personality at Work* (pp. 53–70). New York: Routledge.
- Jost, J. T., Kay, A. C., & Thorisdottir, H. (2009). *Social and psychological bases of ideology and system justification*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 480–498.
- Leary, M. R. (1990). Responses to social exclusion: Social anxiety, jealousy, loneliness, depression, and low self-esteem. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 9, 221–229.
- Lerner, M. J. (1980). *The belief in a just world: A fundamental delusion*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Lerner, M. J., & Lerner, S. C. (Eds.). (1981). *The justice motive in social behavior: Adapting to times of scarcity and change*. New York: Plenum Press.
- McDougall, W. (1908). *An introduction to social psychology*. London: Methuen.
- McGuire, W. J. (1983). A contextualist theory of knowledge: Its implications for innovation and reform in psychological research. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 16, 1–47.
- Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press. (Original work published 1949)
- Miller, D. T., & Vidmar, N. (1981). The social psychology of punishment reactions. *The Justice Motive in Social Behavior*, 145, 172.
- Murray, H. A. (1938). *Explorations in personality*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Nisbett, R. E., Zukier, H., & Lemley, R. E. (1981). The dilution effect: Nondiagnostic information weakens the implications of diagnostic information. *Cognitive Psychology*, 13, 248–277.
- Pepitone, A. (1976). Toward a normative and comparative biocultural social psychology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34, 641.
- Petty, R. E., Wegener, D. T., & White, P. H. (1998). Flexible correction processes in social judgment: Implications for persuasion. *Social Cognition*, 16, 93–113.
- Rescorla, R. A. (1988). Pavlovian conditioning: It's not what you think it is. *American Psychologist*, 43, 151–160.

- Rozin, P. (2001). Social psychology and science: Some lessons from Solomon Asch. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5, 2–14.
- Rozin, P. (2006). Domain denigration and process preference in academic psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1, 365–376.
- Rozin, P. (2009). What kind of empirical research should we publish, fund, and reward?: A different perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4, 435–439.
- Snyder, M. (1974). Self-monitoring of expressive behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 30, 526–537.
- Tetlock, P. E. (2002). Social functionalist frameworks for judgment and choice: Intuitive politicians, theologians, and prosecutors. *Psychological Review*, 109, 451–471.
- Tetlock, P. E., Kristel, O. V., Elson, S. B., Green, M. C., & Lerner, J. S. (2000). The psychology of the unthinkable: Taboo trade-offs, forbidden base rates, and heretical counterfactuals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 853–870.
- Tetlock, P. E., Lerner, J. S., & Boettger, R. (1996). The dilution effect: Judgmental bias, conversational convention, or a bit of both?. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26, 915–934.
- Tetlock, P. E., & Manstead, A. S. (1985). Impression management versus intrapsychic explanations in social psychology: A useful dichotomy? *Psychological Review*, 92, 59–77.
- Tetlock, P. E., Visser, P. S., Singh, R., Polifroni, M., Scott, A., Elson, S. B., et al. (2007). People as intuitive prosecutors: The impact of social-control goals on attributions of responsibility. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43, 195–209.
- Wu, J. J., Zhang, B. Y., Zhou, Z. X., He, Q. Q., Zheng, X. D., Cressman, R., et al. (2009). Costly punishment does not always increase cooperation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106, 17448–17451.