

An Aristotelian Framework for the Human Good

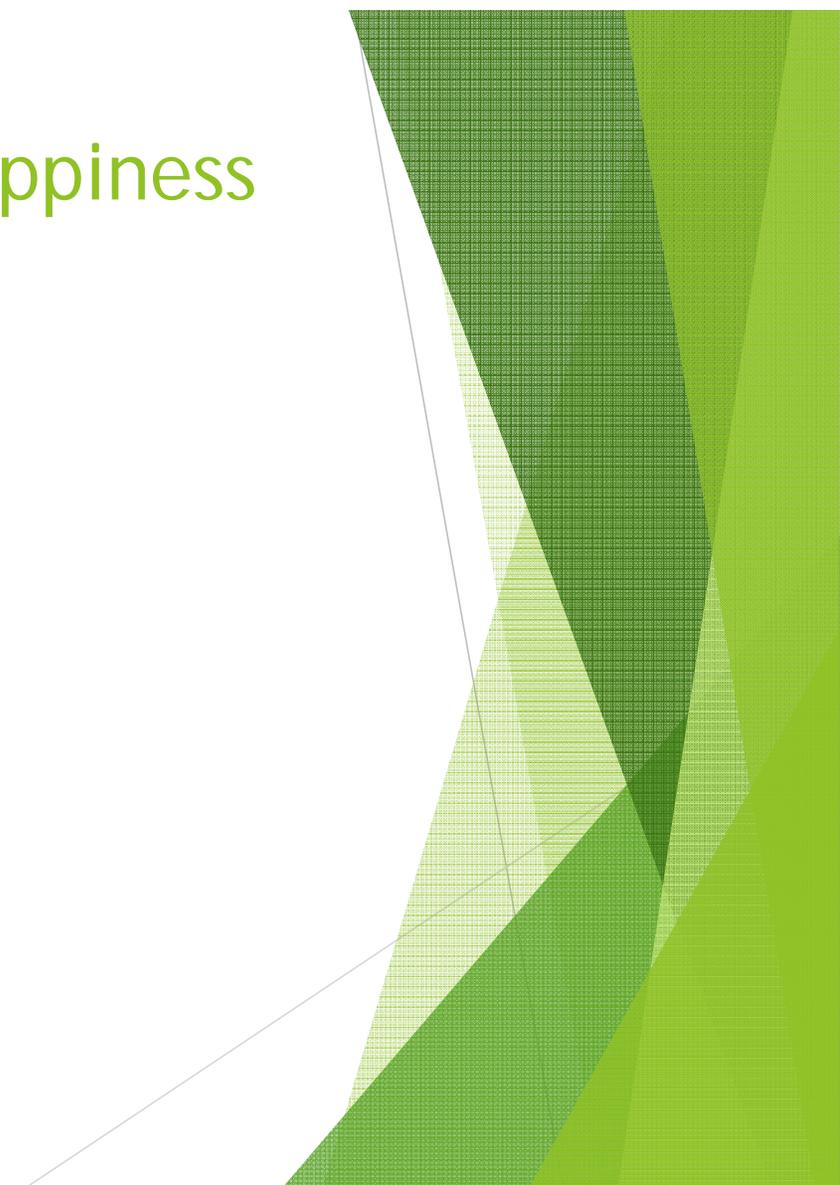
G. Tyler Lefevor
Counseling Psychology, Ph. D. Candidate
University of Miami

Where We're Headed

- ▶ My background
 - ▶ Psychology
 - ▶ Philosophy
- ▶ My goals for the presentation
- ▶ Three core Aristotelian concepts
 - ▶ Happiness as an activity
 - ▶ Instrumental vs. constitutive activities
 - ▶ Individual vs. shared goods
- ▶ Three ways in which these ideas are used to improve the human condition
 - ▶ Goal setting and motivation
 - ▶ Personality, character, and situational influences on helping behavior
 - ▶ Philosophical critiques of non-psychologically real accounts of behavior

Three Aristotelian Concepts: Happiness as an Activity

- ▶ The good life is the life lived in accordance with virtue
- ▶ *Eudaimonia* translated better as flourishing than happy
- ▶ Focus on activities over states



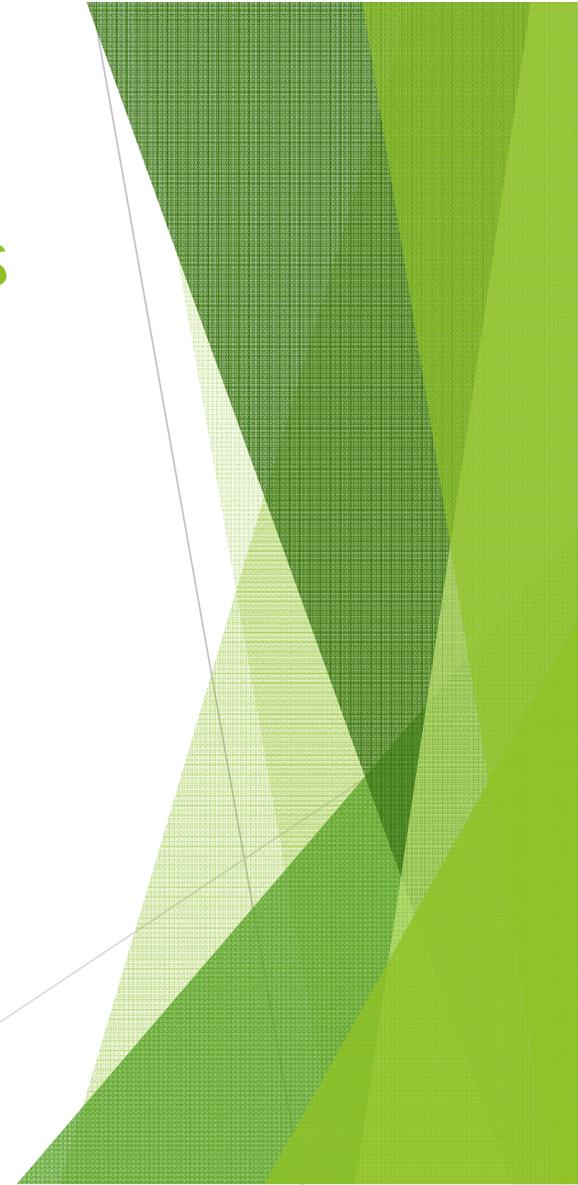
Improving the Human Condition: Social Psychology

- ▶ Character and virtues are central to Aristotle's notions of the "good life"
- ▶ Creating more psychologically real accounts of character
 - ▶ Meta-analysis of 286 studies of the impact of situational factors on helping behavior
 - ▶ Theoretically driven critique of situationist literature
 - ▶ Interactionist understanding of character and situational factors impact on helping



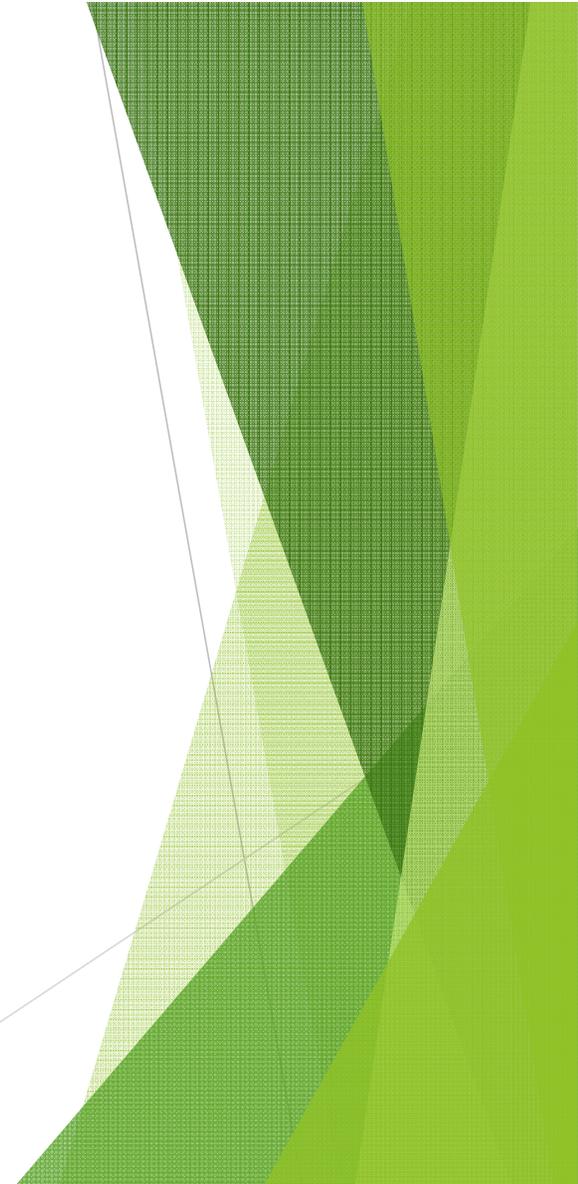
Three Aristotelian Concepts: Instrumental and Constitutive Activities

- ▶ Instrumental activity
 - ▶ Importance is *what is being achieved*
 - ▶ Examples: making ends meet, getting a degree, pleasurable hooking up
- ▶ Constitutive activity
 - ▶ How an activity is carried out is of equal importance as the outcome
 - ▶ Examples: work as a calling, getting an education, romance
- ▶ Both are important in *eudaimonia*



Improving the Human Condition: Goal Setting and Motivation

- ▶ Instrumental and constitutive goals
 - ▶ Qualitative study of goal setting among highly motivated emerging adults
 - ▶ Expressed both instrumental and constitutive goals
 - ▶ Constitutive goals tied to more “meaningful” activities



Three Aristotelian Concepts: Individual and Shared Goods

- ▶ Individual goods
 - ▶ Goods that can be pursued and possessed by an individual
 - ▶ Examples: wealth, pleasure, health
- ▶ Shared goods
 - ▶ Goods that can only be pursued and possessed as a group
 - ▶ Examples: friendship, justice, intimacy
- ▶ Both are important in *eudaimonia*

Improving the Human Condition: Philosophical Critiques

- ▶ Three examples
 - ▶ Individual and shared goods in psychotherapy
 - ▶ The emptiness of the construct of meaning used by positive psychologists
 - ▶ The problematic use of theological concepts in psychological explanation

