Chapter 13

Social Psychology

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PsychSim 5 Tutorials:

Dating and Mating
Social Decision Making

Not My Type

Worth Video Series:

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Introduction to Psychology – Why Do People Help? Explaining Behavior

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Bystander Apathy: Failing to Help Others in Distress

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Competition and Aggression: Testosterone at Work

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Motivation and Work – Love: The Mind-Body Connection

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Whom Do We Help?

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Liking and Imitation: The Sincerest Form of Flattery

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Clothes Make the Man


Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Attitudes and Prejudicial Behavior

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – The Wisdom of Groups

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PsychSim 5 Tutorials: Everybody’s Doing It!

Worth Video Series:

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Introduction to Psychology – Schachter’s Affiliation Experiment

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Milgram’s Obedience Studies

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – The Wisdom of Groups

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Obedience and Authority: A Laboratory Demonstration


*Scientific American Introductory Psychology Videos*: Social Influence

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PsychInvestigator:

   Correspondence Bias

   Stereotyping

Interactive Presentation Slides for Introductory Psychology: 17.1 Social Cognition

Worth Video Series:

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   *Scientific American Introductory Psychology Videos*: Prejudice

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HANDOUTS

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   HANDOUT 13.2 Prosocial Behavior in the News

   HANDOUT 13.3 Self-Ratings of Traits

Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Describe the processes of *social behavior, social influence, and social cognition*.

2. Discuss how being social is evolutionary advantageous, and compare our level of sociality with that of other species.
3. Define aggression, illustrate the frustration–aggression hypothesis with an example, and discuss some biological and cultural factors that contribute to levels of aggression.

4. Discuss some of the benefits and pitfalls of cooperation, focusing on issues of risk and trust, and describe ways in which cooperation has been scientifically studied.

5. Contrast prejudice and discrimination.

6. Discuss group processes in decision making and how factors such as the common knowledge effect, group polarization, and groupthink can lead to poorer decisions.

7. Explain why the often dreadful behavior of groups would rarely be shown by individual members acting alone, using the concepts of deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility.

8. Define altruism, and distinguish it from kin selection and reciprocal altruism.

9. Explain how women and men differ in their criteria for the selection of a mate, and describe what those differences are.

10. Identify the situational, physical, and psychological factors that contribute to attraction.

11. Distinguish passionate love and companionate love, and describe the development of each in a close relationship.

12. Explain how social exchange, cost-benefit ratios, and equity each play a role in maintaining a close relationship.

13. Compare the hedonic, approval, and accuracy motives and their relation to susceptibility to social influence.

14. Define normative influence, noting how the norm of reciprocity is involved in the door-in-the-face technique of social influence.

15. Compare conformity and obedience, and describe a classic experiment in each area.

16. Distinguish between an attitude and a belief, and describe the role that informational influence plays in shaping these thoughts.

17. Compare systematic persuasion and heuristic persuasion, and give an example of each.

18. Describe the desire for consistency most people feel, noting how the foot-in-the-door technique and cognitive dissonance each stem from this desire.

19. Describe four ways in which stereotypes, while useful, sometimes produce harmful consequences.
20. Explain the *attribution process*, distinguish between *situational attributions* and *dispositional attributions*, and describe the *covariation model of attribution*.

21. Define the *correspondence bias*, and discuss two reasons why it occurs.

22. Define the *actor–observer effect*, and show how it results from the overall processes of attribution.

I. Social Behavior: Interacting with People

(Chapter Objectives 1–12)

Human beings are social animals. Like all animals, human beings are designed to survive and reproduce, in response to fundamental evolutionary pressures. Survival requires scarce resources, and two mechanisms for obtaining those resources are *aggression* and *cooperation*. Impulsive aggression is a reaction to a negative internal state, and males are particularly prone to use aggression to ensure their status. The primary risk of cooperation is that others may take benefits without bearing costs. One way to reduce the risks associated with cooperation is to form *groups* whose members are biased in favor of each other. Groups of people often show *prejudice* and *discrimination* toward those who are not members, collectively make poor decisions, and sometimes take extreme actions that no individual member would take alone. *Deindividuation*, *social loafing*, and *diffusion of responsibility* are some of the causes of these extreme behaviors.

The ability to reproduce involves gaining access to a suitable mate. Both biology and culture make the costs of reproduction higher for women than for men, so women typically do the choosing of potential mates. Attraction is a feeling that draws one closer to a potential mate, and it has both situational and personal determinants. Of the personal determinants, physical appearance plays an unusually important role because it can provide indicators of a person’s genetic endowment and willingness and ability to provide for offspring. Psychological determinants are also important, and people seem to be most attracted to those who are similar to them on a number of dimensions. Human reproduction is usually accomplished within the context of a long-term romantic relationship that is initially characterized by feelings of intense attraction and later characterized by feelings of friendship.

**Lecture Suggestion 13.1**

Similarity and Attraction Revisited

Robert Zajonc and his colleagues have investigated similarity (of attitudes, background, goals, beliefs, interests, values) as a powerful predictor of interpersonal attraction, and have looked at it from a different perspective, with fascinating results.

Couples in Michigan and Wisconsin who had lived together for 25 years were asked to supply photos taken when they were first involved with one another and more recently, after this long period of time together. Many couples provided shots from their wedding and from their 25th anniversary. After the photographs were cropped so that only the
faces of the men and women were visible and so that other cues such as clothing styles or background scenes were not visible, the pictures were then presented to groups of judges whose task was to match up the couples. That is, presented with the photo of a young woman, for example, and an array of six photographs of young men, participants were asked to simply match “who went with whom,” or to identify the woman’s spouse from the array of men. (Participants were also asked to match up the couples using other combinations—male targets and female options, photos of the older partners, and so on.)

Zajonc found that, in spite of the similarity thesis that would predict couples to resemble one another early in their relationship as a reason for their interpersonal attraction, raters were no better than chance at matching couples based on their young photographs. Somewhat startling, however, was their accuracy rate in matching the older photographs—participants could tell who resembled whom after 25 years of marriage at levels better than chance. Because this couldn’t be due to artifactual cues (scenes in the background, quality of the images) or methods of presentation (since these elements were carefully controlled), the conclusion is inescapable: these couples grew to look like one another in facial resemblance after years of marriage.

In attempting to offer some suggestions as to why this might occur, Zajonc lists:

Diet. It is reasonable to suggest this as a contributing factor. Couples tend to adopt the same dietary habits, so it is possible that years of eating high- or low-fat diets could lead to similar fatty deposits in the face, in turn producing greater physical resemblance. However, a rank correlation between weight and age failed to support this notion.

Environmental factors. As an example of the factors that might cause this phenomenon, 25 years of living in Texas could produce the leathery skin cues that distinguish one couple from another hailing from the Minnesota tundra. However, all participants came from the same Midwestern background, limiting the impact of environmental as well as income, cohort, or socioeconomic factors.

Zajonc and his colleagues prefer the explanation of empathic responding and its effects on facial musculature to explain the facial resemblances. Since most couples share at least a modicum of empathy for one another, the joys and sorrows of one partner typically are matched in the expression of the other partner, such that when one spouse beams with news of a pleasant event the other spouse responds in kind, grinning from ear to ear. This matching of facial actions—expressions of happiness at another’s happiness, sadness at a partner’s sorrow, and all points in between—multiplied by 25 years, may indeed etch the kinds of muscular and skin tone changes that produce greater resemblance. Bolstering this explanation, Zajonc found that, of the couples in the study, those who rated themselves as most satisfied with their relationships (and hence, were likely to have experienced greater empathic responding) bore the greatest resemblance to each other.

Zajonc’s study has important implications for your students beyond its novel take on the similarity thesis. Ask them to think about the person they’re currently dating or
interested in. Have them concentrate for a minute: Do they *really* want to look like that person 25 years from now?

Source:


**Lecture Suggestion 13.2**

Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer!

Perhaps you’ve been in this situation. Everyone’s gathered around the Thanksgiving table for a lovely meal. It’s a crisp autumn day. Mom and Dad are there. The cousins came in from out of town. Grandpa, the patriarch of the family, has carved the bird. As the table talk turns to local politics, everyone expresses their opinions. Especially Grandpa, who weighs in on how the “freakin’ Orientals and coloreds are ruining this city for everyone!” Predictably, the evening ends early for everyone.

There’s a stereotype that people who stereotype are usually older rather than younger. That may be true, but as social psychologist Bill von Hippel points out, speaking one’s mind may be in larger part a product of controlling one’s mind. Von Hippel and his colleagues have assembled evidence indicating that the frontal lobes shrink with age. But the frontal lobes control executive functioning, part of which is the ability to censor and inhibit behavior. With diminished functioning comes diminished inhibitory control, and as a result, more outbursts of a socially unacceptable nature would be predicted.

In one test of this idea, von Hippel asked people of varying ages to inhibit unwanted speech. Participants read a passage of text that contained distracting words; they were instructed to read the paragraph but omit the distracters, a similar task to reading every third word in this sentence. The researchers found that differences in inhibitory control were related to differences in the frequency of racist speech. Older adults displayed prejudice toward Blacks (measured separately) to the extent that they showed greater difficulties with inhibiting unwanted vocalizations. In short, despite knowing it was wrong, these folks blurted out the racist ideas that others might have held in check.

These findings are intriguing and offer a biologically based explanation for why prejudicial attitudes may be expressed, especially among the elderly. They might also help account for why that same group tends to tell long, rambling stories or bring up embarrassing events that others know to avoid.

Diminished frontal lobe control may manifest itself in several ways. So the next time Grandpa asks if you’re still dating “that Hebrew fella” who broke up with you several years ago, be patient.

Sources:


**Lecture Suggestion 13.3**

Miss America Meets the Smurfs

Michael Cunningham and his colleagues offer some evolutionary observations as to what the sexes find appealing in each other. You can also see the discussion in the textbook on some of the physical features that people tend to find attractive in a potential mate.

Cunningham asked college men to rate women’s attractiveness, based on a collection of photographs of Miss Universe contestants and of women taken from college yearbooks. The experimenters also took physiognomic measurements of the women’s faces, assessing such dimensions as midface length, nostril width, pupil width, facial length, separation of eyes, width of smile, width of face at cheekbones, width of face at mouth, height of forehead, width of cheeks, thickness of upper lip, and so on. Those women whose features were usually associated with children (e.g., small chin, small nose, relatively large eyes widely spaced) were rated as highly attractive. Also rated attractive were prominent cheekbones and narrow cheeks, as well as high eyebrows and a wide smile. In addition, cross-cultural generality was taken into account, given that the Miss Universe contestants came from a range of countries and in fact had been selected for their attractiveness by a multinational panel.

Cunningham explains these preferences for features using an evolutionary approach:

- **Indicators of neoteny** (i.e., relatively childlike features) may signal that the bearer is friendly, fertile, and healthy as well as elicit responses for care giving and affection. (The Smurfs, Bambi, E.T., Snuggles the Fabric Softener Bear, and black velvet paintings of children with large, dewy eyes have all capitalized on this effect.)

- **Indicators of maturity** (such as high cheekbones), when combined with neonate features, may signal that the woman is at an optimal age for mating.

- **Indicators of expressiveness** (such as large eyes and wide smiles) may cue sociability and receptiveness.

Although all three sets of indicators were present in the judgments made by the college men, neonate features predominated.

A subsequent study examined the attractiveness choices of women judging men. Following the same strategy, Cunningham and his colleagues asked college women to
rate the attractiveness of photographs of men taken from college yearbooks, later compared their choices to physiognomic measurements, and found that the women followed a multiple-motive strategy: Although women found the neotenous feature of large eyes to be attractive, they were also drawn by maturity cues (such as prominent cheekbones and a large chin) and expressive features (such as a big smile and high-status clothing). These multiple motives suggest that women seek an optimal combination of features that together signal fitness for reproduction and capacity to provide for needs.

Sources:


**Lecture Suggestion 13.4**

A Quickie

In speed dating, people chat with one another for 5 minutes, a bell rings, and then they move on to another person. Repeat. At the end of the night if one’s person-preferences match those of another, he or she pursues the relationship. Now there’s “speed friending”: same set-up, same idea, same brief interactions to determine if a person wants to be friends with someone who, minutes ago, was a total stranger.

Lunch? Jogging? Casual sex? It’s up to you. But as a way of cutting through all the clutter of having to make actual friends, it seems like an idea whose time has come to our busy world.

Source:

http://www.8minutedating.com/

**Lecture Suggestion 13.5**

Bad Guys Wear Black

Tom Gilovich, at Cornell University, distinguished as a creative researcher in both social and cognitive psychology and as an avid sports fan, has combined his interests in a set of multimethod studies examining some causes of aggression.

Frank and Gilovich looked at the association between blackness and badness among teams in the National Football League (NFL) and National Hockey League (NHL). Almost universally, black is seen as a color of evil and death (from mourning rituals in the West to cowboy hats to heavy-metal music to being “blacklisted,” “blackmailed,” or
“blackballed,” cultures as diverse as the United States, Germany, Hong Kong, Denmark, India, and tribes of Central Africa agree that it is not a color to be trifled with). The researchers calculated the number of yards penalized among the NFL teams and the number of minutes spent in the penalty box among the NHL teams as a measure of aggressiveness, using archival records for the period between 1970 and 1986. These penalties were then compared between teams whose uniforms were primarily black (in the NFL: Pittsburgh Steelers, Oakland Raiders, New Orleans Saints, Cincinnati Bengals, and Chicago Bears, although the Bears actually wear dark blue uniforms; in the NHL: Pittsburgh Penguins, Vancouver Canucks, Philadelphia Flyers, Boston Bruins, and Chicago Blackhawks) and teams whose uniforms were not. Frank and Gilovich found that the black-clad teams reliably were more aggressive. As a further test, the researchers also identified two NHL teams (Pittsburgh and Vancouver) who had switched uniform colors from nonblack to black sometime during their history. Following the switch, penalty minutes increased for these teams. However, this was not a mere effect of new fabric; when the New Jersey Devils’ uniforms changed from blue-and-gold to red-and-green, there was no reliable change in the number of penalty minutes after the switch.

Frank and Gilovich suggest that both self-perception and social perception help explain these findings. When donning a black uniform, one may see oneself as tougher, meaner, and more aggressive, and so act in ways consistent with that self-perception. For the same underlying reasons, referees may also perceive players in dark uniforms as tougher, meaner, and more aggressive than they actually are, and so assess more penalties. In one lab experiment college students and referees watched staged football games between teams wearing black or white uniforms. Both the students and the referees awarded more penalties to a team when it wore black. In a second experiment, students wore either white or black uniforms before participating in an athletic competition. Given their choice between aggressive and nonaggressive games, students wearing black reliably chose aggressive activities.

Sources:


Classroom Exercise 13.1

Deindividuation

David Dodd put together this exercise illustrating the concept of deindividuation to demonstrate that even normal, well-adjusted college students are capable of deviant, antisocial behavior given the right situational conditions (e.g., feelings of anonymity and nonresponsibility).

- Ask your students to respond anonymously to the following question: *If you could be totally invisible for 24 hours and were completely assured that you would not be detected or held responsible for your actions, what would you do?*
- Students should then record their responses on a blank sheet of paper.
- Next, have them fold their papers before turning them in.
- Collect students’ answers and randomly select several to read aloud.

At this point, students will most likely get excited to hear the results. Indeed, students will find the results hilarious as common themes emerge, including criminal acts (“rob a bank” is often the single most popular response), sexual acts, and spying or eavesdropping. Although occasional charitable responses (e.g., resolving wars, ending world hunger) are revealed, antisocial acts typically outnumber prosocial ones. Dodd also likes to point out to his classes that the average number of antisocial responses given by his college students (36%) is no different from the number of antisocial responses given by inmates at a maximum security prison where he once taught.

Source:


Classroom Exercise 13.2

*The Magnificent Seven, Ocean’s Eleven,* and the Dirty Dozen

It doesn’t seem to take much to tick some people off. The slightest provocation sends them flying into an aggressive rage. In fact, sometimes we’re left wondering just what it was that got them so steamed up in the first place. The instigators of aggression can be obvious or subtle. Nonetheless, there are plenty of things that spur people to aggress.

William Davidson has compiled a list of the “dirty dozen” instigators of aggression and suggests using it as the basis for a classroom exercise. The list is reproduced in **Handout 13.1**. Davidson’s original notion involved asking students to identify movie scenes that featured one or more of these instigators and awarding extra credit points for voluntarily submitting the scenes for commentary by the students in the class. You could certainly structure an exercise in a similar fashion, but other ideas also come to mind. For example:
You might want to find brief scenes from popular films that illustrate each instigator and show them in class as a starting point for discussion.

Alternatively, you might distribute Handout 13.1 to your students and simply ask them to discuss in class films, books, or online material that show each concept.

Perhaps you’d like your students to rank each instigator in terms of its prevalence, either in society or in depictions of society. For example, in real life, frustrations are probably a prevalent source of aggression, whereas in movies aggression is often spurred by something more dramatic; a revenge killing, insults, and so on.

Finally, you might ask students to simply reflect on these instigators in their own lives and share examples of times when one or more instigators were present in an aggressive act either performed by or witnessed by the student.

Regardless of how you choose to use this dirty dozen, it can be a tidy way of introducing the topic of aggression.

Source:


Classroom Exercise 13.3

Us vs. Us

Tribalism is a potent social force. There’s “us,” and then there’s “not us.” From Iraqi tribes to Scottish clans to the haves and the have-nots to Jane Elliott’s blue-eyed and brown-eyed students, the separation of “us” and “them” is a powerful one.

Nothing illustrates this point like the separation of “us” into “still us but not quite”; one group artificially divided by some arbitrary means. Research on the minimal intergroup situation has amply demonstrated that the act of categorization itself fosters in-group favoritism, perceptions of out-group homogeneity, and assumed similarity of out-group members. To demonstrate this in class, Linda Isbell and James Tyler suggest an activity to create the minimal intergroup situation.

Briefly flash a number of random dots on a projection screen (about 250 in no particular order), and ask students to quickly estimate the number of dots presented. There’s no possibility of counting the dots, and in fact the estimates are usually toward the low end, but all of that is rather immaterial.

After their estimates have been written down, tell the students an actual number of dots (“100” might work), and then ask them to note whether they’re in the underestimator group (i.e., those who guessed less than the standard) or the overestimator group. This is an easy way to set up an in-group and an out-group based on a meaningless attribute (in this case, dot-estimating ability), but there are
other ways as well: divide students based on the length of their last name (e.g., more or less than 6 letters), their liking for modern art versus classical art, their eye color, or the number of zeroes in their student ID numbers, etc.

- After the two groups have been formed, ask all students to rate several traits according to how well they describe a typical underestimator or overestimator. Isbell and Tyler suggest the following mix of positive and negative attributes, judged on an 11-point scale (0 = not at all, 10 = extremely) and presented in counterbalanced order (i.e., half the students should rate overestimators first and underestimators second): dishonest, unfriendly, unintelligent, lazy, careless, kind, thoughtful, intelligent, friendly, dependable, honest, hard-working.

- You might choose a different set of attributes, or arrange these attributes as you see fit on a handout.

You should find evidence of the in-group favoritism effect, as members of each rate fellow members higher on the positive dimensions (e.g., overestimators like other overestimators, but they’re not too keen about underestimators).

Instructor’s Note: Isbell and Tyler reported that, curiously, there were no differences in in-group favoritism ratings as a function of watching The Eye of the Storm (or similar blue-eyed/brown-eyed videos). Students who completed this exercise before watching a video about the arbitrary division of people into groups showed the same favoritism effects as students who completed this exercise after watching the same video! You can use this as a point of discussion regarding the power of categorization and the intractability of stereotypes.

Sources:


http://www.janeelliott.com/

Classroom Exercise 13.4

A Checklist for Relationships: A Deck of Cards and a Bit of Tape

Many instructors are familiar with demonstrating the matching hypothesis in relationships by playing a spirited game of Indian Poker (also called Blind Man’s Bluff or forehead stud). The game is simple:

- Participants are dealt a playing card from a standard deck, which they affix to their foreheads, with the suit and value facing out.

- Players can see everyone else’s cards but their own.

- Their task is to find another player to create the highest number pair.
- Players with like numbers tend to pair, thus demonstrating the similarity hypothesis. Hal Kelley used to orchestrate this game at UCLA parties to illustrate the matching principle.

Brian Lewis and Regan Gurung suggest an extension of this exercise that incorporates social exchange theory to a greater extent.

- Solicit 16 volunteers who are given one card from a set of playing cards (numbers 2 through 7, hearts and clubs only).

- Tell students to affix the card to their foreheads, face out, and then approach other students with the goal of maximizing their total card value.

- They can ask other students only, “Will you be my partner?” and can answer only “yes” or “no” when asked themselves.

- The students circulate for 5 minutes if necessary, after which time they stand in their pairs.

- The instructor should then write on the board the pairs of values, and the student participants should rate on a 7-point scale their satisfaction with their relationships (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely).

- Next, a wild card is introduced. A volunteer with a jack affixed to her or his forehead circulates, asking the same questions as the previous volunteers.

- Students repair and the relationship satisfaction is again rated.

- This procedure is repeated three more times with students bearing a queen, king, and ace. In short, four contrasts are introduced in successive rounds of the standard Indian Poker game.

Lewis and Gurung report that when they do this exercise, students start by trying to match up with the highest value card holder, who in turn rejects all of the lower value card holders. Eventually there is a near-perfect match up; the 3 of clubs matches with the 3 of hearts, and so on. This demonstrates the matching hypothesis in the traditional sense. When the first contrast is introduced (the jack), students quickly sever their previous relationships and “court” the newcomer (in the hope of obtaining the highest pair). Lower value holders are again rejected and tend to return to their previous relationships, although they devalue their satisfaction. Higher value holders were generally able to latch on to the newcomers as each was introduced in turn.

If you conduct this exercise in your own classroom, use it as an opportunity to discuss social exchange theory, the matching hypothesis, relationship satisfaction, comparison levels, comparison levels for alternatives, and other aspects of selecting potential mates.
Sources:


**Classroom Exercise 13.5**

Everybody Get Together, Try to Love One Another Right Now

The list of presumably bad things in social psychology is a long one. Far too often, social psychology focuses on the negative aspects of social interaction: being duped in the persuasion process, behaving aggressively toward others, willingly obeying the destructive commands of an authority, and becoming befuddled by cognitive dissonance. But it’s also clear that people get together for mutually beneficial outcomes: The study of attraction and close relationships provides one example. All too often, acts of altruism and prosocial behavior go unnoticed. In this exercise, ask your students to focus on the positive by collecting examples of prosocial behavior in the news.

Here are some suggestions for how to structure this task:

Option A: You might ask students to watch the evening news for a few consecutive nights, then record the number of stories that feature prosocial acts. (Use *Handout 13.2* to help with this task.)

- What criteria did they use to include a news story in the category of prosocial behavior?
- How many such stories did they find, out of the total number of stories presented?
- Did the type of story differ when they watched the local news as compared to the national news? If so, how?
- What similarities did they find among the news events depicting prosocial behavior?

Option B: Alternatively, you might ask students to collect instances of helping from other media by scanning the newspapers for a few days and collecting articles that feature different examples of helping behavior.

- What are the common themes?
- For example, are there similarities in the descriptions of the people who offer help in emergencies? Or of the people in need of help? Or in the type of helping situations?
Discussion:

In all cases students should focus on the specific prosocial behaviors, making a larger statement about prosocial behavior in general. What do the examples they collected tell them about our capacity for productive social interaction? Do these examples help clarify, broaden, or obscure the concepts of prosocial behavior and altruism? How might social psychologists contribute to encouraging prosocial actions, based on what we know about why people sometimes help and sometimes hurt others?

Classroom Exercise 13.6
Social Psychology All Around

Social psychology covers an awful lot of ground: aggression, attraction, close relationships, person perception, persuasion, group behavior, conformity, obedience, prejudice, communication—and that’s just scratching the surface. Fortunately, that broad range of topics lends itself well to a broad range of applications, and you can enlist your students to apply them.

- Challenge your students to take one concept from social psychology and find five examples of it in the real world. A concept can be defined as broadly or narrowly as you’d like. For example, students might gather five examples of aggression (which should be easy to do) versus five examples of the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

- Similarly, you might allow students to find instances of persuasion, or insist that they find clear examples of the norm of reciprocity.

- You can decide if you want to allow students to mix and match (i.e., get some broad and some narrow applications).

- Similarly, you might want to limit the domains of application (e.g., television shows or advertising, real social interactions between living humans, literature, and so on).

- Students might gather their examples from newspaper clippings, Internet, movies, or any sources you’d like to consider.

Summary:

The goals are to (1) get students to think more deeply about social psychology by seeing it in action in their daily lives, (2) clarify social psychological concepts by recognizing when they apply and when they don’t, (3) generate examples that can be used in class discussion, and (4) form the basis for a short paper or extra-credit assignment.

Source:

Multimedia Suggestions

**Feature Film: American History X** *(1998, 119 min, rated R)* Edward Norton delivers a tour de force performance as a neo-Nazi who sees the error of his ways. After being released from prison he returns to his home, family, and friends a wiser person, but the attitudes of those around him persist. In particular, his younger brother (played by Edward Furlong) is falling increasingly into the white supremacist way of life. This is a great film for illustrating aggression, prejudice, group behavior, conformity, attitude change, and a host of other social psychological concepts.

**Feature Film: Crash** *(2005, 112 min, rated R)* An all-star cast is featured in this tale of two days in Los Angeles. The lives of many people interweave through a series of disparate events. All concerned learn dramatic lessons about selfhood, prejudice, the power of groups, attitudes, and the value of valuing others.

**Feature Film: Planet of the Apes** *(1968, 112 min, rated G)* Charlton Heston’s legacy lives on in this fine science fiction film. It’s the future; the apes are in charge and the humans aren’t happy. Showing how the tables have been turned can be instructive for illustrating prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, and other aspects of group behavior.

See the Preface for product information on the following items:

**Interactive Presentation Slides for Introductory Psychology** 17.3 Social Relations

**PsychSim 5 Tutorials**

- Dating and Mating
- Social Decision Making
- Not My Type

**Worth Video Series**

- Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Introduction to Psychology – Why Do People Help? Explaining Behavior
- Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Bystander Apathy: Failing to Help Others in Distress
- Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Competition and Aggression: Testosterone at Work
- Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Motivation and Work – Love: The Mind-Body Connection
- Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Whom Do We Help?
Social influence requires understanding basic motives, such as the motives to approach pleasure and avoid pain. People are influenced by rewards and punishments. Something that makes humans unique animals is that we can be influenced by observing others being influenced and think about the causes of rewards and punishments that they receive, which can cause influence attempts to backfire. In general, people want to be accepted by others, so they try not to violate social norms. Most people feel that they should benefit from those who have benefited from them, and several influence techniques put people in a position where they must either comply with a request or risk violating that norm.

When people are unsure of the norms in a situation and look to the behavior of others to guide their own behavior, they often end up obeying requests or conforming to the group’s behavior. People are also motivated to have accurate attitudes and beliefs, and they achieve this in three ways: they use the behavior of others, they use communications from others, and they compare new information to old information to help them decide what is true. Some of the communications used to determine the truth appeal to reason, whereas others appeal to habit and emotion. When people recognize inconsistencies among their attitudes, beliefs, and actions, they may experience cognitive dissonance. To alleviate this unpleasant state, people may attempt to eliminate the inconsistency or justify it.

Lecture Suggestion 13.6

It’s a Small World After All

Most students recognize Stanley Milgram’s name in connection with his famous studies of obedience. Few realize, however, that Milgram was responsible for exploring a number of other fascinating social phenomena. These studies include conformity, psychological maps, the lost-letter technique of attitude measurement, intrusion into waiting lines, television’s effects on aggression, and an exploration of cyranoids (humans...
carefully trained to parrot surreptitious messages from others). Among the many creative avenues Milgram pursued is the small world problem.

Milgram posed a simple question (building on the earlier work of Ithiel de Sola Pool and others): Given any two people in the world, what are the odds that they know each other? To answer this question you will quickly find yourself asking a related question: If Person X and Person Y do not know each other directly, how many intermediate links in an acquaintance network would it take to bring the two together? That is, X may not know Y, but Person X knows Person Z, who in turn knows Person Q, who in turn knows Person W, who in turn knows Person C, and C knows Person Y quite well.

Most people assume that the chances must be quite slim that X and Y can be linked easily. In an experimental test, Milgram asked a group of women and men from all walks of life to try to pass a message to a target person, someone living in the United States and chosen arbitrarily. Participants were instructed to transmit the message to someone else who was more likely to know the target than did the participant. This process would be repeated (always among people who knew each other on a first-name basis) until the message was received by the target.

Milgram found that the number of links required to accomplish this task averaged between 3 and 10, with a median of 5.5. That is, on average it took about six links to move a message between two previously unacquainted people. The mechanics of this phenomenon involve a dizzying array of variables—the social circles one moves in, intuition about who might best know the target person, willingness to cooperate in transmitting the message, racial or cohort differences, and so on. The conclusion? Despite our far-flung, fast-paced culture, it really is a small world.

The small-world problem has since inspired mathematicians, sociologists, linguists, and epidemiologists to investigate its parameters and served as the theme for the play *Six Degrees of Separation*.

Sources:


Lecture Suggestion 13.7

A Peg and a Grasshopper

What do a peg and a grasshopper have in common? Cognitive dissonance. The textbook discusses dissonance theory in regard to cognitive consistency and attitude change. Two classic studies illuminate dissonance theory further.

Leon Festinger and James M. Carlsmith provided one of the first, and one of the best, demonstrations of the induced compliance paradigm for studying cognitive dissonance. In a two-hour experiment on “measures of performance,” 71 college men were asked to use one hand to remove 12 spools from a tray, and then refill it. This mundane task lasted about half an hour, only to be followed by an equally mundane task. Participants were presented with an array of 48 pegs sunk into a board and asked to move each of them a quarter-turn at a time, cycling around until all pegs were returned to their original position. After half an hour of this, all participants were quite bored, frustrated, and in a fairly negative mood; precisely the condition Festinger and Carlsmith wanted them in.

The second part of the study was then announced to the participants. At this point, they were informed that a person usually came in to convince the next waiting participant of how fun, exciting, and interesting the tasks were, but that, unfortunately, this person hadn’t shown up yet. They were then asked if they would be willing to do this job. Half the participants were told they would be paid $1 for their help, whereas the remainder were told they would receive $20 for their assistance. All participants agreed to help, conveyed the information to the waiting participant, and as they were leaving their attitudes toward the experiment were measured. In keeping with the predictions of dissonance theory, those participants who had been paid $1 reported enjoying the task much more than those who had been paid $20. Given that their behavior could not be revoked, and that $1 was an insufficient justification for telling the lie, the only option available to reduce dissonance was to bring their attitudes in line with their behavior.

A second study by Phil Zimbardo and his colleagues extended this work on induced compliance in a novel way. As part of a study of novel foods, ROTC members, military reservists, and college students were informed that the study was relevant to the “new mobile military” and sought to determine a liking for fried grasshoppers. The procedures and information were delivered in one of two ways. In the “Mr. Nice” condition, the experimenter warmly greeted the participants, appeared sensitive to their needs, and interacted well with his coworkers. “Mr. Nasty,” on the other hand, was gruff and surly, and berated his assistants. Although many participants ate at least one grasshopper, those in the “Mr. Nasty” condition professed much greater liking for grasshoppers as food. The dissonance produced between disliking grasshoppers and eating them could not be reduced by recourse to the experimenter; after all, he was a jerk. The only avenue available to the participants was to bring their attitudes in line with their behavior.
Sources:


**Classroom Exercise 13.7**

Persuasive Powers

Robert Cialdini knows a thing or two about persuasion; he wrote a book on the subject. Yet Cialdini is still an easy target for a shrewd salesperson using the very persuasion techniques Cialdini has helped discover.

Many people think that being duped by salespeople, hucksters, and shysters happens to someone else rather than themselves. We like to think of ourselves as relatively immune to the persuasive tactics used against us, but Phil Zimbardo and his colleagues offer an exercise to persuade us otherwise.

Have students set themselves up as the target of a persuasive communication. Students should:

- identify a situation in which persuasion is likely to occur
- run the idea by you for permission
- enter the persuasive situation
- then write a paper on their experiences

As you might imagine, students find themselves the targets of types of persuasive situations that include:

- buying stuff (jewelry, cars, appliances, insurance, Tupperware)
- selling stuff (offers to work selling knives over the summer, offers to sell timeshares to others, offers to “work from home” and “make big money”)
- believing stuff (pitches homeless hustlers, psychics)

Students should incorporate social psychological principles in their papers (such as the foot-in-the-door, authority, escalating commitments, social proof) and comment on their thoughts and feelings during the persuasion process.
The result of this exercise is what’s been borne out by scientific research: Being a patsy helps “immunize” people to future persuasion tactics. Your students may be once bitten but twice shy.

Sources:


Classroom Exercise 13.8

Sometimes You Gotta Break the Rules

Norms are implicit rules for social behavior and are really only noticed when they are violated. But this assignment, from Brett Pelham of the State University of New York, Buffalo, asks your students to do just that: Break a social norm that everyone typically obeys.

■ Have students observe a variety of social norms in their daily activities, then choose one to violate.

■ Tell them to break the norm several times, rather than once, and in a variety of settings involving different people.

■ Give them some examples of norm violations, such as a man wearing a dress; singing out loud in public; impinging on someone’s personal space; looking at other riders rather than the floor numbers in an elevator; sitting right next to a stranger in an otherwise empty movie theater; raising both hands simultaneously to ask a professor a question; conspicuously taking more than the maximum number of items to the grocery express check-out lane; asking a stranger to take her or his seat on the bus; being excessively helpful or excessively disclosive in response to a stranger’s simple request.

■ Be clear about some ground rules:

■ Students should not do anything illegal, unethical, dangerous, or obnoxious; pointless antics that waste other people’s time or money, or that might be threatening to others, are not allowed.

■ Students should give a clear definition of what the norm is and how their behavior would violate it; there are lots of bizarre behaviors students could perform, but many of them would not violate any implicit social rule.

■ Students need to run their ideas by you before they engage in the behavior, to get an objective opinion about the first two points.
Have them write a report on this project, addressing these questions:

- What function does the norm serve in society?
- How did you feel as you broke the norm?
- What were the reactions of other people as you broke the norm?
- How does it keep interaction flowing smoothly?
- What might have happened if you violated this norm in a different culture or subculture?

Sources:


**Classroom Exercise 13.9**

Demonstrating Obedience

Designed to make believers out of students who are skeptical of the results of Milgram’s studies on obedience to authority, William Hunter proposed a simple demonstration designed to illustrate the obedience concept.

- Enter the classroom on a day prior to discussing obedience and the Milgram experiments.
- Make sure that everyone is seated.
- Next, go through a series of increasingly bizarre requests with your students. Examples of possible requests are given below, but feel free to substitute or add your own ideas:
  - Ask a student to switch seats with another student.
  - Have everyone remove their shoes and place them in a pile at the front of the room.
  - Ask students to take off their watches and exchange them with other people.
  - Ask students to do jumping jacks in order to loosen up.
  - Ask students to rub their tummies while patting their heads (and vice-versa).
  - Ask students to do the “wave” (this one is quite effective in a large class).
- Ask students to quack like a duck or to sing a silly song.

- Ask students to come up with a class cheer and yell it in unison several times as loud as they can.

- End your session with a big round of applause.

- Then, after everyone has returned to their seats, ask them why they complied with the sequence of behaviors you requested of them.

Summary:

Students will recognize that they responded to requests made by an authority figure (i.e., because you are the instructor). Hunter suggests focusing the discussion on issues such as attributes of authority figures, why we obey authority, whether we should always obey authority, how a person gets authority, and what society would be like without authority. All of your students will find this exercise entertaining and interesting; besides being invigorating, it helps students relate the seemingly unreal circumstances of the Milgram experiment to their own real-life experiences. It also tends to cure those who, after hearing about Milgram’s results for the first time, would say, “I would never obey an authority without good reason.”

If you’d like more ideas on ways to demonstrate obedience and other social psychological concepts, consult Frank LoSchaivo, Justin Buckingham, and Trisha Yurak’s article (see the sources below).

Sources:


Classroom Exercise 13.10

Obey the Instructor

An interesting way to demonstrate obedience requires planning ahead. In your syllabus, before your first lecture on obedience, add the following: “Bring an empty soda can to class!” When you reach that point in the semester, show students film of the classic Milgram experiments. After showing the film, engage the class in a discussion of the research. Next ask the students who brought an empty can to class to place the can in their left hand. Then ask students to raise their right hands if they believe that they would definitely not administer a 450-volt shock to a learner if they were participating as subjects in Milgram’s research. While their hands are still in the air, ask the students to raise their left hands. Look out over the large number of students holding up empty soda cans.
cans and ask, “Why are you holding those soda cans?” Eventually some student will point out that you told them to bring the cans to class, at which point you can engage in an animated discussion about obedience with your class.

Source:


**Classroom Exercise 13.11**

*We All Conform*

Snyder (2003) suggests a number of class demonstrations to help students become aware of conformity in their own behavior. Two demonstrations involve clothing. The first involves asking a group of 10 students to come and stand in front of the class. In all likelihood, the majority of these students will be wearing the “official collegiate uniform” of jeans and a T-shirt. After pointing this out to the class, open it up for discussion and see how students try to explain that this behavior is not conformity. Another demonstration of conformity in clothing involves the colors that individuals wear. Over the last 50 years, pink has been the color that women dress girls in while blue is considered the more masculine color. Draw a $2 \times 3$ (female/male × pink/blue/neither) matrix on the board. Ask all the women in the class to stand and count the number of those wearing pink shirts. This number then goes in the appropriate box in the matrix. Next, count the number of women wearing blue shirts and the number of women wearing neither pink nor blue and enter those numbers in the appropriate boxes. Repeat this procedure with the men in the class. Snyder finds that women wear more pink than the men, and similar amounts of pink and blue. The men wear more blue than the women, and rarely wear pink. There tends to be little gender difference in the proportion of students wearing neither pink nor blue.

Source:


**Classroom Exercise 13.12**

*Inducing Cognitive Dissonance*

This simple exercise by David Carkenord and Joseph Bullington allows students to experience the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance personally in class. In this exercise, cognitive dissonance is induced by comparing students’ attitudes and behaviors on a variety of social issues.

- Prior to your discussion of cognitive dissonance, draw a 5-point Likert scale on the board ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree.*
Next, ask students to take out a blank piece of paper and indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements that you will read aloud (by writing a number from 1 to 5 corresponding to the scale next to the number of each question). Carkenord and Bullington suggest using the following statements:

1. World hunger is a serious problem that needs attention.
2. Our country needs to address the growing number of homeless people.
3. The right to vote is one of the most valuable rights of American citizens.
4. Our government should spend less money on nuclear weapons and more on helping citizens better their lives.

Ask students to turn their papers over and answer the next series of questions by responding “yes” or “no” according to whether they perform the behavior on a regular basis. This series of behavioral questions corresponds to the previous attitudinal items:

1. Do you personally do anything to lessen world hunger (e.g., donate money or food or write to your elected representative)?
2. Do you personally do anything to help the homeless (e.g., volunteer at a homeless shelter or donate money)?
3. Did you vote in the last election for which you were eligible?
4. Do you personally convey your feelings to the government (e.g., by writing your representative or by participating in protests/marches)?

After students have completed both series of questions, have them turn back to side one and ask them (by a show of hands) how many agreed or strongly agreed with attitudinal item one.

Next, ask them to turn their papers over and to raise their hands if they responded “Yes” to the corresponding behavioral item.

Repeat this process for all four questions.

Summary and Discussion:

You will find that students understand this exercise very quickly. A majority of students will agree with or show positive attitudes toward the issue, but only a small minority will actually report behavior consistent with those attitudes. Carkenord and Bullington suggest that discussion should focus on (a) how these inconsistencies made students feel, (b) formal definitions for consonance and dissonance, (c) research on cognitive dissonance (including Festinger and Carlsmith’s famous study), and (d) strategies for reducing dissonance.
Source:


**Multimedia Suggestions**

**Feature Film: Jonestown: Paradise Lost (2007, 100 min, not rated)** This is the latest of several reenactments of the events of Jonestown and the People’s Temple. The twist here is that actual footage from Jim Jones’s compound is interspersed with this factually accurate retelling of the Jonestown Massacre, focusing especially on Representative Leo Ryan’s fateful visit.

**Feature Film: Lords of Discipline (1983, 116 min, rated R)** David Keith stars in this engaging drama that chronicles the operations of a secret society within a young men’s military academy. Conformity and obedience, hostility and aggression, and intergroup conflict are central social psychological principles in this film, among others. Based on the Pat Conroy novel.

**Feature Film: Twelve Angry Men (1957, 96 min, not rated)** Henry Fonda stars in this compelling courtroom drama in which jurors must decide the fate of a boy accused of murdering his father. The lone not guilty vote in a seemingly cut-and-dried case, Fonda gradually and methodically builds a case to win over the other jurors. This engrossing film provides excellent examples of conformity, attitude change, and group decision making.

**Feature Film: Compliance (2012, 90 min, rated R)** The title of this movie should really be “Obedience,” because what plays out over the course of this unsettling film involves a restaurant manager obeying the instructions from a perceived authority figure. The manager, Ann Dowd, receives a call at work from someone who identifies himself as a police officer. He informs her that there is a complaint that one of her employees, Dreama Walker, has stolen from a customer. Following the orders of this perceived authority figure, the manager takes the accused employee to a back room to search her before the police arrive. The caller manipulates the manager and the other restaurant employees into participating in the young woman's sexual degradation. The humiliation only stops when one individual finally has the conscience to protest and refuse to participate, at which point they realize that they have been tricked into a crime by this unknown stranger. A sobering note at the end of the film reveals that this story is based on true events that occurred more than 70 times across the United States.

See the Preface for product information on the following items:

**Interactive Presentation Slides for Introductory Psychology** 17.2 Social Influence

**PsychSim 5 Tutorials** Everybody’s Doing It!
**Worth Video Series**

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Introduction to Psychology – Schachter’s Affiliation Experiment

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Milgram’s Obedience Studies

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – The Wisdom of Groups

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Obedience and Authority: A Laboratory Demonstration


*Scientific American Introductory Psychology Videos: Social Influence*

**III. Social Cognition: Understanding People**

(Chapter Objectives 19–22)

We make inferences about other people on the basis of categories to which they belong—in other words, by stereotyping. Making such inferences can lead us to misjudge others for four reasons. First, stereotypes can be inaccurate, either because our culture has provided misinformation or because we have seen rare confirmatory examples of a person in a category exhibiting the stereotypical behavior. Second, stereotypes can be overused because the mere act of categorization leads us to see category members as having more in common than they actually do. Third, stereotypes can perpetuate themselves by causing us to see what we expect to see, to treat others in ways that lead them to behave as we expected, and to explain away disconfirming evidence. Finally, stereotypes can operate unconsciously and automatically, making it difficult to avoid using them. We also make inferences about people based on their actions, assuming that others act as they do because of the situations in which they find themselves or because of their own dispositions. When a person’s action is low in consistency, high in distinctiveness, and high in consensus, we should attribute the action to the situation; however, evidence indicates that we tend to attribute actions to dispositions when we should not. This happens because someone else’s situation is often difficult to see and information about that person’s situation is difficult to use, so we are less prone to this error when making attributions for our own behavior.

**Lecture Suggestion 13.8**

Explaining Correspondence Bias

The correspondence bias, sometimes called the fundamental attribution error, refers to the tendency of social perceivers to overestimate the dispositional causes of an actor’s
behavior, or, conversely, to fail to adequately take the effects of the situation into account. This phenomenon has intrigued social psychologists for decades. Researchers understand that the correspondence bias can take place; why this uneven assignment of causality takes place, however, has taken more time to understand.

Offering a compelling explanation for the correspondence bias, Daniel Gilbert believes that the act of inferring another’s traits, attitudes, or attributes is a multistage rather than a unitary process. First, some categorization of the behavior takes place (“Nick is yelling at Reggie”), followed by a characterization of the behavior (“Nick is a hostile fellow”), and then a correction of the inference that takes into account information about situational constraints (“But Reggie just punched and insulted Nick”). When these processes are allowed to run to completion, people ought not to commit the correspondence bias; their initial characterizations of behavior (trait inferences) can be corrected by applying situational information. The problem is that the three stages do not involve the same amount of mental work. Categorization and characterization are relatively automatic, effortless tasks, whereas the process of correction is a more controlled, effortful process. Disruptions to this sequence of events, then, are more likely to affect the correction stage, because disruptions will usurp the cognitive resources needed to adequately correct for the effects of the situation. Specifically, when made cognitively busy (doing simultaneous mental tasks), social perceivers should be unable to adequately correct their initial characterizations, and so be left with attributions heavily weighted toward the actor’s dispositions.

Gilbert and his colleagues tested this process by showing research participants videotapes of a very anxious woman. The viewers were told that the woman was discussing anxiety-provoking topics, such as her sexual fantasies and public embarrassments she had endured. Most participants categorized the behavior as anxiousness, characterized the woman as suffering from manifest anxiety, but then corrected their attribution to account for the situation. However, when subjects were asked to simultaneously perform another resource-consuming task (i.e., memorizing the discussion topics prompting the woman’s anxiety as they scrolled across the bottom of the video screen), they were unable to correct their initial attributions and were left committing the correspondence bias. These cognitively busy participants believed that the woman actually was dispositionally anxious. Ironically, the information that could have been used to correct that judgment (memorizing the discussion topics) was the very information that limited their ability to correct their judgments.

As another example, the cognitively busy act of trying to ingratiate oneself to someone leads to a mistaken perception of the individual. Resources vital to correction are interrupted when hearing either a pro-choice or an anti-abortion speech while simultaneously trying to think of a reply. And when the process is disrupted earlier (by making the categorization or characterization stages effortful), similar results are obtained. Moving from the lab to the real world, the explanation offered for the correspondence bias is clear: Social perception is a cognitively demanding task; without the resources needed for correction, we may be left with mistaken, trait-based ascriptions about an individual.
Source:


**Lecture Suggestion 13.9**

I Raise My Glass to My Doppelgänger

John Lydon is a social psychologist at McGill University. “John Lydon” also happens to be the birth-name of Johnny Rotten, singer for the Sex Pistols. So you can imagine psychologist John Lydon’s consternation when, while completing a postdoctoral position at UCLA, he was routinely besieged by phone callers and unwelcome visitors trying to track down rock star John Lydon’s address (which also happened to be in Los Angeles at the time).

The notion of a *doppelgänger*—an exact double, usually diametrically opposite in character to oneself—has a rich history in folklore and literature. In our modern age there’s a digital equivalent; the Googleganger. As the search-engine giant continues to catalog pretty much everything in the world, it has become childishly easy to search for the name of a friend, loved one, or even yourself. What pops up, however, may not always be expected. People with common names (“John Smith”) are used to being mistaken for one another, but even people with less common names (“Johannes Schmidt”) who may be separated by vast divides of geography, culture, background, and interests, get Googleganged.

So what happens when people transpose the traits and qualities of a Googleganger onto another person? It can be difficult to dismantle the schemas we apply to one individual when faced with someone new who shares the same identifying information. In the 1950s, Paul Secord studied how facial resemblances can influence personality judgments; we see someone who looks like someone else, and we impute the qualities of the one person onto the other. Daniel Wegner and Daniel Gilbert have both studied the difficulties of “unbelieving” information. Learning that Adolf Hitler is not a tyrannical monster and is just a quiet farmer can be an exercise in mental gymnastics. In fact, daily life often presents us with, “No, not *that* Kristy Wallace, the *other* Kristy Wallace” moments in casual conversation with our friends. In short, there’s a tangled web of attributions, trait inferences, schematic processing, automaticity, and person perception to be unraveled as the ability to locate anyone who sounds like anyone else becomes more commonplace.

Sources:


http://scholar.harvard.edu/schacterlab

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/record/23/02/29.html
Lecture Suggestion 13.10

A Word to the Wise

A popular saying has it that first impressions last. There’s more than a kernel of truth to that witticism. The tasks of person perception, attribution, categorization, and stereotyping are often fueled by the bits and pieces of information we gather from even a cursory glance at another individual. In short, how you look or what you do can provide the thin slices of reality needed to form lasting impressions about you.

Regan Gurung and Kristin Vespia recently reported evidence that links impression formation and classroom behavior. They gathered the responses of 861 undergraduates who completed an online survey regarding perceptions of professors. For two of their current classes, students rated their instructors’ attractiveness, likeability, style of dress, and approachability. Students also indicated their current GPA, class standing (i.e., first year, sophomore), sex, and levels of attendance and participation. Finally, they provided perceptions of course difficulty, liking for the course, format of the course, and types of required assignments.

The data revealed that likable, good-looking, approachable, and well-dressed teachers generally had students who said they learned more, had higher grades, and liked the class better. Is this causal? No. Is this reliable? Probably. Is this news? No. But it is a word to the wise. Looking good and being likable highlight some of the major forces in social psychology: We like attractive interaction partners, and we like to be liked by others. Sharing the results of this study with your students can provide a nice illustration of how these principles extend to a situation with which they’re quite familiar. It can also serve as a demonstration of other principles of social psychology, such as bias, categorization, or the pitfalls of stereotyping. Highly competent instructors with really, really bad fashion sense may be in for a tough time, whereas mediocre professors who look good may get more than the benefit of the doubt!

You would need both a thick skin and a sense of humor to discuss these kinds of results with your students, but in any event it’s a nice point of departure for introducing some core concepts.
One’s point of view can be a powerful thing. We’re talking about one’s literal point of view, or the physical perspective one takes on observing a behavior.

Research from the toddlerhood of attribution theory demonstrated that the actor–observer effect could be reversed by showing participants in an interaction a different point of view. Michael Storms videotaped both participants in an interaction, then replayed the tapes of either the actor or observer to either the actor or observer. When faced with viewing their own behavior (as an observer routinely would), actors tended to draw more dispositional attributions for their actions. Since then considerable research has shown that seeing a perspective one wouldn’t ordinarily see can influence a range of emotions, cognitions, and behaviors.

A practical application of this camera-perspective effect arises in the interpretation of videotaped confessions. Many law enforcement agencies videotape interrogations and confessions as a matter of course. The videotape presumably provides an additional piece of incontrovertible evidence that a suspect confessed, and it helps assure that coercion, threats, or a rubber hose weren’t used in the process.

Research has demonstrated that when the camera shows only the suspect’s face (as opposed to both the suspect and the questioner), potential jurors are more likely to think that the confession was voluntary, and therefore that the suspect is guilty. In fact, seasoned judges show this same bias produced by camera angle, evaluating coerced confessions as though they were voluntary. Videotaped evidence of a confession can only be introduced at trial if a judge rules it was voluntary; as such, a substantial percentage of false confessions may be unwittingly introduced. G. Daniel Lassiter and his colleagues have investigated this phenomenon further and discovered that 21 judges who viewed mock confessions (sometimes showing just the suspect, other times showing the suspect and questioner) were likely to judge those confessions as voluntary when they saw the suspect only.

Clearly, this is a case in which science can step up to help the legal profession in its pursuit of truth. Currently, no U.S. jurisdiction requires the two-person perspective for recorded confessions.

Sources:


**Classroom Exercise 13.13**

**Actors vs. Observers**

A mainstay of social psychology is the observation that actors and observers differ in their attributions. Actors tend to attribute another person’s behavior to dispositional causes, but attribute their own behavior to the effects of the situation. In short, the person speeding down the freeway next to you is an idiot, but your reckless driving is because you’re late this one time for a meeting. Many demonstrations of the actor–observer effect have been proposed over the 40 or so years since it’s been identified, but recently Anne Gordon and Mary Kaplar suggested a new way to illustrate these differences in attribution.

Your students are probably familiar with the game Scruples, in which moral dilemmas are presented on cards and players have to indicate if they would or would not engage in the behavior. For example, a card might say “You’ve sold your house. Before you move out, the roof starts to leak. Do you have it fixed?” or perhaps “You accidentally damage a car in a parking lot. Do you leave a note with your name and phone number?”

- Present students with 20 such dilemmas, chosen from the game and appropriate to a college-age audience.

- Ask students to indicate whether a target person (themselves or an acquaintance) would engage in the behavior by circling either *yes*, *no*, or *depends on the situation*.

- After completing this brief task, have students count the number of times they chose *depends on the situation* for ratings of themselves and ratings of an acquaintance.

The authors found, as you no doubt will, that about 60% of their students demonstrated the actor–observer bias by selecting “it depends” for themselves rather than for an acquaintance.

Sources:


http://www.scruplesgame.com/
Classroom Exercise 13.14

I’m OK, You’re . . . You, I’m Not So Sure About . . ..

The attribution process stems from a fundamental desire to explain events. Sometimes those events are the behaviors of others, sometimes those events are our own behaviors, sometimes the process is marred by attributional biases and depleted cognitive resources, but at the heart of it all we want to know why.

When explaining aspects of ourselves, we seem to apply a much broader benefit of the doubt than we extend to others. We often think we’re above average on many dimensions we’re not. Jason Nier has wondered about this above-average effect and proposed a demonstration you can share with your students, based on the ambiguity of self-ratings and trait definitions.

Nier points out that individuals tend to see themselves as above average on traits that are ambiguous and socially desirable. If you’re asked whether you’re more or less gregarious than most people, for example, chances are (1) you’ll have heard the word gregarious before and recall that it was usually used in a positive way, (2) you’ll be a bit uncertain about what gregariousness includes and excludes in its definition, but (3) reason that it’s probably a good trait dimension to be higher rather than lower on. In that spirit:

■ Ask your students to complete Handout 13.3. You’ll notice that it includes a mix of both positive and negative attributes, as well as those that are more or less ambiguous. The key is reproduced here:

Positive/Highly Ambiguous: Sensitive, Idealistic, Sensible, Ingenious, Quick

Positive/Less Ambiguous: Neat, Well-read, Mathematical, Athletic, Punctual

Negative/Highly Ambiguous: Neurotic, Inconsistent, Impractical, Submissive, Insecure

Negative/Less Ambiguous: Sarcastic, Sloppy, Clumsy, Gossipy, Bragging

Summary and Discussion:

You should find that, among positive characteristics, students rate themselves above average on the highly ambiguous traits, and among negative characteristics, also rate themselves below average on the highly ambiguous traits. You can use this as a starting point for discussing attributional biases, the above-average effect, and most importantly, the cognitive mechanisms that drive these phenomena.

Source:

Classroom Exercise 13.15

Label Liability

Assigning labels to individuals and then never looking deeper than that is a shortcut to stereotyping. Two classroom exercises can illustrate this to your students.

Option A: Susan Goldstein, Mikki Hebl, and Eden King all suggest labeling exercises that demonstrate the formation of stereotypes, the self-fulfilling prophecy, and the power of prejudice. For example:

- Goldstein suggests preparing several labels (such as those used for file folders) that have trait descriptors on them. You can think of your own, but suggestions such as frail, good at math, uneducated, lazy, musical, cute, helpless, violent, overemotional, athletic, artistic, or materialistic work pretty well.

- Ask volunteers from your class to blindly affix one of these randomly selected labels to their foreheads or back (i.e., any surface where they themselves can’t see the label), and then converse with one or two students in the class on the topic of “future goals” (i.e., something fairly vague that will inspire discussion).

- The partners (and the volunteers as well) should be told that throughout the conversation they are to treat the labeled individuals in accordance with the label itself. So, for example, someone interacting with “uneducated” might use simple words and short sentences, whereas someone interacting with “overemotional” might keep the conversation light and the enthusiasm to a minimum.

Discussion:

After 15 minutes or so, ask the students to discuss their experiences. The volunteers might want to comment first on how they felt being the object of stereotypical ways of thinking. Any observers who did not directly participate might address changes that they noticed in the behavior of the volunteers or questioners. The questioners might comment on whether it was easy or difficult to interact with someone following the dictates of a label. Finally, all students might discuss the ease with which stereotypes are formed, or the difference between positive and negative stereotypes, or how it feels to be a member of a minority group.

Option B: Mikki Hebl and Eden King have developed a similar exercise.

- They suggest asking 5 volunteers to don baseball caps with the labels “good leader,” “very attractive,” “funny,” “annoying,” or “lazy.”

- Again, the volunteers shouldn’t know which cap they’re wearing.

- The volunteers then work with each other in a group to complete a series of tasks, such as naming a new school mascot, identifying the three best reasons to be a psychology major, determining the distance between two major landmarks on
campus, and finally lining up in order of their presumed likability, based on the previous interactions.

- After each task you should ask for the group’s answer and note who provides it, before instructing them on the next task.

- Also, when all the tasks are completed, ask each volunteer to guess whether her or his label was positive or negative, what it said precisely, and what clues were used to make that guess.

Discussion:

All the students in the class should then contribute to the discussion you lead on the self-fulfilling prophecy. In what ways did the volunteers change their behaviors to be in line with the labels on their hats? Did the volunteers know generally whether their labels were positive or negative, and specifically what they were? What nonverbal or verbal clues tipped them off to the labels that guided the interactions? How did the volunteers feel being talked up or down to in the process of group discussion?

Sources:


Multimedia Suggestions

**Feature Film: Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? (1967, 108 min, not rated)** Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, Sydney Poitier, and Katharine Houghton star in this Academy Award–winning film about interracial dating. When a black man is invited by an upper-class white woman to her politically liberal family home, her parents discover that it isn’t always easy to practice what you preach. Impression formation, attitude change, and stereotypes and prejudice play a central role in this excellent film.

**Feature Film: Defending Your Life (1991, 112 min, rated PG)** Meryl Streep and Albert Brooks star in this witty comedy as two recently deceased souls who are called upon to defend their lives in order to be sent to heaven. Attribution theory, social comparison, and interpersonal attraction are central social psychological principles in this film.

See the Preface for product information on the following items:

**Interactive Presentation Slides for Introductory Psychology** 17.1 Social Cognition

**PsychInvestigator**

Correspondence Bias
Stereotyping

**Worth Video Series**

Video Anthology for Introductory Psychology: Social Psychology – Attitudes and Prejudicial Behavior

*Scientific American Introductory Psychology Videos: Prejudice*

**Other Film Sources**

*Are You a Racist?* (1986, 50 min, IM). The BBC conducted an interesting experiment: Take four self-confessed racists and have them live for five days with four victims of racism. Feelings are openly shared and attitudes are resistant to change.

*Attitudes* (2001, 30 min, IM). Prejudicial attitudes are the focus of this video, which examines the development and prevention of prejudice.

*Attraction* (2005, 50 min, IM). The focus is on physical attractiveness, as 50 women and 50 men are auditioned as potential dates for an assertive professional woman and an unassuming man.

*Being in Love* (2001, 51 min, IM). Falling is love is one thing; being in love is another.

*Blink* (2000, 57 min, UCMEDIA). Gregory Withrow is an interesting fellow. Once a leader in a white supremacist organization, he fell in love with a woman whose parents fled Nazi Germany and eventually married a Mexican-American woman. The militant group White Aryan Resistance once beat him senseless and nailed him to a crucifix for deserting their ideology. See a multitude of social psychology in action in this film.

*Blue-Eyed* (1995, 86 min, CN). Based on the famous elementary school demonstration of “blue-eyed children,” Jane Elliott now transforms 40 teachers, police, school administrators, and social workers into despondent and distracted adults. Prejudice and discrimination are discussed, particularly sexism, homophobia, and ageism. See also *Eye of the Storm, A Class Divided,* or *The College Eye.*

*Bullied to Death* (2000, 50 min, IM). The focus here is bullying, but extensions to group behavior, aggression, conformity, and prejudice can be made.

*Can You See the Color Gray?* (1997, 54 min, UCMEDIA). Between black and white are all kinds of shades of gray. Between certainty and uncertainty are all kinds of levels of understanding. This video prompts us to examine the formation of stereotypes and how they influence our lives.

*Candid Camera: Social Psychology* (1994, 58 min, IM). Allen Funt and Phil Zimbardo team up to host these humorous scenes (taken from the popular *Candid Camera show*) that illustrate aspects of social psychology.

The College Eye: The Angry Eye (2001, 35 min, IM). Jane Elliott presents another foray into helping us understand others. Young adults from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds are called upon to explore racism in modern society.

Conflict (2002, 60 min, IM). The Stanford Prison experiment gets revisited in this look at power, authority, and the effects of the situation on influencing social behavior.

Conformity: In the Real-Life Lab (2005, 10 min, IM). This ABCNews segment features neurological research that examines what the brain does when we decide to fall in line with the will of a group.

The Critical Issues: Obedience and Ethics (2000, 30 min, IM). Stanley Milgram’s obedience experiments are the launching pad for this look at ethics in research, applied research (e.g., group behavior, bullying), and other topics relevant to going along with the group.

Crowd Behavior: Controlling Carnival Crowds (1997, 50 min, IM). The carnival crowds are the people attending the Notting Hill carnival. Issues such as the group mind, individualism, and collective behavior are examined.

Dealing with Racism and Hatred (2002, 34 min, IM). In-group, out-group, my tribe, your tribe . . . Racism and hatred are the ugly offspring of stereotyping and categorization.

Experimental Studies in Social Climates of Groups (1953, 30 min, b&w, UIOWA). A classic account of Kurt Lewin’s studies of groups and leadership in three boys’ clubs. Autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire principles were used in the groups. The reactions of the boys when conditions of leadership are changed to another method are examined.

Exposed—Observing Human Behavior: Heartbreak (2006, 60 min, IM). Social and romantic rejection can hurt; in fact, they can hurt the brain, the body, and the mind. This video looks at how that happens.

Exposed—Observing Human Behavior: Liars (2006, 56 min, IM). This video looks at the intriguing topic of how and why we lie.

Exposed—Observing Human Behavior: Persuaders (2006, 57 min, IM). The persuaders are coming. This video will help you identify them and their tactics.

Eye of the Storm (1971, 29 min, CHU). A third-grade all-white class is divided on the basis of eye color. Discrimination is practiced against each group on alternate days. A compelling film. (Also see A Class Divided, Eye Opener, The Stolen Eye, and The College Eye.)
Eye Opener (2004, 33 min, IM). Glasgow is the setting for Jane Elliott’s blue-eyes/brown-eyes lesson in discrimination.

Face to Face: Social Interaction (2005, 30 min, IM). As the title suggests, the focus of this video is how interpersonal communication takes place.

Faces of the Enemy (1987, 58 min, IM). Propaganda, dehumanization, and mass persuasion are the subjects of this frank treatment of interpersonal and international perception. Recommended for mature students.

Falling in Love (2001, 52 min, IM). Love is a many splendored thing. Some of that splendor is amply evident in this video.

For All Practical Purposes: The Prisoner’s Dilemma (1986, 30 min, PENN). The Prisoner’s Dilemma is shown in the broader context of negotiations, labor relations, and corporate takeovers. A good expansion of topics related to social cooperation and competition.

Foundational Ideas in Social Construction (2000, 40 min, IM). Kenneth Gergen promotes his views about social construction. The relational nature of everything and the slipperiness of truth are considered.

Group Influence (2001, 30 min, IM). Groupthink, deindividuation, and individuality are some of the topics considered in this presentation on group behavior.

Human Aggression (1975, 24 min, IM). Stanley Milgram is the host of this look at aggressive behavior. Bandura’s Bobo doll makes an appearance, as do some young toughs from a street gang.

The In Crowd and Social Cruelty (2002, 41 min, IM). John Stossel examines in-groups and out-groups in middle school and high school, and what happens when disagreement turns to bullying.


Killing Us Softly III: Advertising’s Image of Women (1999, 30 min, MEF). Jean Kilbourne continues the examination she started in Killing Us Softly and Still Killing Us Softly with this look at the portrayal of women in advertising.


Moonchild (1981, 49 min, PSU). A dramatic reenactment of one person’s journey into and out of the Moonie cult. Explores recruiting tactics and indoctrination methods.

Obedience (45 min, PENN). Documentary film of Stanley Milgram’s classical study on obedience to authority using original footage and interviews.

Obedience: A Reenactment (1996, 11 min, IM). This short presentation depicts a reenactment of Milgram’s obedience studies.

Obeying or Resisting Authority: A Psychological Retrospective (2007, 36 min, FHS). ABCNews invited social psychologist Jerry Burger to comment on the ability of women and men off the street to inflict pain on a stranger. Phil Zimbardo also weighs in on the lessons of the Stanford Prison experiment.

The People of People’s Temple (1979, 24 min, FI). Interviews with survivors, documentary footage, and footage from Jonestown during its heyday combine in this powerful examination of social influence.

People to People: Social Psychology (2006, 30 min, IM). Social cognition, social influence, and social relations are the focus of this video. Topics such as cooperation, group influence, and social motives are considered.

Persuasion in Everyday Life (2007, 25 min, IM). Laugh tracks, shop-at-home networks, placebos . . . we’re persuaded to believe lots of things during the course of a typical day. The reasons why are examined in this video.

The Power of Persuasion (2001, 55 min, IM). Robert Cialdini shares his knowledge of the art and science of persuasion.

Prescribing Beauty (2005, 57 min, IM). How do you know when a person qualifies as beautiful, and is there any agreement across cultures on some kind of beauty standard? This video examines these and related issues.

The Psychology of Racism: Where Have We Gone Wrong? (2004, 60 min, IM). Derald Wing Sue discusses how passivity can perpetuate racism.

Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment (1990, 50 min, IM). This update of Phil Zimbardo’s well-known study mixes recent hindsights with footage from the original event.

Race and Racism (2001, 60 min, IM). Knowing what race is affects how one deals with races and racism. The historical, economic, and psychological forces driving racism are examined, as are the assumptions inherent in census data and people’s treatment of multiracial individuals.

Rage to Revenge: The Science of Violence (2000, 53 min, FHS). Brad Bushman, Paul Ekman, and Stafford Lightman discuss the violent emotions that give rise to violent behaviors.
Silent Witnesses: The Kitty Genovese Murder (1999, 50 min, IM). This recent video revisits the events of 1964, when New Yorker Kitty Genovese was brutally murdered as many people did nothing to help.

Social Cognition (2001, 30 min, IM). Impression formation and attitude formation are the types of social cognition addressed here.

Social Cognitions and Attributions (1989, 30 min, IM). Self-handicapping, self-esteem, and belief perseverance are examined in this look at how we size up ourselves and others in our social world.

Social Interaction Model (2001, 60 min, IM). The social interaction model is used to describe how people interact in culturally diverse settings. Person perception, attribution, and role expectations underlie the discussion.

Social Psychology Series: Aggression (30 min, PENN). Presents research that emphasizes the role of learning in the occurrence of aggression and describes possible methods for controlling aggression.

Social Psychology Series: Communication—Negotiation and Persuasion (30 min, PENN). Describes and demonstrates verbal and nonverbal factors that influence the behaviors and attitudes of others.

Social Psychology Series: Communication—Social Cognition and Attributions (30 min, PENN). This video discusses research on how we perceive others, wish to be perceived by others, interpret communications, and attribute causes to behavior. Also includes an overview of research methods used by social psychologists.

Social Psychology Series: Conformity (30 min, PENN). Examines the advantages and disadvantages of conforming in various situations as well as factors that influence the likelihood of conformity.

Social Psychology Series: Friendship (30 min, PENN). Examines the factors that contribute to the formation of friendships and the characteristics of friendships, including differences between male and female friendships.

Social Psychology Series: Helping and Prosocial Behavior (30 min, PENN). Explores why people help others, including the roles of reciprocity and social responsibility.

Social Psychology Series: Prejudice (30 min, PENN). Using dramatizations, the relationship of stereotypes and emotions to prejudice are examined. Methods of reducing discrimination are also discussed.

Staying in Love (2001, 51 min, IM). After you’ve fallen in love and have been in love, how do you stay in love? Watch this video and find out.

The Stolen Eye (2002, 50 min, IM). In Australia, Jane Elliott tests a group of white and Aboriginal volunteers in her blue-eyes/brown-eyes demonstration.
*Them and Us: Cultural Awareness* (2007, 25 min, IM). Prejudice’s roots in categorization—identifying who’s “us” and “not us”—is the theme of this video.

*Tough Guise: Media Images and the Crisis in Masculinity* (1999, 40 min, MEF). A look at how popular culture portrays men and shapes the images men adopt for themselves. Focuses on how guises such as rugged individualism may be detrimental to women and to male-female relations.

*The Wave* (1984, 46 min, IM). This Emmy Award-winning film has held up remarkably well. A high school teacher forms his own Reich, with serious consequences.

*Why Riots Happen* (1999, 51 min, FHS). If you’ve wondered why riots happen, this video explains it all. This Discovery Channel production takes a cue from history (such as the Rodney King court decision that unleashed riots in Los Angeles) and presents opinions from experts (such as researchers studying hooliganism, crowd violence, mob mentalities, and Daryl Gates, former LAPD chief).

*Why We Lie* (2000, 51 min, FHS). This Discovery Channel presentation examines research by Paul Ekman, Bella DePaulo, and other social psychologists in an attempt to understand the frequency with which we lie, the reasons we give for lying, and the benefits that might accrue. Psychiatrists and polygraphers also offer commentary from their perspectives.

*Due to loss of formatting, Handouts are only available in PDF format.*