1

Introducing

Social Psychology

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1 Defining Social Psychology: What is social psychology, and how is it different from other disciplines?

1.2 The Power of the Situation: Why does it matter how people explain and interpret events—and their own and others’ behavior?

1.3 Where Construals Come From: Basic Human Motives: What happens when people’s need to feel good about themselves conflicts with their need to be accurate?

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. What Is Social Psychology?

Why does it matter how people explain and interpret events—and their own and others’ behavior?

 A. Defining Social Psychology

* Social psychology is defined as the scientific study of the way that the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people.
* Social psychologists study social influence, the effect that the words, actions, or mere presence of other people have on our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behavior.
* Social influence includes direct attempts to persuade others (e.g., advertisements) as well and more subtle ways in which others have an impact (e.g., the effect of the mere presence of others on behavior).
* Social influence may impact thoughts and feelings in addition to behavior.

B. Social Psychology, Science, and Common Sense

1. Philosophy

• Social psychology and philosophy are often concerned with the same questions.

• Social psychology differs from philosophy because it is empirical.

2. Common Sense and Folk Wisdom

• Common sense explanations, such as those offered by journalists, are known as folk wisdom.

• Folk wisdom may be contradictory and provides no way of determining correctness.

**3. An Empirical Approach**

• Social psychologists test hypotheses, or educated guesses, in well-designed experiments to discern the situations that would result in one outcome or another.

• The advantages of an empirical approach are that competing explanations can be tested against each other and that knowledge derived from past research can be used to make reasonable predictions about what will occur in the future.

C. How Social Psychology Differs from Its Closest Cousins

• Personality psychology focuses on individual differences in human behavior (those aspects of people’s personalities that make them different from other people), while social psychology focuses more on how the social situation affects people similarly.

• Sociology is concerned with social class, social structure, and social institutions.

• Social psychology joins other social science disciplines in its focus on social behavior.

• Social psychology differs from personality psychology and sociology in its level of analysis. For personality psychologists, the level of analysis is the individual. For social psychologists, the level of analysis is the individual in the context of a social situation. For sociologists, the level of analysis is the group or institution.

• Table 1.1 (page 9) depicts comparisons between social psychology and closely-related fields of personality psychology and sociology.

NOTES:

II. The Power of the Situation

Why does it matter how people explain and interpret events—and their own and others’ behavior?

A. Fundamental Attribution Error

• Social psychologists face barriers to convincing people that their behavior is greatly influenced by the environment.

• People tend to explain behavior entirely in terms of personality traits and thus underestimate the power of social influence. This is called the fundamental attribution error.

B. Underestimating the Power of Social Influence

• The fundamental attribution error can lead to a false sense of security—we assume problematic behavior could never happen to us and thus we do not guard against its occurrence.

• In a demonstration of the fundamental attribution error, Ross and Samuels (1993) found that college students’ personalities, as rated by the resident assistants in their dormitories, did not determine how cooperative or competitive they were in a laboratory game. The name of the game—whether it was called the Wall Street Game or the Community Game—did, however, make a tremendous difference (see Figure 1.1 on pg. 11).

III. The Power of Social Interpretation

A. Behaviorism

• Behaviorism is a school of psychology maintaining that to understand human behavior, one need only consider the reinforcing properties of the environment (how positive and negative events in the environment are associated with specific behaviors). Behaviorists tried to define social situations objectively, focusing on the reinforcements received in response to behavior.

• Because behaviorism does not deal with cognition, thinking, and feeling, this approach has overlooked the importance of how people interpret their environments.

B. Construal and Gestalt Psychology

• Social psychology focuses on construal, the way in which people perceive, comprehend, and interpret the social world.

• This emphasis on construal has its roots in Gestalt psychology, a school of psychology stressing the importance of studying the subjective way in which an object appears in people’s minds, rather than the objective, physical attributes of the object.

• Kurt Lewin, the founding father of modern experimental social psychology, was the first to apply Gestalt principles from the study of the perception of objects to social perception.

* Fritz Heider added that we tend to try to guess how other people are interpreting the situations that they are in and that these guesses are often incorrect.
* Lee Ross coined the term “naïve realism” to describe the human tendency to assume that we perceive the world accurately and, by extension, people who disagree with our views are incorrect or biased. His research shows that naïve realism may play a role in peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians because each side will tend to automatically reject ideas that they perceive as coming from the other side regardless of the actual merit of those ideas.
* To be able to accurately predict other peoples’ behaviors, we need to not only observe the situations they are in but also correctly understand their construals of those situations.

NOTES:

IV. Where Construals Come From: Basic Human Motives

* What happens when people’s need to feel good about themselves conflicts with their need to be accurate?

• Social psychologists have found that two motives are of primary importance in determining our thoughts and behavior: the need to be accurate and the need to feel good about ourselves.

• Sometimes both these motives pull us in the same direction, but noted theorist Leon Festinger realized that it is when these two motives pull us in opposite directions that we can learn the most about psychological processes.

* U.S. presidents face this issue when deciding whether to continue costly and unsuccessful wars. Ending a war may sometimes be the most logical step based on the information available, satisfying the need to be accurate, but being the president who lost a war would make the president both feel and look bad, not satisfying the need to feel good about oneself. So, presidents may be motivated to prolong wars in part because they prioritize the need to feel good about themselves over the need to be accurate.

A. The Self-Esteem Approach: The Need to Feel Good About Ourselves

• Self-esteem is people’s evaluation of their own self-worth, or the extent to which people see themselves as good, competent, and decent. Most people have a strong need to maintain high self-esteem. This need can clash with the need for accuracy, leading people to distort their perceptions of the world.

• In order to preserve self-esteem, people may distort their perceptions of reality (e.g., by explaining their personal deficiencies in more positive ways). Such distortions are more “spins” on the facts than they are total delusions.

1. Suffering and Self-Justification

• Social psychological research demonstrates that when people volunteer to undergo a painful or embarrassing initiation in order to join a group (e.g., a fraternity hazing), they need to justify the experience in order to avoid feeling foolish. One way they do this is to decide that the initiation was worth it because the group is so wonderful.

• Under certain conditions, then, the need for self-justification can lead people to do surprising or paradoxical things (e.g., preferring things for which they have suffered to those which are associated with ease and pleasure).

B. The Social Cognition Motive: The Need to Be Accurate

• Although people may bend the facts to serve their self-esteem needs, they by and large do not distort reality. In fact, human reasoning skills are extraordinary.

• Social cognition is the study of how people think about themselves and the social world; more specifically, how people select, interpret, remember, and use social information.

• This approach views people as amateur sleuths seeking to understand and predict their social world. Coming up with an accurate picture of the social world may be difficult because there are many relevant facts and we have only limited time.

1. Expectations about the Social World

• Our expectations can sometimes get in the way of accurately perceiving the world.

• In the self-fulfilling prophecy, our expectations about another person’s behavior result (via the mechanism of influencing our behavior toward the target) in changing the target’s behavior.

• While social psychologists are often motivated by simple curiosity to study social behavior, they are also frequently motivated by the desire to help resolve social problems, such as increasing conservation of natural resources, increasing the practice of safe sex, understanding the relationship between viewing television violence and aggressive behavior, developing effective negotiation strategies for the reduction of international conflict, finding ways to reduce racial prejudice, and helping people adjust to life changes.

NOTES:

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KEY TERMS

• Social Psychology: (pg. 3) The scientific study of the way in which people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people

• Social Influence: (pg. 3) The effect that the words, actions, or mere presence of other people have on our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behavior

• Individual Differences: (pg. 6) The aspects of people’s personalities that make them different from other people

• Fundamental Attribution Error: (pg. 10) The tendency to overestimate the extent to which people’s behavior is due to internal, dispositional factors and to underestimate the role of situational factors

• Behaviorism: (pg. 12) A school of psychology maintaining that to understand human behavior, one need only consider the reinforcing properties of the environment

• Construal: (pg. 12) The way in which people perceive, comprehend, and interpret the social world

• Gestalt Psychology (pg. 12) A school of psychology stressing the importance of studying the subjective way in which an object appears in people’s minds, rather than the objective, physical attributes of the object

• Self-Esteem: (pg. 16) People’s evaluations of their own self-worth—that is, the extent to which they view themselves as good, competent, and decent

• Social Cognition: (pg. 17) How people think about themselves and the social world; more specifically, how people select, interpret, remember, and use social information to make judgments and decisions

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CRITICAL THINKING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions can be used as a starting point for a lecture or during the midpoint in a lecture to encourage active participation and gain the students’ attention. They could be discussed in class as a whole, or in pairs or small groups to encourage cooperative learning.

• What are some of the “folk wisdoms” or common sense generalizations that you have grown up with? How valid does the text suggest that these generalizations are likely to be? Pick a common sense generalization that seems valid and useful to you. Can you think of a way to test it experimentally?

• The textbook emphasizes that social psychology is distinguished by its focus not only on the power of the situation but also on individuals’ construals of the situation. Can you think of some examples from your personal experience where two people (or groups) differed in their construal of the same situation? A classic research example of differences in construal is provided by A. Hastorf and H. Cantril (1954), “They Saw a Game: A Case Study” (reprinted in Halberstadt, A. G., & S. L. Ellyson, Social psychology readings: A century of research, pp. 89–94. New York: McGraw-Hill). This study analyzes Dartmouth and Princeton students’ very different perceptions of a football game whose outcome was contentious. Students could read this article, or you could ask students if they have ever discussed the outcome of a game with friends at rival colleges. Another alternative is to describe the Glass and Singer (1972) study of the effects of perceived control on reactions to noise, or to show students the last part of the film Discovering Psychology: The Power of the Situation (available for free at learner.org; clip is at the end of the 30-minute video), which portrays a study by Langer in which student pilots were given an eye test either while dressed as pilots and in the context of a realistic flight simulation exercise, or while dressed in ordinary clothes and when part of the flight simulator was presumably out of order so they could not “fly.” (Students in the “pilot” condition demonstrated significantly better eyesight.)

• Another example that will help students get a more concrete idea of the impact of construal is based on the outcome of the Senate Whitewater Committee hearings. Members of the Committee all sat through 52 hearings with 250 witnesses, and all read the same documents. Although all members of the committee were exposed to the same evidence, they reached very different conclusions in reports released on June 18, 1996. Republican members of the committee concluded that the Clintons had not been fully revealing in their tax disclosures relevant to the Whitewater project. These members also believed that Hillary Rodham Clinton had attempted to foil investigations into both Whitewater and Vincent Foster’s suicide. In contrast, Democrats concluded that “this yearlong investigation shows no misconduct or abuse of power by the President or the First Lady.” What accounts for differences in construal? Are these differences in any way related to the two basic motives described in the textbook chapter? In conducting this discussion, make sure that the point comes across that differences in construal can be due both to differences in what individuals are motivated to perceive and to differences in what individuals expect to see.

• At the end of the first class, you could ask students to pay attention to their behavior over the next couple of days, and to note instances where they find themselves acting in a way that is influenced by the “demand characteristics” of the situation—that is, where they believe that they are acting in a way called for by the situation that is different than they would otherwise behave. Alternatively, you can have them do this exercise on the first day just based on memories of the past few days. An example that is familiar to many college students is changing the amount of alcohol consumed to fit in with peer expectations during fraternity and sorority rush. Questions that students could think about in regard to their examples are: Why do you feel that your behavior was changed by the situation in this instance? How have you behaved in other situations? What specifically was it about this situation that changed your behavior? Was your behavior motivated at all by the need for accuracy or by the need for self-esteem? This topic could also serve as a first journal assignment if you decide to assign a social psychology journal as part of your course. See Exercise 1-12 under Student Projects and Research Assignments later in this chapter for details on journal assignments.

• To illustrate that personality traits do not account for all of the variance in social behavior, you can ask students to number their papers from 1 to 5 and to respond yes or no to the following questions: (1) Do you often make contributions to class discussions in small seminars? (2) Are you more of a talker than a listener on a first date? (3) Do you regularly strike up conversations with strangers on buses or airplanes? (4) Are you typically lively and outgoing at a party? (5) Are you typically lively and outgoing with your close friends? Once students have recorded their answers, ask students to raise their hand if they responded “yes” or “no” to all of the questions. Invariably, few students will raise their hand. This stimulates a good discussion about the relative contributions of traits versus situational factors to behavior.

• In the early 1960s, an infamous murder occurred in the Queens borough of New York City. A young woman named Kitty Genovese was stabbed to death while in the courtyard of her apartment complex. The attack lasted 45 minutes, and at least 38 observers watched the murder from the windows of their apartment above. However, not a single one of them attempted to help Genovese, not even by telephoning the police. How might a sociologist explain the behavior of the bystanders? A personality psychologist? A social psychologist?

• Do all behaviors seem to the students equally likely to be prone to situational influence? How easy is it for students to believe that a person’s behavior is influenced by the social situation when they get drunk at a fraternity party? When the person steals a car for a gang initiation? When a man allows a cult leader such as David Koresh to engage in sexual relations with his wife and young daughter? Students will tend to find it easier to believe that situational influence operates in the first than in the last of these situations. What is it about the situation that makes it easier to believe in the power of the situation over personality in the first of these situations than in the last?

• The text provides a relatively in-depth discussion of the self-esteem approach to basic human motives. Provide a personal example of an experience in which your behavior was influenced by a need to feel good about yourself. The social cognition approach to basic human motives suggests that our actions may be guided by a need to be accurate. Provide a personal example of an experience in which your behavior was influenced by the need to be accurate. In which kinds of situations is each motive likely to dominate for you?

• The text notes that we often gain the most enlightenment about social psychological processes when the need to be accurate conflicts with the need to feel good about ourselves. Can you think of any examples of when these two motives conflict with each other?

• What kinds of professions are concerned with understanding the effects of social influence? As students list professions (teaching, coaching, advertising, nursing, management, etc.), note that these fields often rely on applications of social psychology for gaining their understanding of what kinds of influence will be effective and in what situations.

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**Autogra****ded Writing Activities in MyPsychLab and REVEL**

**The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**

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| --- | --- |
| **MyLabs Group** | MyPsychLab, MyDevelopmentLab |
| **Prompt Code**Provide a unique identifier | ARONSONch01\_01 |
| **Prompt Type**Check appropriate type | Expositoryx | Descriptive | Narrative | Persuasive |
| **Assessment Goals**Briefly summarize and describe the assessment goals for this prompt (e.g., Student Understanding, Critical Thinking, Integrating Concepts, Writing Quality, Other) | Student Understanding, Critical Thinking, Integrating Concepts |
| **Instructor Requirements** | n/a |
| **Prompt** | Describe the *self-fulfilling prophecy* and why it is important to understand how it works. |
| **Length of Response**(in words) | Minimum | Maximum | Expected (Avg.) | Comments |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Planned Scoring**  |
|  | Holistic | Trait 1 | Trait 2 | Trait 3 | Trait 4 | Trait 5 |
| **Trait Name** | Ideas | Organization | Conventions | Voice | Focus & Coherence |
| **Score Points** | Weighted Average | 50% | 10% | 10% | 10% | 20% |

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| **Trait 1 Rubric:** IdeasSpecific Trait |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Response features well-developed thesis with robust supporting details of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* Strong consideration and argumentation of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* Excellent, perceptive analysis of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
 |
| **3** | * Response features thesis with some supporting details describing the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* Sufficient, thoughtful consideration and argumentation of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* Fairly comprehensive analysis of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
 |
| **2** | * Response features broad, loosely-defined interaction or event with limited supporting details describing the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* Minimal consideration and argumentation of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* Weak concluding analysis of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
 |
| **1** | * Response features poorly-defined interaction or event with no supporting details describing the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* No consideration and argumentation of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
* Lack of concluding analysis of the self-fulfilling prophecy.
 |

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| **Trait 2 Rubric:** Organization |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Organization is effective and demonstrates a logical flow of ideas within the response.
* Transitions effectively connect concepts.
* May contain an effective introduction and/or conclusion.
 |
| **3** | * Organization is clear and appropriate.
* Transitions appropriately connect concepts.
* May contain an appropriate introduction and/or conclusion.
 |
| **2** | * Organization is skeletal or otherwise limited, which may impede the reader’s ability to follow the response.
* Some simple or basic transitions are used but may be inappropriate or ineffective.
* May contain a minimal introduction and/or conclusion.
 |
| **1** | * Response lacks a clear plan.
* Transitions are lacking or do not link ideas.
* Both the introduction and conclusion are minimal and/or absent.
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| **Trait 3 Rubric:** Conventions |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Demonstrates sophistication and skill with a wide variety of conventions.
* May contain minor editing errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or sentence construction.
* Errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding.
 |
| **3** | * Demonstrates adequate control over a variety of conventions.
* Response may contain some errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and/or sentence construction.
* Most errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding.
 |
| **2** | * Although basic conventions may be mostly controlled, overall the response demonstrates inconsistent control over conventions.
* May not use a variety of conventions, OR may only use basic conventions.
* May contain a substantial number of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and/or sentence construction.
* Some errors interfere with the reader’s understanding.
 |
| **1** | * Demonstrates a lack of control over basic conventions.
* May contain a large number of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and/or sentence structure OR the errors are severe.
* Errors interfere with the reader’s understanding OR the response is minimal and has a density of errors.
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| **Trait 4 Rubric:** Voice |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Voice is appropriately authoritative, indicating a high level of comfort with the material.
* Words are precise and well-chosen.
* Sentences are varied and have a natural fluidity.
 |
| **3** | * Voice is appropriate and clear.
* Words are appropriate to the subject matter.
* Sentences are appropriate and varied, making the response easy to read.
 |
| **2** | * Voice may be artificial or uneven.
* Word choice, overall, may be appropriate for the subject matter, but original writing may indicate a limited vocabulary range.
* Sentences may be choppy, rambling, or repetitive in a way that limits fluency.
 |
| **1** | * Voice may be lacking or inappropriate.
* Original writing may be simplistic, vague, inappropriate, or incorrect.
* Sentences may be limited in variety or may comprise awkward fragments or run-ons that produce a halting voice.
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| **Trait 5 Rubric:** Focus & CoherenceSpecific Trait |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Response persuasively justifies its conclusions through logic and examples.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. effectively demonstrate a strong command of the relevant concepts in communication.
 |
| **3** | * Response justifies its conclusions through some combination of logic and examples.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. effectively demonstrate a good command of the relevant concepts in psychology.
 |
| **2** | * Response provides some justification for its conclusions. Some combination of logic and examples are present but are inconsistent or somewhat ineffective.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. demonstrate only a partial understanding of the relevant concepts in psychology.
 |
| **1** | * Response provides no significant justification for its conclusions. Logic and examples are absent, inconsistent, and/or ineffective.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. demonstrate no more than a weak grasp of the relevant concepts in psychology.
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**What Is Psychology?**

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| **MyLabs Group** | MyPsychLab, MyDevelopmentLab |
| **Prompt Code**Provide a unique identifier | ARONSONch01\_02 |
| **Prompt Type**Check appropriate type | Expositoryx | Descriptive | Narrative | Persuasive |
| **Assessment Goals**Briefly summarize and describe the assessment goals for this prompt (e.g., Student Understanding, Critical Thinking, Integrating Concepts, Writing Quality, Other) | Student Understanding, Critical Thinking, Writing Quality |
| **Instructor Requirements** | n/a |
| **Prompt** | Describe how social psychology overlaps with, but is different from, its “cousins” sociology and personality psychology. |
| **Length of Response**(in words) | Minimum | Maximum | Expected (Avg.) | Comments |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Planned Scoring**  |
|  | Holistic | Trait 1 | Trait 2 | Trait 3 | Trait 4 | Trait 5 |
| **Trait Name** | Ideas | Organization | Conventions | Voice | Focus & Coherence |
| **Score Points** | Weighted Average | 40% | 10% | 10% | 20% | 20% |

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| **Trait 1 Rubric:** IdeasSpecific Trait |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Response features well-developed thesis with robust supporting details of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* Strong consideration and argumentation of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* Excellent, perceptive analysis of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
 |
| **3** | * Response features thesis with some supporting details describing how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* Sufficient, thoughtful consideration and argumentation of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* Fairly comprehensive analysis of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
 |
| **2** | * Response features broad, loosely defined interaction or event with limited supporting details describing how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* Minimal consideration and argumentation of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* Weak concluding analysis of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
 |
| **1** | * Response features poorly defined interaction or event with no supporting details describing how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* No consideration and argumentation of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
* Lack of concluding analysis of how psychology compares with sociology and personality psychology.
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| **Trait 2 Rubric:** Organization |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Organization is effective and demonstrates a logical flow of ideas within the response.
* Transitions effectively connect concepts.
* May contain an effective introduction and/or conclusion.
 |
| **3** | * Organization is clear and appropriate.
* Transitions appropriately connect concepts.
* May contain an appropriate introduction and/or conclusion.
 |
| **2** | * Organization is skeletal or otherwise limited, which may impede the reader’s ability to follow the response.
* Some simple or basic transitions are used but may be inappropriate or ineffective.
* May contain a minimal introduction and/or conclusion.
 |
| **1** | * Response lacks a clear plan.
* Transitions are lacking or do not link ideas.
* Both the introduction and conclusion are minimal and/or absent.
 |

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| **Trait 3 Rubric:** Conventions |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Demonstrates sophistication and skill with a wide variety of conventions.
* May contain minor editing errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or sentence construction.
* Errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding.
 |
| **3** | * Demonstrates adequate control over a variety of conventions.
* Response may contain some errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and/or sentence construction.
* Most errors do not interfere with the reader’s understanding.
 |
| **2** | * Although basic conventions may be mostly controlled, overall the response demonstrates inconsistent control over conventions.
* May not use a variety of conventions, OR may only use basic conventions.
* May contain a substantial number of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and/or sentence construction.
* Some errors interfere with the reader’s understanding.
 |
| **1** | * Demonstrates a lack of control over basic conventions.
* May contain a large number of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and/or sentence structure OR the errors are severe.
* Errors interfere with the reader’s understanding OR the response is minimal and has a density of errors.
 |

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| --- |
| **Trait 4 Rubric:** Voice |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Voice is appropriately authoritative, indicating a high level of comfort with the material.
* Words are precise and well-chosen.
* Sentences are varied and have a natural fluidity.
 |
| **3** | * Voice is appropriate and clear.
* Words are appropriate to the subject matter.
* Sentences are appropriate and varied, making the response easy to read.
 |
| **2** | * Voice may be artificial or uneven.
* Word choice, overall, may be appropriate for the subject matter, but original writing may indicate a limited vocabulary range.
* Sentences may be choppy, rambling, or repetitive in a way that limits fluency.
 |
| **1** | * Voice may be lacking or inappropriate.
* Original writing may be simplistic, vague, inappropriate, or incorrect.
* Sentences may be limited in variety or may comprise awkward fragments or run-ons that produce a halting voice.
 |

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| **Trait 5 Rubric:** Focus & CoherenceSpecific Trait |
| **Score Point**  | **Description of Student Response** |
| **4** | * Response persuasively justifies its conclusions through logic and examples.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. effectively demonstrate a strong command of the relevant concepts in communication.
 |
| **3** | * Response justifies its conclusions through some combination of logic and examples.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. effectively demonstrate a good command of the relevant concepts in psychology.
 |
| **2** | * Response provides some justification for its conclusions. Some combination of logic and examples are present but are inconsistent or somewhat ineffective.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. demonstrate only a partial understanding of the relevant concepts in psychology.
 |
| **1** | * Response provides no significant justification for its conclusions. Logic and examples are absent, inconsistent, and/or ineffective.
* References to people, events, places, relationships, etc. demonstrate no more than a weak grasp of the relevant concepts in psychology.
 |

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IN-CLASS EXERCISES AND QUICK ASSESSMENTS

Exercise 1–1

Common Sense

In class: Make enough copies of handout 1.1a for half the class and enough copies of handout 1.1b for the other half of the class. As you distribute the handouts, do not let students know that one side of the room received 1.1a and the other side received 1.1b. When students have answered the question, ask students to raise their hands if they marked a 3, 4, or 5 for their answer. Most hands will go up. Then ask two students, one on each side of the room, to read their statements.

Discussion: Why do we believe that both homilies in a pair are generally true? What are some other examples where folk wisdom contradicts itself? Let students generate as many as they can come up with. Some other examples are: “many hands make light the work” and “too many cooks spoil the broth”; “birds of a feather flock together” and “opposites attract”; “strike while the iron is hot” and “look before you leap”; “absence makes the heart grow fonder” and “out of sight, out of mind”; “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” and “Patience is a virtue”; “the pen is mightier than the sword” and “actions speak louder than words”; and “haste makes waste” and “he who hesitates is lost.”

This exercise ties in neatly to the textbook’s discussion of folk wisdom on pp. 9–10. Folk wisdom embodies generalizations about human nature. These old sayings are, in essence, society-wide implicit personality theories embodying “common-sense” notions about human behavior. They often have a basis in reality, and seem to be useful for making predictions. However, as the exercise demonstrates, “common sense” may tell us different things.

 While it need not be discarded, common sense is not enough. We need to examine the evidence for and against each saying to discover the circumstances under which it may be accurate or inaccurate. How do social psychologists go about trying to resolve the contradictions embodied in this folk wisdom? Empirical research is particularly helpful for this purpose. Of course, you might also note that it would be foolhardy for any social psychological researcher to completely abandon using common sense and to rely only upon empirical findings from previously conducted research. Empirical results or answers are only as good as the questions that have been asked, and when common sense is contradicted by an empirical result, it may indicate (as in the case of these contradictory common sense homilies) that the result is true only under certain circumstances—which the social psychologist will then attempt to specify.

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.1a: COMMON SENSE

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you think this statement is accurate in giving advice.

**BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| not at all accurate | a little accurate | somewhat accurate | moderately accurate | very accurate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Name:     Date:

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.1b: COMMON SENSE

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you think this statement is accurate in giving advice.

**NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| not at all accurate | a little accurate | somewhat accurate | moderately accurate | very accurate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Exercise 1–2

Social Psychology Quiz

As an alternative to Exercise 1–1 on social psychology and common sense, you can give students the quiz found in the “Try It!” exercise in Chapter 2 (pg. 25) the first or second day of class. The quiz is reprinted here for your convenience. Answers can be found on page XXX of the textbook. Since this quiz is in the second chapter, students will probably not yet have encountered it. The quiz items focus on somewhat counterintuitive research findings in social psychology. They provide a lead-in to a lecture or discussion on why we do social psychological research and why social psychology is not “just common sense.” These questions can also be administered via online survey as an out of class assignment.

Name:     Date:

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.2: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY QUIZ

Directions: Take a moment to answer the questions below, each of which is based on social psychological research. Though the correct answers may seem obvious in retrospect, many are hard to guess in advance.

1. Suppose an authority figure asks college students to administer near-lethal electric shocks to another student who has not harmed them in any way. What percentage of these students will agree to do it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. If you give children a reward for doing something they already enjoy, they will subsequently like that activity

a) more.

b) the same.

c) less.

3. When a business or governmental agency is faced with an important choice, it is always better to have a group of people make the decision, because “two heads are better than one.”

 a) true

 b) false

4. Repeated exposure to a stimulus, such as a person, a song, or a painting, will make you like it

a) more.

b) the same.

c) less.

5. You ask an acquaintance to do you a favor—for example, to lend you $10—and he or she agrees. As a result of doing you this favor, the person will probably like you

a) more.

b) the same.

c) less.

6. Who do think would be *least* likely to help a stranger who drops a bunch of papers all over the ground? Someone who is in a

 a) good mood

 b) neutral mood, or

 c) bad mood?

7. In the United States, female college students tend not to do as well on math tests as males do. Under which conditions will women do as well as men?

a) when they are told there are no gender differences on the test

b) when they are told that women tend to do better on a difficult math test (because under these circumstances, they rise to the challenge)

c) when they are told that men outperform women under almost all circumstances

8. Which statement about the effects of advertising is most true?

a) Subliminal messages implanted in advertisements are more effective than normal, everyday advertisements.

b) Normal, everyday advertising, such as TV ads for painkillers or laundry detergents, is more effective than subliminal messages implanted in ads.

c) Both types of advertising are equally effective.

d) Neither type of advertising is effective.

9. What effect, if any, does playing violent video games have on how likely people are to act

 aggressively in everyday life?

 a) Playing the games increases the likelihood that they will act aggressively.

 b) They become less aggressive because the games “get it out of their system.”

 c) Playing the games has no effect on how aggressive people are.

10. Students walking across campus are asked to fill out a questionnaire on which they rate the degree to which student opinion should be considered on a local campus issue. Which group do you think believed that students should be listened to the most?

a) those given a light clipboard with the questionnaire attached

b) those given a heavy clipboard with the questionnaire attached

c) the weight of the clipboard made no difference in people’s ratings

Exercise 1–3

Empirical Questions

Instructions: This activity will help students distinguish between empirical questions and non-empirical questions. Have students work in small groups, give each group the handout with the list of questions, and have them discuss whether each of the following questions is empirical or not, and why, and a social psychological topic or not and why.

After the small group discussions, discuss each question as a class. This activity should help students understand what constitutes an empirical question and which questions fall under the purview of social psychology. You could easily modify this activity by changing the questions to fit your own area of expertise or an area of interest for your students.

Answers:

1a. This is not an empirical question. Although you could assess how moral individuals consider premarital cohabitation to be, whether a practice is actually moral cannot be scientifically tested.

1b. This is not a social psychological question. You may wish to discuss which other academic disciplines do tend to deal with moral questions (e.g., religious studies, philosophy).

2a. This is an empirical question. It could be answered by comparing survey data about attitudes that has already been collected.

2b. This is not a social psychological question because it does not consider individuals in their social situations as the level of analysis. Because it is about changes in U.S. society, it is a sociological question.

3a. This is an empirical question. It could be answered by comparing the marital satisfaction of couples who cohabitated before marriage to those who did not. If your students are more methodologically savvy, you might discuss that, although this is an empirical question, it would be unethical to do an experiment to answer this question.

3b. This is a social psychological question. It considers the individual in the context of a cohabitating or non-cohabitating couple relationship as the level of analysis.

Group Member Names: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Social Psychology Course Number and Section:

HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.3: EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS

As a group, discuss each question below and then write your answers in the space provided.

Question 1: Is a couple living together outside of marriage immoral?

a. Is this an empirical question or not? Why?

b. Is this a social psychological question or not? Why?

Question 2: How have beliefs about whether premarital cohabitation is acceptable changed over the last 50 years in the U.S.?

a. Is this an empirical question or not? Why?

b. Is this a social psychological question or not? Why?

Question 3: How does premarital cohabitation affect subsequent marital satisfaction?

a. Is this an empirical question or not? Why?

b. Is this a social psychological question or not? Why?

Exercise 1–4

Traits and Situations as Determinants of Behavior

Time to Complete: 15–20 minutes

Ahead of Time: You will probably want to work through the calculations yourself first so as to avoid confusion. You may wish to have a couple of hand calculators available for those students who would prefer to do the arithmetic involved this way. However, most students will likely have calculators on their cell phones.

In Class: To further illustrate the fundamental attribution error, ask students to think of the person they know who would be most likely and the person they know who would be least likely to donate food to a food drive. Then distribute the handout. Have students complete the exercise and calculations in the handout. Walk around to assist students who may be confused over the calculations.

When students have worked through the calculations, ask students to raise their hands and indicate how many students had a bigger number for the effect of personality traits than for the effect of situations? How many students had a bigger number for the effect of situations than for personality traits? Did anyone have two numbers equal to one another? Most students will indicate that they had a bigger number for the expected effect of personality traits.

Then, tell the students that this study was, in fact, conducted at Stanford University by Newton, Griffin, and Ross (1980). Use the overhead transparency provided to show students the results from the Newton et al. study, and walk students through the calculations for the size of the effects of personality traits and situations.

Discussion: Most students will find that the expected effect of personality is larger than the expected effect of the situation. However, in fact, when Newton, Griffin, and Ross (1980, described on pp. 132–133 of L. Ross & R.E. Nisbett, The person and the situation: Perspectives of social psychology, New York: McGraw Hill) conducted a study like this, they found that the effect of the situation was more powerful than the effect of personality. (See transparency master for results.) Thus, those people who expect that the effect of personality will be stronger than the effect of the situation are making the fundamental attribution error.

Note that in this study, the situation had a more powerful effect than did personality, even though the people used as participants in the research were both the most helpful and the least helpful people the students knew. If personality were to have a strong effect on predicting helping behavior, it should certainly be when the target people are known for being extreme on the personality dimension (as compared to the more typical case when the target people used are randomly selected). But even in this case, the effect of the situation was more powerful than that of personality.

Name:     Date:

Social Psychology Course Number and Section:

HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.4: TRAITS AND SITUATIONS

Think of the person you know who would be most likely to donate food to a food drive:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Think of the person you know who would be least likely to donate food to a food drive:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now, imagine the following situation:

Students are mailed a letter and asked to make a donation of food to a campus crusade against hunger. They are assigned a specific type of food to bring and are given a map to the place to deliver their donation. The night before their donation is due, they are called and reminded to bring their food.

How likely is your most likely person to donate food? Use a percentage between 0% and 100% to indicate how likely your “most likely” person is to donate food under these circumstances. Write this number on line A, below.

How likely is your least likely person to donate food? Use a percentage between 0% and 100% to indicate how likely your “least likely” person is to donate food under these circumstances. Write this number on line B, below.

Now, imagine that each person is mailed a letter asking to make a donation of food to a campus crusade against hunger, but that this time, no map, type of food, or phone call are provided.

Under these circumstances, how likely is your “most likely” person to donate food? Write this number on the line C, below.

Under these circumstances, how likely is your “least likely” person to donate food? Write this number on the line D, below.

|  |
| --- |
| **Effect of Persons** |
|  |  | Most Likely Person | Least Likely Person |
| **Effect of Situations** | Cues Given | A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | B \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| No Cues | C \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | D \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

Now, we’ll have you do some simple calculations. Use a calculator if necessary.

First, what is the average of A and C? \_\_\_\_\_\_ (E) “average most likely”

Now, what is the average of B and D? \_\_\_\_\_\_ (F) “average least likely”

Take these two numbers, and find their difference (E – F = G). \_\_\_\_\_\_ (G) difference most & least likely

(G) is your EXPECTED EFFECT OF PERSONALITY TRAITS.

Now, find the average between A and B. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (H) “average w/cue”

And also find the average of C and D. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (I) “average w/o cue”

Take these two numbers, and find their difference (H–I=J). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (J) difference w/ & w/o cue

(J) is your EXPECTED EFFECT OF SITUATIONAL CUES.

Exercise 1–4

Transparency Master

Results from Newton, Griffin, & Ross (1980)

Effect of Persons

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Most Likely  | Least Likely | Average |
| Effect of Situations | Cues Given | A 42% | B 25% | G=33.5% |
|  | No Cues | C 8% | D 0% | H= 4.0% |
|  | Average | E= 25% | F=12.5% |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

EFFECT OF PERSONALITY TRAITS:

difference E – F = 25% – 12.5% = 12.5%

EFFECT OF SITUATION:

difference G – H = 33.5% – 4% = 29.5%.

Exercise 1–5

Hindsight Bias

Have half of the students complete version A of the questionnaire and half complete version B. Then ask students to indicate how many found their finding surprising, and how many found it not surprising. Most hands will indicate that they found the finding “not surprising.” Then debrief the students by telling them that half had findings opposite to those seen by the other half, and use this as an opportunity to introduce the concept of the hindsight bias, the tendency, after an event has occurred, to believe that one could have foreseen the outcome (Slovic & Fischhoff, 1977). The concept is briefly discussed at the beginning of Chapter 2. The hindsight bias can make social psychology’s results seem more “common sense.”

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.5a: HINDSIGHT BIAS

Social psychologists have found that offering students money or prizes in exchange for good grades is a good way to get them interested and involved in their school work.

Why do you think this might be?

Do you find this research result surprising, or not surprising? (Circle one)

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.5b: HINDSIGHT BIAS

Social psychologists have found that offering students money or prizes in exchange for good grades can actually undermine students’ interest in their school work because students then only want to do the work if they are going to get paid.

Why do you think this might be?

Do you find this research result surprising, or not surprising? (Circle one)

Exercise 1–6

Demonstrating the Fundamental Attribution Error I

Time to Complete: 15–20 minutes; In-class

In Class: Ask members of the class to break up into pairs, preferably with people who don’t know each other very well. The pairs are told they are going to play a game. Each pair decides, by flip of a coin, who will play each of two roles: the Quizmaster and the Contestant. Once this has been decided, the Quizmaster has five minutes to make up five difficult but not impossible questions of general knowledge (e.g., “How many symphonies did Beethoven write?”). The Quizmaster will make up the questions and then the Contestant will have a chance to answer them. The Quizmaster will then tell the Contestant whether he or she is right or wrong. Give the Quizmasters about five minutes to make up the questions, and allow the pairs another five minutes for the Contestants to give their responses and the Quizmasters to “grade” them. After the quiz, have each person fill out the questionnaire. Make a point of telling your students that you are not asked to rate the intelligence of your partner but rather their general knowledge—their knowledge for the types of trivia they’ve been asking or answering. Collect them and use the overhead transparency to tally the results. You can calculate averages based on the tally. (You may want to bring a calculator to class to help quickly generate means.) Watson reports that he typically finds that the contestants rate their partners about half a point higher than the quizmasters rate theirs.

Discussion: Why did the contestants generally rate themselves lower? What do you think the results would have been if your role were switched with that of their partner? How does this exercise demonstrate the fundamental attribution error?

QUICK ASSESSMENT:

To test your students’ understanding of the fundamental attribution error and the connection between the FAE and this demonstration, ask them to complete the quick assessment handout to accompany exercise 1.6.

Source: This exercise was developed by David L. Watson (in the APA’s Activities Handbook for the Teaching of Psychology, Vol. 2, pp. 135–137). It is based on a study conducted by Ross, L. D., Amabile, T. M., and Steinmetz, J. L. (1977), Social roles, social control, and biases in social perception processes, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35, 485–494.

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.6: FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

Questionnaire

Indicate whether you were a Contestant or a Quizmaster (Circle one).

Rate the general knowledge of the person that you worked with by comparing that person with yourself. Do not put your name on this sheet or allow your partner to see it.

The person I worked with seems to have (check one):

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ less general knowledge than I do

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat less general knowledge than I do

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about the same level of general knowledge that I do

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ somewhat more general knowledge than I do

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ more general knowledge than I do

Exercise 1-6

Questionnaire

Transparency Master

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Contestant** | **Quizmaster** |
|  |  |  |
| Less |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |
| Somewhat Less |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |
| About the Same |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |
| Somewhat More |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |
| More |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |        \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    |

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.6:

QUICK ASSESSMENT—FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

Directions: In this assessment, you will demonstrate your knowledge of the fundamental attribution error and analyze the results of our in-class demonstration. Please answer the following questions and explain your answers in detail.

1. Describe and explain the fundamental attribution error in your own words.

|  |
| --- |
|   |
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|   |

2. Did our class results show support for the fundamental attribution error? Explain why or why not.

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3. Did your results find evidence for obedience? Explain why or why not.

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4. What aspects of the situation do you think led to this result?

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Exercise 1–7

Demonstrating the Fundamental Attribution Error II

Another method of demonstrating the fundamental attribution error is to do a replication of the classic Jones and Harris (1967) study. Ask for two student volunteers to present a short speech. Take them into the hallway and give each a handwritten speech on a controversial issue (typed versions of two speeches on abortion are attached and may be used, but if the class is small enough that students will see the typing, the effect may be ruined). Getting an effect depends on students believing that the students who read the speech first wrote it themselves, or at least had their free choice of which speech to read. The first two students then take turns presenting their speeches. Have the first speaker present his or her speech. Then ask the students to rate the first speaker’s true attitude and turn it in. The second student presents his or her speech, and again, the students in the audience rate the speaker’s true attitude and turn in their ratings.

In the next part of the demonstration, ask for two more volunteers to give a speech. In front of the class, ask the presenter of the pro-choice speech to give their speech to the first new volunteer, and the presenter of the pro-life speech to give their speech to the second new volunteer. It should be clear to all students that the new volunteers have been assigned to speak on one side or the other of the issue, and have had no choice in the matter. Again, the volunteers present their speeches and the students make their ratings of the speaker’s true attitude. Although the ratings will be considerably less extreme than in the first case, students do tend to make the fundamental attribution error and assume that the speaker’s views correspond at least somewhat to those that they presented, even though the speakers had no choice.

Speech topics: (Create handwritten versions so that the student audience believes the first two speakers have composed the content themselves.)

For Speaker #1: Pro-Life Speech

Abortion is wrong because it involves the taking of a human life. This is murder, and calling it by any other name does not disguise what it really is. Life begins at the moment of conception, and people should not play God by deciding whether or not a life that already exists should continue. A woman who does not want the responsibility of having a child can always give it up for adoption. There are always many couples waiting to adopt healthy newborn infants.

For Speaker #2: Pro-Choice Speech

A woman should have the right to choose an abortion because it is her body and life that are being affected by the growing fetus. If choice is taken away from women, they will continue to get abortions anyway, but they will have to get them from unethical doctors who might actually hurt them, as happened in the days before abortion was legal. Also if abortion is made illegal, there will be many more babies who are unwanted and forced to live lives of poverty and abuse.

QUICK ASSESSMENT: To test your students’ understanding of the fundamental attribution error and the connection between the FAE and this demonstration, ask them to complete the quick assessment handout to accompany exercise 1.7.

Source: This demonstration is adapted from a suggestion in M. Lovaglia (2000), Knowing people: The personal uses of social psychology. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.7: FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

Directions: After you have heard each speech, rate the speaker’s true attitude using the scale below. Circle the number corresponding to the description you believe best fits the speaker’s true attitude.

Speaker #1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Extremely pro-choice | Moderately pro-choice | Slightlypro-choice | Neutral | Slightly pro-life | Moderately pro-life | Extremely pro-life |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Speaker #2 |
| Extremely pro-choice | Moderately pro-choice | Slightlypro-choice | Neutral | Slightly pro-life | Moderately pro-life | Extremely pro-life |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Speaker #3 |
| Extremely pro-choice | Moderately pro-choice | Slightlypro-choice | Neutral | Slightly pro-life | Moderately pro-life | Extremely pro-life |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Speaker #4 |
| Extremely pro-choice | Moderately pro-choice | Slightlypro-choice | Neutral | Slightly pro-life | Moderately pro-life | Extremely pro-life |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Exercise 1-7

Questionnaire

Transparency Master

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SPEAKER | MEAN RATING | SPEECH CONDITION |
| 1 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Pro-life |
| 2 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Pro-choice |
| 3 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Pro-life (other) |
| 4 | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Pro-choice (other) |

Name:     Date:

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.7:

QUICK ASSESSMENT—FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

Directions: In this assessment, you will demonstrate your knowledge of the fundamental attribution error and analyze the results of our in-class demonstration. Please answer the following questions and explain your answers in detail.

1. Describe and explain the fundamental attribution error in your own words.

|  |
| --- |
|   |
|   |
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|   |

2. Did our class results show support for the fundamental attribution error? Explain why or why not.

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3. Did your results find evidence for obedience? Explain why or why not.

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4. What aspects of the situation do you think led to this result?

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Exercise 1–8

Demonstrating Conformity: A First Day Activity

Time to Complete: 10-15 minutes, in-class.

This exercise should be done the first day of class before students know you by sight. You will need to solicit the assistance of a confederate who will pose as the course instructor and ask students to comply with a number of requests, including the sharing of personal information.

In class: The confederate will enter the classroom just prior to the start of class while you wait in your office. He/she should provide a first name and tell students that they have a lot to accomplish today and must begin right away by filling out a student information sheet (see next page). If students ask questions about why such information is needed, instruct the confederate to respond with answers such as, “We’ll get to that in a minute.” After students have completed the form, the confederate should collect them and then ask the students to all stand and face the back of the room. Again he/she should delay questions. As the students are facing the back of the room, the confederate should quietly leave the room with the completed information sheets. A few minutes later, you, the actual instructor, enter the room, apologize for being late, and ask the students why they are facing the back of the room. You should be puzzled, astonished, concerned that someone else unknown to you entered the room and collected such information from your students. You should also ask them why they provided such information to a total stranger. After the charade has gone on for a while, you can then reveal that the confederate was actually working with you to help demonstrate principles of social psychology. You can then begin to introduce the concepts of obedience, authority, deception, and research ethics. This demonstration is adopted from:

LoSchiavo, F. M., Buckingham, J. T., & Yurak, T. J. (2002). First-day demonstration for social psychology courses. Teaching of Psychology, 29, 216-219.

QUICK ASSESSMENT

To test your students’ understanding of the link between their own behavior and obedience, ask them to complete the quick assessment handout to accompany exercise 1.8.

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

Please provide the following information. Please print clearly.

Last name: First name: Middle name:

School address:

Home address:

Home phone:

Cell phone:

Email address:

Student ID number:

Social Security number:

Driver’s License number (and issuing state):

Name:     Date:

Social Psychology Course Number and Section:

HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.8:

QUICK ASSESSMENT—CONFORMITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Directions: In this assessment, you will demonstrate your knowledge of obedience and analyze your own behavior. Please answer the following questions and explain your answers in detail.

1. Describe and explain obedience in your own words.

|  |
| --- |
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2. Did you comply with the requests of the confederate? Why or why not?

|  |
| --- |
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3. Did your results find evidence for obedience? Explain why or why not.

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4. What about the situation do you believe had the greatest impact on your behavior?

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5. What questions do you have about social psychology as a field or obedience in particular?

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INTEGRATING “TRY IT” ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES

Exercise 1–9

How Values Change Paper

This paper is based on the “Try It!” exercise on page 3. Have students rate their own values and then ask one parent or person who raised them and one of their closest friends to rate their values (see handout). Then have them write a paper about how their values are influenced by others and whether their values are more similar to their parent’s values or their peer’s values. As a class, you could discuss whether students who have been in school longer (e.g., seniors) have values that are more similar to their peers and less similar to their parents than students who just started (e.g., freshmen).

Name:     Date:

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HANDOUT EXERCISE 1–9: HOW VALUES CHANGE

Think about the five things in your life that you value most (e.g., having good friendships, family, protecting the environment, learning new things, making a decent income, expressing creativity) and list them in order from most important to least important.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Now, have a parent or someone who raised you tell you the five things that they value most in life and write them here.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Finally, have a peer (someone your own age who you are close to and have met in the past few years) tell you the five things that they value most and then write them here.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Are your values more similar to your parent or peer? How do important people in your life influence your values? How do your values influence with whom you become friends?

Exercise 1–10

Shyness and Social Situations

This exercise is based on the “Try It!” on page 7 of the text. Have students rate their own levels of shyness. Then, in small groups, have them discuss how shy they feel and how shy they act in various social situations (e.g., with their best friend, with a group of people they know well, at a big party full of new people, in a small group discussion in class). Have them decide whether shy behavior is a function of the person, the situation, or both.

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STUDENT PROJECTS AND RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS

Exercise 1–12

An Informal History of Social Psychology

A library assignment can provide the basis for a discussion of the history of social psychology and also serve to familiarize students with the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP) (and other major journals in the field, if you wish). Assign each student, or a group of students, to examine the issues from a specified year of JPSP (available in most college and university libraries). The assigned years could vary from 1921, when the Journal of Abnormal Psychology and Social Psychology (JAPSP) (the first predecessor of JPSP) began, to the present (of course, the first year assigned will depend upon the availability of older issues in your library). Students assigned to examine the 1920s will need to look at both JAPSP, which was published from 1921 to 1924, and its retitled version, the Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology JASP). JASP is the name of the journal published by the American Psychological Association's Division 8 from 1924 to 1964. In 1965, the journal was retitled the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Homework Assignment: For each student or group, ask them to find the answers to the following questions. You may distribute handout 1.11, which covers questions 1–4, if you wish.

1. What were the most popular topics to study in the year that you examined?
2. Take one issue from the year that you have been assigned (making sure that it is not a “special issue” devoted to a single topic) and examine each study in that issue. Look at the participants being used in the studies. What percentage of studies use participants that are college students? What percentage of studies use male participants only? Female participants only? Both sexes?
3. Again, examining a single issue, calculate the average number of authors per article. Also, calculate the percentage of authors that have a female first author and the percentage that have any female authors.
4. Again, examining a single issue, calculate the average number of studies presented in each article.
5. [*For upper-level social psychology classes where the students can already be expected to know the difference between experimental and correlational/survey methods:* Examine one issue in the year you have been assigned and examine each study in that issue. What percentage of the studies are experiments? What percentage are surveys? What percentage use other methodologies?]

In Class: In class, have students report their results. You can use the transparency master for Exercise 1–11 to summarize the findings. Have different groups report on each question to demonstrate trends in the history of social psychology. The discussion should reveal trends in the content studied in social psychology: for example, the focus on cognitive dissonance in the 1960s, attribution in the 1970s, heuristics, schemas, and biases in the 1980s, and the self, culture, and motivation in the 1990s. Additionally, students will see for themselves the changes in use of broader subject populations (though this is still quite limited), the increasing role of women social psychologists as authors in the field, and the trend toward multi-study articles over recent years. An article by H. T. Reis & J. Stiller (1992), “Publication trends in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: A three decade retrospective,” Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18, 465–472, summarizes some of these changes and others from the 1960s to the 1990s, including more detailed methods sections, more tables, more literature cited in introductions, more research participants per study, and more complex statistics. These changes highlight the development of social psychology from a young science to one that has come “of age.” A variation of this assignment could have some students report on the Journal of Social Psychology rather than on JPSP so that the differences between sociological and psychological social psychology will be highlighted.

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Name:     Date:

Social Psychology Course Number and Section:

HANDOUT EXERCISE 1.12: AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Directions: In this assignment, you will be investigating the history of social psychology by examining issues from your assigned year of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

1. What were the most popular topics to study in the year that you examined?

|  |
| --- |
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |

2. Take one issue from the year that you have been assigned (making sure it is not a special issue devoted to a single topic) and examine each study in that issue. Look at the participants being used in the studies. What percentage of studies use participants who are college students? What percentage of studies use male participants only? Female participants only? Both sexes?

|  |
| --- |
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |

3. Again, examining a single issue, calculate the average number of authors per article. Also calculate the percentage of articles that have a female first author and the percentage that have any female authors.

|  |
| --- |
|   |
|   |
|   |

4. Again, examining a single issue, calculate the average number of studies presented in each article.

|  |
| --- |
|   |

5. Add any additional observations below.

|  |
| --- |
|   |
|   |
|   |

Exercise 1–12

Transparency Master: An Informal History of Social Psychology

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Decade | Topics | Participants | Mean #of Authors | Mean # of Exps. |
| 1920s |  |  |  |  |
| 1930s |  |  |  |  |
| 1940s |  |  |  |  |
| 1950s |  |  |  |  |
| 1960s |  |  |  |  |
| 1970s |  |  |  |  |
| 1980s |  |  |  |  |
| 1990s |  |  |  |  |
| 2000s |  |  |  |  |

Exercise 1–13

Personal Experience Essays or Journal

Throughout the term, you might have students either keep a journal (with regular entries once a week) or write personal experience papers in which they demonstrate how some event from their personal experience can be understood using concepts from the course. Miller (1997; Self-knowledge as an outcome of application journal keeping in social psychology, Teaching of Psychology, 24, 124–125) reports that such a procedure results in significant acquisition of self-knowledge as well as knowledge about concepts from the course. A website with many examples of how various instructors have implemented this idea is

[http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/assignments.htm#journals](http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/assignments.htm%23journals).

Exercise 1–14

Social Psychology Illustrations

Another project in which students might engage throughout the term is the collection of magazine articles and newspaper clippings that illustrate social psychological concepts (based on Rider, E. (1992), “Understanding and applying psychology through use of news clippings,” Teaching of Psychology, 19, 161–163). For each scrapbook entry, students can write a paragraph explaining how the article illustrates a theory or concept from the class. Students need not limit themselves to articles; editorials, advertisements, and even cartoons may be illustrative as well. Rider reports that students indicated that keeping such a portfolio enhanced their knowledge of course material and ability to apply material outside the classroom.

 For a more modern twist on this assignment, you can have students find brief online videos that are examples of social psychological concepts, have them present the videos in class, and explain the concept they demonstrate. I recommend having students visit your office hours before they present in class so that you can be sure that students are well-prepared and have selected appropriate examples.

James Gire (Virginia Military Institute) uses the following similar exercise for his course. Students are asked, over the course of the term, to provide several “illustrations” of social psychological concepts. These are examples of social psychological principles from journals, newspapers, magazines, and websites. Students provide both the illustration (with source information) and an explanation of the concept being illustrated.

Example of an Illustration

Concept/Principle: Conformity

Source: Shakespeare, W. HAMLET, Act 3, Scene 2

HAMLET: Do you see yonder cloud, that’s almost in shape like a camel?

POLONIUS: By the mass, and ’tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS: It’s back’d like a weasel.

HAMLET: Or, like a whale?

POLONIUS: Very like a whale.

Explanation: The above conversation is a clear case of how our perception of reality is sometimes influenced by others. This example appears to be a case of informational influence, whereby we use other people’s experiences to help us determine the accuracy of our perceptions. This type of conformity is most likely to occur when the situation is ambiguous, the other person(s) is/are experts, and the people to whom we are conforming have a higher status than we do. Notice that Polonius is of lower status relative to Hamlet.

A variety of other similar assignments can be found in syllabi online at [http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/assignments.htm#content](http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/assignments.htm%23content).

Exercise 1–15

Social Issues Term Paper

Those instructors who wish to emphasize the applications of social psychology could have students explore social psychological contributions to the research on a particular social problem. This is probably best done as a term paper. One easy way to approach this assignment is using issues of the Journal of Social Issues. Each issue of this journal is focused on a different social problem. The inside rear cover of each issue lists the topics that have been covered during the past twelve years. Recent issues have examined social psychological approaches to studying hate crimes, euthanasia, affirmative action, youth violence, and inequalities in higher education. Each issue begins with an article prepared by the editors of that particular issue. This introductory article provides background on the social issue and on key social psychological perspectives that are relevant to the problem. Then the introductory article provides a brief summary of the contents of each article in the issue (which typically number 8 to 10). A term paper assignment could include summarizing this introductory article and as many of the articles in the issue as seem appropriate for the amount of credit given for the assignment. Instructors wishing to include such an assignment as part of their course assignments could ask students to begin thinking about topics they are particularly interested in exploring at the beginning of the course.

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WEBSITES TO EXPLORE

<http://www.socialpsychology.org> Social Psychology Network. The largest social psychology database on the Internet, developed and maintained by Scott Plous of Wesleyan University. Contains more than 5,000 links to social psychology-related resources, including a directory of social psychologists and of research groups, information about professional journals, an extensive directory of teaching resources, information about social psychology textbooks and about graduate programs, and access to online studies.

<http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow> Course Resources on the Web—Activities and exercises in social psychology. Jon Mueller of North Central College, Naperville, IL, created this site. It contains links to course assignments and activities developed and posted on the Web by many instructors of social psychology as well as links to lecture notes or outlines, social psychology websites, and information about using technology in teaching.

<http://psych.hanover.edu/Research/exponnet.html> Contains links to known experiments on the Internet that are psychologically related. Maintained by Dr. John H. Krantz at Hanover College.

<http://www.socialpsychology.org/siteweek.htm> A website developed by Scott Plous and his social psychology classes over the years, based on the best web illustrations that students submitted.

<http://www.sesp.org> The homepage of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology. It contains information about membership to this organization and upcoming conferences.

<http://www.units.muohio.edu/psybersite/Humor/index.shtml> A website containing cartoons related to social psychological themes and student analyses of them.

<http://oursocialworld.blogspot.com/> A blog by Don Forsyth covering general social psychology topics.

<http://learner.org/resources/series138.html> This website has free access to the Discovering Psychology series. Episodes must be viewed over the Internet (i.e., they are not able to be downloaded).

<http://psych-your-mind.blogspot.com/> This blog, written by Social and Personality psychologists, discusses the application of psychological issues to everyday life.

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FILM AND VIDEO LISTINGS

Candid Camera Classics in Social Psychology (58 min., 1994, MCG). Fifteen clips from the original Candid Camera series selected to illustrate basic social psychological concepts.

Invitation to Social Psychology (25 minutes, 1975, PSU). Narrated by Stanley Milgram, focuses on methods and subject matter in social psychology, including attitudes, obedience, attraction, aggression, and altruism.

The Power of the Situation (27 minutes, 1992, WGBH/PBS Series, ANN). Discover how situational forces can manipulate beliefs and behavior. Also included are the ways social psychologists interpret human behavior within its broader social context. Includes footage of Lewin’s leadership style study, the Milgram obedience study, the Asch conformity experiment, and the Zimbardo prison study. This can be accessed for free at learner.org.

The Social Animal (29 minutes, 1964, PSU). An older film that simulates classic studies by Asch, Deutsch, Festinger, and Schacter.

Social Psychology (33 minutes, 1971, PSU). Uses the case of the initial bussing of black students into white schools to introduce theories of social comparison, attitude formation and change, and prejudice.

Trading Places (1993). This comedy stars Dan Aykroyd and Eddie Murphy as pawns in two millionaires’ amateur experiment in social psychology. The film takes a light look at the power of social influence and the argument over nature versus nurture.

True Colors. (19 minutes, 1991, IU). A report from ABC’s Primetime Live showing how two men, similar in all aspects except one, their race, are treated very differently in a variety of situations.

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ONLINE VIDEOS TO EXPLORE

Single Ladies Dance. Video clip of an adult man in a black leotard dancing to “Single Ladies” by Beyoncé Knowles. Ask students why Cubby is dancing to the song and write answers on the board (lead in to construals and different types of attributions students make for behavior; plus it’s a really funny video). Can also lead into the fact that construals are important because we often don’t have all the facts (i.e., we don’t know why Cubby did it) and the fundamental attribution error, because most students will give dispositional reasons.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_lrKhmx2WU>

Marriage Proposal Rejection. (2 minutes) This is a clip of a man proposing and having his proposal rejected in front of his girlfriend’s entire family. It can be used as a lead in to discussing the need to be accurate versus the need to maintain self-esteem. What should he think? He could assume it was not his fault at all that she said no and protect his self-esteem, or he could try to get an accurate assessment of what happened (e.g., maybe proposing in front of her family was a bad idea; maybe his relationship was not as solid as he thought) so it will not happen again.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlQzTRX-7MA&NR=1>

How Do You Define Yourself? (13 minutes). Lizzie Velasquez gives a TED talk about what it is like to grow up with a rare syndrome that causes her to not be able to gain weight and to be blind in one eye, getting her labeled the “ugliest woman in the world”. Velasquez begins by discussing the benefits of her syndrome, which demonstrates that people can have different construals of the same objective situation. She continues by discussing how she is able to feel good about herself even in the face of social rejection and even while she accurately understands the negative consequences of her syndrome. This clip also briefly addresses bullying.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzPbY9ufnQY>

*How to Lose Your Self-Esteem* (18 minutes). Matthew Whoolery discusses why we need to stop thinking about self-esteem and thinking egocentrically (i.e., the negative consequences of the need to feel good about the self). He first takes a cultural perspective, claiming that the pursuit of self-esteem is much less common in countries outside of the U.S. and talking about the benefits of thinking about other people rather than just the self. He then discusses the value of admitting that you are not amazing and how a realistic understanding of the self fosters self-improvement and growth. This ties in to this chapter’s discussion of the conflict between feeling good about the self and being accurate. Finally, he discusses the importance of being who you are and doing your own unique good in the world.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjjPce\_SbUA

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