SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: SOCIAL COGNITION AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

A Six-Lesson Unit Plan for High School Psychology Teachers

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CONTENTS AND PROCEDURAL TIMELINE

Contents

Procedural Timeline

This unit is aligned to two content standards and nine learning targets that fall under the Social standard area from the Social and Personality Pillar of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2022).

Social Psychology: A Six-Lesson Unit Plan for High School Psychology Teachers

PILLAR	STANDARD AREA	CONTENT STANDARDS AND LEARNING TARGETS	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND ACTIVITIES
Social and Personality	Social	**Content Standard 1: Social Cognition** 1.1 Describe attributional explanations of behavior. 1.2 Explain how experiences shape attitudes and beliefs. 1.3 Explain how attitudes, biases, and beliefs affect behavior and relationships with others.	**Lesson One: Social Cognition Content Outline** Activity 1.1: What's More Powerful: Your Attitudes or Your Actions Activity 1.2: Cognitive Dissonance Scenarios Activity 1.3: Reflection
Social & Personality	Social	**Content Standard 2: Social Influence** 2.1 Explain how the presence of other people can affect behavior. 2.2 Describe how intergroup dynamics influence behavior. 2.3 Explain how persuasive methods affect behavior and beliefs. 2.4 Identify factors influencing attraction and relationships. 2.5 Identify factors influencing aggression and conflict. 2.6 Identify factors influencing altruism and helping behaviors.	**Lesson Two: Persuasive Methods Content Outline** Critical Thinking Exercise 2.1: The Three Factors of Persuasion Critical Thinking Exercise 2.2: Persuasion Scavenger Hunt Activity 2.1: Identifying Compliance Strategies Activity 2.2: Using Social Media for Persuasion Activity 2.3: Reflection **Lesson Three: Social Influence Content Outline** Activity 3.1: Social Influence Obedience Activity Activity 3.2: Social Influence Deindividuation Activity Activity 3.3: Reflection **Lesson Four: Attraction and Relationships Content Outline** Activity 4.1: Introduction to Attraction and Relationships Activity 4.2: Relationship Mapping Activity 4.3: Media Analysis Activity 4.4: Reflection **Lesson Five: Aggression Content Outline** Critical Thinking Exercise 5.1: Aggression Questionnaire Activity 5.1: Seeing Aggression in Our Everyday Life Activity 5.2: Reflection **Lesson Six: Altruism and Helping Behaviors Content Outline** Activity 6.1: Introduction to Helping Behavior Activity 6.2: Altruistic Acts Journal Activity 6.3: Helping Behavior in the Media Activity 6.4: Reflection

Introduction and Document Use

The Social and Personality Pillar of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2022) is comprised of four standard areas (Social, Personality, Multiculturalism and Gender, and Motivation and Emotion). This lesson plan is designed to support the teaching of **two specific content standards (social cognition and social influence)**, that fall under the Social Content Standard. Some teachers may expect to find content on cultural differences and similarities or concepts such as prejudice and discrimination under the category of social psychology but should note that this lesson plan does not address those topics as it is aligned to the Social standard area as mentioned above. The lessons include content outlines, critical thinking exercises and class activities to support the needs of teachers, learners and classrooms. All resources in this lesson plan are designed to promote engagement and mastery of social psychology concepts. Teachers can choose from the activities to develop lessons as needed.

In addition to the activities described in this lesson plan, teachers are encouraged to explore TOPSS Resources to Broaden Diversity and Representation in the High School Psychology Curriculum. These resources, which include summaries of research studies, psychologist profiles, guiding questions and other resources, are aligned to each of the five content pillars of the National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula (APA, 2022), including the Social and Personality Pillar.

At the time of this publication, this diversity and representation project is currently in progress and the TOPSS committee intends to continue to add resources that reflect different dimensions of diversity over time. Teachers are encouraged to periodically check the site for updates.

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Proposed number of days/hours for lesson:

Number of total teaching hours*: 7-8

      9-10 days in 50-minute classes = 7-8 hours (one semester class: 5 days; 4 hours)

      5 days in 90-minute classes = 7.5 hours (one semester class: 3 days; 4.5 hours)

*Total teaching hours can be less if not all activities are used in class.

LESSON 1
Social Cognition

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Researchers in social psychology examine how we assign determinants of behavior in others and in ourselves. Throughout our day, we encounter any number of behaviors that we quickly perceive as being due to personal traits (i.e., disposition) or external factors. The way that we assign credit or blame is influenced by several components of social cognition.

Social psychologists also study the ways in which attitudes may influence one's behavior, and conversely, how behavior may influence one's attitude or thinking. They also examine the power of roles and behavior on attitude and study the ways in which people's thoughts and biases affect how they relate to each other. Why do we take credit when things go our way, and blame others when they don't?

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

- **Attribution Theory:** the processes by which people ascribe motives to their own and others' behavior, and particularly whether these motives are either internal and personal (a dispositional attribution) or external and circumstantial (a situational attribution) (APA, n.d.-a)

- **Fundamental Attribution Error:** the tendency to overestimate the degree to which an individual's behavior is determined by his or her abiding personal characteristics, attitudes, or beliefs and, correspondingly, to minimize the influence of the surrounding situation on that behavior (APA, n.d.-f)

- **Cognitive Dissonance:** an unpleasant psychological state resulting from inconsistency between two or more thoughts or between thoughts and behaviors (APA, n.d.-c)

- **Self-Serving Bias:** the tendency to interpret events in a way that assigns credit for success to oneself but denies one's responsibility for failure, which is blamed on external factors (APA, n.d.-l)

- **False-Consensus Effect:** the tendency to assume that one's own opinions, beliefs, attributes, or behaviors are more widely shared than is actually the case (APA, n.d.-e)

- **Just-World Hypothesis:** the idea that the world is a fair and orderly place where what happens to people generally is what they deserve. In other words, bad things happen to bad people, and good things happen to good people (APA, n.d.-j)

- **Halo Effect:** a rating bias in which a general evaluation (usually positive) of a person, or an evaluation of a person on a specific dimension, influences judgments of that person on other specific dimensions. For example, a person who is generally liked might be judged as more intelligent, competent, and honest than they actually are (APA, n.d.-i)

CONTENT OUTLINE

Attribution is the way that we assign credit or blame for behavior.

- **Attribution Theory** explains that we will decide that a behavior is either ascribed as situational or dispositional.

- The **Fundamental Attribution Error** may lead us to overestimate dispositional factors in the behavior of others.

  » *Example:* If one witnesses a driving mistake while on the road, they may automatically assume that this is due to the other driver's careless attitude or selfish personality.

  » *Note:* Research suggests that our attributions can also be impacted by dimensions such as racial or gender identity. For example, a recent study found that college students watching a video of a staged "performance evaluation" in a work setting were more likely to make dispositional attributions of anger when the "employee" was a black woman (Motro et al., 2021).

may be used as an optional introductory activity at this point.

Behavior is a powerful influence over our attitudes and beliefs.

- In 1971, the **Stanford Prison Experiment**, led by Dr. Phil Zimbardo, set out to examine roles in a simulated prison environment. Intended to go on for two weeks, the study only lasted 6 days. This study remains a topic of discussion in social psychology due to its ethical problems (see additional resources for more information, and more modern discussions regarding validity). Despite these concerns, this study continues to influence the conversation about the power of roles and behavior. Additional limitations to this study included that all participants were male undergraduate students.

- **Cognitive Dissonance** is an unpleasant psychological state resulting from inconsistency between two or more thoughts or between thoughts and behaviors (APA, n.d.-c).

- In order to resolve the discomfort of cognitive dissonance, we tend to adjust either our attitudes or our behaviors to align them with the conflicting thought or behavior. Often, people resolve cognitive dissonance by adjusting their attitudes or thoughts, rather than their behavior.

  » *Example:* Many people who smoke cigarettes will continue the behavior, despite knowing the risks to their health. They resolve their dissonance by adjusting their thinking/attitude (i.e., the medical evidence is exaggerated) rather than changing the behavior.

may be used at this point.

Bias and the Blame Game: How does it affect our behavior and relationships?

- When things go our way, we tend to take credit, but when things go wrong, we tend to deny our role. Instead, we think of other factors which may have led to an unwanted outcome. This is a **Self-Serving Bias**.

  » *Example:* If Albert gets a high score on a test, then he may believe that it was because he studied diligently and is smart. If he scores poorly on the test, then he may say that the teacher wrote an unnecessarily difficult test.

- We often (inaccurately) believe that people share our own thoughts, values, or beliefs. This **False-Consensus Effect** may result in our failure to consider other perspectives or solutions.

- Humans are comforted by the idea that the world is a stable, predictable place where good things happen to good people. This idea of a **"Just World"** may create a bias that leads people to victim-blaming.

- **The Halo Effect** is a phenomenon that may lead people to overestimate someone's abilities, skills, or intelligence because of their general likeability.

  » *Example:* Annette sees her friend as funny and kind, so she is certain that her friend will be a great employee for her new event planning business, even though Jamie has no experience in the field.

may be used at this point (optional activity).

CONCLUSION

Summarize the key points of the lesson and emphasize the importance of understanding attribution in Social Cognition.

LESSON 2
Persuasive Methods

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Do you often feel overwhelmed by messages from television advertisements, social media, or magazines and pressures from loved ones, doctors, or even politicians? These messages attempt to persuade you to think or act on something. In the earliest scientific work on persuasion, Carl Hovland and his colleagues (1953) suggested that persuasion is most likely to occur when one pays attention to a message, understands it, and finds it convincing. Persuasion is something that all students and adults can relate to. High school students may experience persuasion daily from social media and television advertisements. While all students are familiar with the concept of persuasion, the factors to persuade and the routes to persuasion are likely unfamiliar topics within this concept. In this lesson, teachers will introduce the factors that affect persuasion and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, along with compliance strategies. *Compliance can also fit into sections on conformity, social norms, and obedience as well.*

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Attitude:** feelings and beliefs about people, objects, events, and ideas.
- **Persuasion:** the active and conscious effort to change an attitude by sending a message.
- **The Elaboration Likelihood Model:**
  - **Central Route:** a method of persuasion that uses high elaboration; that is, you pay attention to the arguments and consider all the information in the message. This method usually results in the development of stronger attitudes that last over time and that you actively defend.
  - **Peripheral Route:** a method of persuasion that uses low elaboration; that is, you minimally process the message. This method usually results in the development of weaker attitudes that are more likely to change over time. Incidental cues are used like attractiveness and emotional attention getters.
- **Mere Exposure Effect:** the increase in liking due to repeated exposure.
- **Compliance:** a change in a person's behavior in response to a direct request.
  - **Foot-in-the-Door Strategy:** compliance strategy in which if you agree to a small request, you will likely then comply with a larger request.
  - **Door-in-the-Face Strategy:** compliance strategy in which if you refuse a large request, you are more likely to comply with a smaller request.
  - **Lowballing Strategy:** compliance strategy in which you agree to a commitment and then the terms of that commitment increase.

CONTENT OUTLINE

Factors that Affect Persuasion

- There are three factors that affect the **persuasiveness of a message** (Petty & Wegener, 1998):
  - the source of the message,
  - the content of the message, and
  - the intended receiver who processes the message.

- Strong arguments are important for the content of the message (Greenwald, 1968), especially arguments that appeal to emotions.

- Sources that are both **attractive and credible** tend to be very persuasive.

- A message also may be more credible and persuasive when you **perceive the source as similar to yourself or if the message aligns with your personal values** (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018).

  » *Example:* A recent study of men who have sex with men found that an HIV-prevention video was more effective in reducing people's intention to engage in safe-sex when the characters in the video were more similar to those watching the video (Basaran et al., 2019).

- Advertisers also use the **Mere-Exposure Effect** by repeating the message over and over in hope that the multiple exposures will encourage persuasion.

Critical Thinking Exercise 2.1: The Three Factors of Persuasion *can be completed at this point.*

The Elaboration Likelihood Model

- Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1986) theorized the **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**, a dual process theory detailing two types of routes to persuasion to change attitudes: central route and peripheral route.

- **Central Route** to persuasion uses high elaboration, meaning someone is motivated, able to process information and is in high need of cognition. An individual elaborates the information, paying attention to all arguments and all of the information provided and uses rational cognitive processing.

  ◦ This route leads to strong attitudes that last over time.

  ◦ Central route works well for individuals who are analytical and already involved in issues.

    » *Example:* Using the central route to persuasion when discussing climate change, an individual would focus on arguments that discuss greenhouse gasses, melting ice, extreme weather conditions and rising temperatures (van der Linden et al., 2015).

- **Peripheral Route** to persuasion uses low elaboration, meaning someone is unmotivated or unable to process information. An individual minimally elaborates the information, not thinking carefully.

  ◦ This type of persuasion often uses superficial and surface level imagery to appeal to one's emotions leading to impulsive actions.

  ◦ Attitudes developed through this route are weaker and more susceptible to change over time.

    » *Example:* Using the peripheral route to persuasion when discussing climate change could include using celebrities or other social figures to support positions or arguments.

Critical Thinking Exercise 2.2: Persuasion Scavenger Hunt *can be completed at this point.*

Compliance

- **Compliance strategies** also influence behaviors, much like persuasion. However compliance refers to encouraging individuals to change their behavior in response to a request. Consumer psychology studies compliance and how sellers use these concepts to influence buyers to purchase goods and services. There are several types of compliance strategies. *Compliance can also fit into sections on conformity, social norms, and obedience as well.*

- **Foot-in-the-door** is a type of compliance strategy where an individual is asked to make a small commitment and then after they complete it, asked to make a larger one. Once the individual complies with the small request, they are more likely to also comply with a second, larger request.

  » *Example:* Someone might ask an individual to sign a petition. Once the person agrees to sign, they will be more likely to agree to a request to join in a protest.

- **Door-in-the-face** is another type of compliance strategy where an individual is first asked for a large commitment and then when they refuse, they are asked to make a smaller commitment. Individuals are more likely to agree to make a smaller commitment after they refuse an initial request.

  » *Example:* Someone might ask an individual to donate to a cause. They refuse. But then they are asked to sign a petition. The individual will likely sign the petition since they initially refused to donate.

- Lastly, **lowballing** is a type of compliance strategy where an individual makes a commitment and then the terms of that commitment increase.

  » *Example:* Someone purchases a cell phone and later learns that there are a number of fees and other charges that make the purchase more costly.

Activity 2.1: Identifying Compliance Strategies *can be completed at this point.*

Activity 2.2: Using Social Media for Persuasion *can be completed at this point.*

Activity 2.3: Reflection *can be completed at this point (optional activity).*

CONCLUSION

Summarize the key points of the lesson and emphasize the importance of understanding persuasion and compliance techniques.

Social Influence

GENERAL OVERVIEW

In social psychology, researchers study the ways in which other individuals and groups may affect our behavior. You may have noticed that the way you think and behave when you are alone is sometimes different from the way you think and behave when other people are around.

How much do other people influence our thinking and behavior? We may adjust our behavior in order to fit in with a group, or as a reaction to perceived expertise or authority. Sometimes, the mere proximity of others will influence our performance of a task. The presence of one or more other people affects behavior in a number of ways. Within any type of group, people may be influenced in terms of roles, norms, attitudes, and responsibilities. As much as we may want to believe in our independent thinking and behavior, being part of a group tends to affect our sense of individuality.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Conformity:** the adjustment of one's attitudes or actions so they align with others' opinions, behaviors, or social norms.

- **Normative Influence:** the tendency of feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that align with social norms.

- **Informational Influence:** in unclear situations, the tendency to feel or act in acceptance of others' perceived knowledge or expertise.

- **Obedience:** behavior in compliance with a direct command, often one issued by a person in a position of authority (APA, n.d.-k).

- **Social Facilitation:** the improvement in an individual's performance of a task that often occurs when others are present (APA, n.d.-m).

- **Social Inhibition:** the influence of the presence of others, where behavior may be inhibited when it is complicated, novel, difficult to perform or might meet disapproval.

- **Social Loafing:** the reduction of individual effort that occurs when people work in groups compared to when they work alone (APA, n.d.-n).

- **Groupthink:** a strong concurrence-seeking tendency that interferes with effective group decision-making (APA, n.d.-h).

- **Group Polarization:** the tendency for members of a group discussing an issue to move toward a more extreme version of the positions they held before the discussion began (APA, n.d.-g).

- **Deindividuation:** a person's loss of self-awareness and a reduction of inner restraints that results in unusual and sometimes antisocial behavior (APA, n.d.-d).

CONTENT OUTLINE

- **Conformity** is the adjustment of behavior to align with the behavior of others due to specific types of social influence

  ◦ **Normative influence** may lead to conformity in a group when individuals behave in a way that allows them to fit in with others, or to be accepted by the group.

  ◦ **Informational influence** may lead to conformity in a group when individuals follow others who they assume know more about a situation or are experts.

- ◦ **Factors that contribute to conformity:** Solomon Asch's 1951 experiment explored whether group behavior would influence subjects to give obviously wrong answers to a simple question (Asch, 1951). Limitations to this study included that all participants were male college students.

    - » *Note:* Researchers have found that the social conformity effect may generalize to workplace decisions about sexual harassment. Participants read workplace harassment scenarios and then heard confederates choose the punishment they thought was appropriate and rate their decision confidence (with high confidence). Over 80% of participants confirmed at least one instance of an inappropriate punishment (Goodmon et al., 2020).

- **Obedience** is the adjustment of behavior in compliance with a direct command.

    - ◦ **Factors that contribute to obedience:** Stanley Milgram's 1961 study explored the likelihood that subjects would obey a perceived authority figure to perform tasks, even if they went against the subjects' personal beliefs and values (Milgram, 1961). Limitations to this study included that all participants were males between the ages of 20 and 50; the confederates were male as well.

- **Social facilitation** may enhance performance simply because of the presence of another person or persons.

    - » *Example:* a runner may improve their running times by running with another person, as opposed to running alone.

- **Social inhibition** may occur when a difficult task is affected by the added pressure of an audience or other people who are present.

    - » *Example:* If an actor is struggling with remembering their lines for a play, then a packed audience on opening night could create a higher level of stress, and cause "stage fright" in the actor.

Activity 3.1: Social Influence Obedience Activity *may be used at this point*

- **Intergroup dynamics** influence behavior in social or group settings

    - ◦ **Social loafing** occurs when individuals put in less effort in a group than they would in an individual setting

        - - Ringelmannn's Rope-pulling study in 1913 showed that adding more participants to a rope-pulling task resulted in less individual effort. Ringelmann was an agricultural engineer who was interested in worker productivity. Since that time, social loafing has been studied in terms of how and why social loafing occurs.

    - ◦ **Groupthink** may affect problem-solving or planning if the group is more focused on harmony than on the problem or task. This may result in the group's inability to foresee possible bad outcomes or problems.

    - ◦ **Group polarization** occurs when an individual discusses opinions with like-minded people within a group. The presence of others who think like us tends to strengthen our opinions on a topic.

    - ◦ **Deindividuation** results from being a part of a crowd, or in a situation where one's identity is hidden in some way. In a crowd, people may lose their sense of individuality, which can result in uncharacteristic behavior.

Activity 3.2: Social Influence Deindividuation Activity *may be used at this point.*

Activity 3.3: Reflection *may be used at this point (optional activity).*

CONCLUSION

Summarize the key points of the lesson and emphasize the importance of understanding Social Influence, or how the presence of others may influence our behavior.

Attraction and Relationships

GENERAL OVERVIEW

What leads us to be attracted to people and want to develop relationships with them? This lesson aims to introduce students to the social psychological factors that influence relationships and attraction. It begins by asking students to reflect on the qualities they find attractive in others. Then the lesson will cover the following topics: physical attractiveness, similarity, proximity, familiarity, reciprocity, and social norms. Students can participate in group activities that apply the material to their own lives.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Physical Attractiveness:** degree to which a person's physical features are considered aesthetically pleasing or beautiful, including facial features, body shape, height, and other physical attributes.

- **Similarity:** shared common interests, values, attitudes, and personality traits.

- **Proximity:** physical distance between people.

- **Familiarity:** degree to which people are exposed to each other.

- **Reciprocity:** tendency for people to like those who express interest in them or show positive regard.

- **Social Norms:** unwritten rules that govern social situations including expectations of how people should interact with each other, express their emotions, and conform to societal standards of behavior.

CONTENT OUTLINE

Activity 4.1: Introduction to Attraction and Relationships *can be completed at this point*

Link to optional video: The Science of Attraction - Dawn Maslar

Relationships and Attraction

- **Physical attraction** refers to the initial interest and desire we feel towards someone based on their appearance.
  - It plays a significant role in the early stages of forming relationships.
  - Beauty standards are shaped by culture and social factors.
    - *Link to optional video:* Beauty Standards Around The World
    - *Link to optional video:* Girls Ages 5-18 Talk About What Beauty Means to Them | Allure
  - There is a "What-is-beautiful-is-good" stereotype; attractive people are associated with positive beliefs and attitudes.

- **Similarity** refers to shared common interests, values, attitudes, and personality traits.
  - Do birds of a feather flock together or do opposites attract?
  - Shared interests, values, and beliefs in building and maintaining relationships are important in friendships and relationships.
    - Having similar core values can contribute to a stronger relationship
  - Link to optional video: Why Are We Attracted to People Who Look Like Us?

- **Proximity** refers to the physical distance between people.
    - Physical or geographic closeness between people can influence the formation and development of relationships.
        - » Example: Students who sit next to each other in class would be more likely to become friends

- **Familiarity** refers to the degree to which people are exposed to each other.
    - Familiarity breeds liking
    - Tendency to like people who are familiar or who we have repeated exposure to
    - **Mere exposure effect** (Zajonc, 1968): Repeated exposure to a person or stimulus can increase liking.
- **Reciprocity** refers to the tendency for people to like those who express interest in them or who show positive regard for them.
    - It is the tendency to like people who like us or show interest in us.
    - Being aware that someone likes or holds us in high regard is a significant factors that contributes to our liking of them.
    - This is beneficial because they are more inclined to desire further interactions, treat us with kindness, offer assistance when necessary, and their presence reinforces our belief in our own likability.
- **Social norms** refer to unwritten rules dictating behavior in social situations and how they are related to relationships.
    - Norms play a vital role in maintaining cooperative relationships and facilitating collective action by providing guidelines for decision-making in social situations.

Activity 4.2: Relationship Mapping *can be completed at this point (Optional activity)*

Activity 4.3: Media Analysis *can be completed at this point (Optional activity)*

Activity 4.4: Reflection *can be completed at this point (Optional activity)*

CONCLUSION

Summarize the key points of the lesson and emphasize the importance of understanding social psychological factors in building relationships.

Aggression

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Has someone ever said anything about you to hurt you? Was that person acting aggressively? Aggression can be a complex concept for psychologists to define. Aggression can not only involve physical acts but also words and/or symbols to threaten, intimidate or emotionally harm others. Researchers have thought aggression to be a basic human instinct. Not only can aggression be part of our biology, but society and culture influence people's tendencies to commit acts of physical violence as well. Aggression is something that all students and adults can relate to. High school students may experience aggression in watching tv, watching movies, playing video games and in social media. While all students are familiar with the concept of aggression, the variables that contribute to aggression might be unfamiliar topics within this concept. In this lesson, teachers will introduce variables that influence aggressive behaviors and how to define aggression.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Aggression:** physical or verbal behavior that is intended to harm someone
- **Frustration-Aggression Principle:** the more frustrated you become, the more likely you are to act aggressively.

CONTENT OUTLINE

Critical Thinking Exercise 5.1: Aggression Questionnaire *can be completed at this point, before students read or learn about aggression.*

Definition of Aggression

How do we define **aggression**? Aggression is included in most every introductory psychology textbook, but their definitions can vary.

This lesson plan defines aggression as physical or verbal behavior that is intended to harm someone.

Biology and Aggression

- There is evidence that aggression has somewhat of a **biological basis**. Research with nonhuman animals has shown that stimulating certain brain regions, like the amygdala, or altering brain chemistry can lead to substantial changes in the level of aggression displayed (de Boer, 2018).
- **Serotonin** specifically is thought to play a role in aggression. In humans, low levels of serotonin have been associated with aggression in adults and with hostility and disruptive behavior in children (Carver & Miller, 2006).
- **Testosterone**, a male sex hormone, has also been linked to higher levels of aggression (Archer, 1991).

Sociocultural Factors of Aggression

- In the 1930s, John Dollard and colleagues proposed the **frustration-aggression principle**: the more frustrated you feel, the more likely you are to act aggressively. Frustration might lead to aggression by eliciting negative emotions.

- **Albert Bandura**'s study in which small children viewed a video of an aggressive model was one of the first studies to investigate the effects of violence on children's behavior (Bandura et al., 1963).

  - Since then, researchers have studied the impact on television and other media violence on children's behavior.

  - Researchers have found that children who are exposed to high levels of violet media are more aggressive than children who are not (Anderson et al., 2010).

- **Violent video games** and their impact has also been a topic of discussions within aggression.

  - In one study, second grade boys were allowed to play either an aggressive or nonaggressive video game. After playing the game, the boys who played the aggressive game demonstrated more verbal and physical aggression than the boys who did not play the aggressive game (Irwin & Gross, 1995).

  - While not all researchers agree, strong evidence supports that playing violent video games correlates with increased levels of aggression with children and adolescents (Anderson, 2003).

Activity 5.1: Seeing Aggression in Our Everyday Life *can be completed at this time.*

Activity 5.2: Reflection *can be completed at this point (optional activity).*

CONCLUSION

Summarize the key points of the lesson and emphasize the importance of understanding factors of aggression.

Altruism and Helping Behaviors

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Students will explore the concept of helping behaviors and altruism. They will learn how altruism is distinct from prosocial behaviors, learn factors that influence helping behaviors, and engage in activities to deepen their understanding. The lesson aims to encourage critical thinking, self-reflection, and empathy, while promoting a broader awareness of the role of helping behaviors in society.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- **Altruism:** the desire to enhance someone else's well-being without intentionally considering one's own personal gain.

- **Bystander Effect:** a phenomenon in which people fail to offer needed help in emergencies, especially when other people are present in the same setting (APA, n.d.-b).

- **Diffusion of Responsibility:** a person is less likely to take responsibility for helping when there are other bystanders present.

- **Egoism:** the individual's own self serves as the motivation and objective of their own actions.

- **Empathy:** ability to understand the perspective and emotions of others.

- **Kin Selection:** helping behavior in the pursuit of preserving one's shared genetic makeup.

- **Prosocial Behavior:** deeds aimed at helping others without considering the underlying motives. In other words, prosocial behavior does not take into account if there is an altruistic or egoistic reason for helping someone (i.e., that motive is not taken into account). Whereas altruism is helping someone for a purely selfless reason.

- **Reciprocal Altruism:** helping someone who is not genetically related with the expectation of the help being reciprocated in the future.

CONTENT OUTLINE

Activity 6.1: Introduction to Helping Behavior *can be completed at this point*

Definition and Discussion of Altruism

- **Altruism** is the desire to enhance someone else's well-being without intentionally considering one's own personal gain.

  ◦ Altruism is the opposite of egoism.

- Social psychologists have debated whether helpful behaviors are always egoistic or if people can be truly altruistic. Examples:

  ◦ Scenario: You tutor someone in statistics

    - Motivation: It looks good on your resume

  ◦ Scenario: You donated blood to people you don't know

    - Motivation: It makes you feel more noble

  ◦ Scenario: A parent gives their child a bath

    - Motivation: They don't want people to think they are bad parents by having a dirty child

- **Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis** by Batson suggests that empathy can lead to an altruistic motive
  - Limitation: This may not always lead to helping

Factors Influencing Helping Behaviors

- **Kin selection:** Helping behavior and promoting survival for people who share genetic makeup.
- **Reciprocal altruism:** Helping someone who is not genetically related with the expectation of the help being reciprocated in the future.
- **Empathy:** Ability to understand the perspective and emotions of others.
  - *Link to optional video:* The Importance of Empathy
- **Helping others feels good:** The relationship between helping and improvements in physical and mental health.
  - *Link to optional video:* Happiness is Helping Others
- **Being in a good mood** can lead a person to be more likely to help others (i.e., the Feel Good, Do Good phenomenon).
  - Can't ruin your good mood by helping.
  - Maintain your positive mood.
- **Feeling bad** can lead a person to be more likely to help others.
  - Feeling guilty.
  - Focus on the struggles of others.
- Helping is more likely to occur when **possible rewards are higher than possible risks.**
- **Negative State Relief Model** by Cialdini et al. (1973): This model suggests that we help others to counteract one's own sadness as a way to heal.
- We may help because it is the **social norm.**
- **Diffusion of responsibility** and the **bystander effect**
  - A person is less likely to take responsibility for helping when there are other bystanders present.
  - » *Note:* Research suggests that diffusion of responsibility can also be impacted by our identities. For example, a recent study looking at the bystander effect in sixth- to eighth-grade students found that girls noticed bullying events, interpreted them as an emergency, and intervened more often than boys. One limitation of this study is that the assessment of gender identity was binary (Jenkins & Nickerson, 2019).
  - Smoke-filled room study showed an impairment of personal responsibility when there were others present in the room who did not act or investigate the situation (Latane & Darley, 1968). Limitations of this study included that all participants were male college students.

Activity 6.2: Altruistic Acts Journal *can be completed at this point*

Activity 6.3: Helping Behavior in the Media *can be completed at this point*

Activity 6.4: Reflection *can be completed at this point*

CONCLUSION

Summarize the key points of the lesson and emphasize the importance of understanding altruism and helping behaviors in our society.

What's More Powerful: Your Attitudes, or Your Actions?

Tiffany Karns, Rowlett High School, Texas

CONCEPT

This activity can be used as a "hook", or introduction to Social Cognition. Students are asked to consider whether their attitudes or their behavior is more powerful and discuss their opinion with classmates. This quick activity creates a path into the discussion on cognitive dissonance.

MATERIALS

None needed.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take 5-10 minutes to complete.

- Ask students to move out from their chairs/desks, and to be prepared to move to one side of the room or the other, as designated by "Attitude" or "Behavior".

    ◦ Pose the question above (What's more powerful: your attitudes or your behavior?) to the whole class, and give them 5 seconds to silently consider their decision.

    ◦ At the count of 3, tell students to move to their chosen side of the room.

    ◦ Tell the class that they have 1 minute to discuss their choice with the others on their side, and set a timer.

    ◦ Have the groups choose a spokesperson who will present their argument, and allow each "side" to present their argument.

    ◦ After hearing both sides of the argument, tell students that they are welcome to change sides if they have changed their mind.

Cognitive Dissonance Scenarios

Tiffany Karns, Rowlett High School, Texas

CONCEPT

Cognitive dissonance refers to an unpleasant psychological state resulting from inconsistency between two or more thoughts or between thoughts and behaviors (APA, n.d.-c). In this activity, students will read examples of thoughts and behaviors that are creating cognitive dissonance and be asked to determine how that discomfort may likely be resolved.

MATERIALS

- Cognitive Dissonance Worksheet
- Something to write with, or computer access if completing the worksheet online

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take 15-20 minutes to complete.

- Students will read the thoughts and behaviors that are creating cognitive dissonance and determine with a partner or small group how that discomfort may likely be resolved. Students should write the resulting change in behavior or thinking below the table.

Cognitive Dissonance Worksheet

BEHAVIOR OR THOUGHT	ATTITUDE OR THOUGHT
1. Attending a social event with a friend who has been mean to a new student	I should not be friends with someone who treats others this way
2. Staying in a college major when you have lost interest in the field of study, and think you might want to pursue something different	I committed to this major, and would have wasted money if I change now
3. High school student who vapes when out with friends	I know that this is bad for my lungs
4. I should speak up when I see someone getting bullied	I should mind my own business. This doesn't involve me!
5. I need to study for this test	I really want to go out with my friends

WHAT IS MORE LIKELY TO CHANGE?

1. Behavior/ thought   Attitude/ thought

   Why? _____

   _____

2. Behavior/ thought   Attitude/ though

   Why? _____

   _____

3. Behavior/ thought   Attitude/ thought

   Why? _____

   _____

4. Behavior/ thought   Attitude/ thought

   Why? _____

   _____

5. Behavior/ thought   Attitude/ thought

   Why? _____

   _____

ACTIVITY 1.3
Reflection

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

Tiffany Karns, Rowlett High School, Texas

CONCEPT

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on what they have learned throughout the lesson and to consider how they can apply this knowledge to their everyday lives. This activity can help students develop critical thinking and reflective writing skills, as well as cultivate a greater sense of personal agency and responsibility in their lives. By reflecting on what they have learned and considering how they can apply this knowledge in their everyday lives, students can become more thoughtful and intentional in their behaviors and contribute to a more positive social environment.

MATERIALS

Tools for writing (e.g., paper, pencil or pen, computer)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Ask students to write a short reflection on one thing they learned about attitudes and actions during the lesson. Encourage them to consider how this knowledge might impact their own actions.

- Since learning about cognitive dissonance, ask students if they will be more likely in the future to challenge their own thinking and behaviors. Why or why not?

The Three Factors of Persuasion

Abigail Messerly, MEd, Groveport Madison High School, Ohio

CONCEPT

This activity will help students identify the three factors that affect persuasion: the source of the message, the content of the message, and the intended receiver who processes the message. In the social psychology unit, students will need to understand and analyze examples of the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In order for students to do this, they must first understand the basics of persuasion and how factors impact persuasion strategies.

MATERIALS

- The Three Factors of Persuasion Worksheet

- Internet access or print resources.

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 10-15 minutes.

- Have students engage in internet research to find a reputable news article and respond to the questions provided.

- When students are finished, discuss their responses and their examples of the factors that impact persuasion.

The Three Factors of Persuasion Worksheet

Directions: Complete some basic internet research, finding a recent news article (from at least the last six months) from a reputable source. Answer the following questions.

1. List the title, author and date of the article.

2. What is the source of this news article?

3. Briefly explain the content of the article's message.

4. Who is the intended audience for this article?

5. In your opinion, how effective is this article in persuading its audience?

Persuasion Scavenger Hunt

Abigail Messerly, MEd, Groveport Madison High School, Ohio

CONCEPT

This activity will help students understand the differences between central route and peripheral route to persuasion by requiring students to (1) find an advertisement example of either route, and (2) reflect upon it.

MATERIALS

- Persuasion Scavenger Hunt Worksheet

- Internet access and/or print resources

INSTRUCTION

This activity will take about 25-30 minutes.

- Have students engage in internet research or use print materials to find an advertisement and respond to the questions provided.

- When students are finished, they should discuss their responses and their examples of advertisements.

Persuasion Scavenger Hunt Worksheet

Directions: Your task is to find either a print material (e.g., magazine article, newspaper advertisement, etc.), or digital material (e.g., Super Bowl or other tv commercial, digital advertisement, digital or social media pop-up, radio or podcast advertisement, etc.) and determine what type of persuasion is used: central route or peripheral route. Respond to the following below.

1. List the type of advertisement.

2. List the name of advertisement (if provided).

3. Where did you find this advertisement?

4. What is this advertisement attempting to convey to its audience?

5. Who is the intended audience?

6. Does this advertisement use central route or peripheral route persuasion? Why?

7. In your opinion, how effective is this article in persuading its audience?

8. Is there any other social psychology concept used in this advertisement? If so, which one and how is it applied?

Identifying Compliance Strategies

Abigail Messerly, MEd, Groveport Madison High School, Ohio

CONCEPT

This activity will help students identify and match compliance strategies. In the social psychology unit, students will need to understand and analyze examples of compliance.

MATERIALS

The Three Factors of Persuasion Worksheet

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

• Have students match the scenarios with compliance examples.

• When students are finished, discuss their responses and examples of compliance.

• As an extension activity, students can also be asked to generate new examples of each type of compliance.

ANSWER KEY

1. Door-in-Face

2. Foot-in-Door

3. Low-Ball

The Three Factors of Persuasion Worksheet

Directions: Match the following compliance strategies to the correct scenario: *low-ball, foot-in-door, door-in-face*.

1. A friend requested her guests to bring a minimum of $100 gifts to her bridal shower. Her guests complained and refused. The friend then decided to lower the cost to a minimum of $50.

2. Your neighbor asks you to water his garden plants while he's gone on vacation and you agree. Then he goes on to ask if you could also mow the lawn while he's gone too.

3. Your little sister asks you to come upstairs with her with a flashlight because she is afraid of the dark. Then, she asks you to tuck them into bed. On the way out of the room, she asks you to get her toy for her. After that, she asks you to bring upstairs her clean clothes from the laundry.

Using Social Media for Persuasion

Adapted from an activity by Amber Lee, Albert Einstein High School, Montgomery County, MD

CONCEPT

To understand the differences between central route persuasion and peripheral route persuasion, students will analyze X (formerly Twitter) accounts* and determine which account is using which type of persuasion.

*This activity references X, but teachers can use any relevant social media platform for this activity.

MATERIALS

- Using Social Media for Persuasion Worksheet
- Electronic device that can access X/handouts with posts (if unable to electronically access X)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take 40 minutes to complete.

- Have students complete the worksheet, go over their responses, and then lead a whole-class discussion.
  - Choose individuals who are highly relevant to students at a particular moment in time to increase student engagement. Some examples might be the current U.S. President, British Prime Minister, the CEO of a popular company, a notable athlete or entertainer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which individual used persuasion most effectively? Why do you say that?
- Which type of persuasion was used more: central route or peripheral route? Why do you think that is?
- How would you use X to persuade an audience?

Using Social Media for Persuasion Worksheet

Directions: Analyze the X (Twitter) feeds for the following individuals. Read the ten most recent tweets and retweets and record the number of each type of reference (how many were about the person themself, about another issue, etc.) in the chart below.

TYPE OF REFERENCE	(Current President, athlete, etc.)	(Current President, athlete, etc.)	(Current President, athlete, etc.)	(Current President, athlete, etc.)
Self				
Another Issue				
Another Person/Persons				
Recent Event				

After tallying the votes, **answer the following reflection questions.**

1. Which individual used more central route persuasion? Why do you think that is? Support your answer.

2. Which individual used more peripheral route persuasion? Why do you think that is? Support your answer.

3. Did any individual use the mere-exposure effect to persuade?

4. Which individual do you think used X most effectively to persuade his or her audience? Why?

5. Which individual do you think used X least effectively to persuade his or her audience? Why?

6. Do you think X is an effective tool to help persuade? Explain your answer.

7. Is following an individual on X an example of foot-in-door compliance? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY 2.3
Reflection

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

Abigail Messerly, MEd, Groveport Madison High School, Ohio

CONCEPT

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on what they have learned throughout the lesson and to consider how they can apply this knowledge to their everyday lives. This activity can help students develop critical thinking and reflective writing skills, as well as cultivate a greater sense of personal agency and responsibility in their helping behaviors. By reflecting on what they have learned and considering how they can apply this knowledge in their everyday lives, students can become more thoughtful and intentional in their helping behaviors and contribute to a more positive social environment.

MATERIALS

Tools for writing (e.g., paper, pencil or pen, computer)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Ask students to write a short reflection on one theory learned about persuasion and compliance during the lesson. Encourage them to consider how this knowledge might impact their own actions.

- Since learning about persuasion and compliance, ask students if they will be more likely in the future to challenge their own thinking about using persuasion and compliance strategies and how those concepts affect behaviors. Why or why not?

Social Influence Obedience Activity

Tiffany Karns, Rowlett High School, Texas

CONCEPT

Obedience is defined as behavior in compliance with a direct command, often one issued by a person in a position of authority (APA, n.d.-k). Stanley Milgram's famous shock machine study is a classic if controversial study on obedience. Students are asked to use a chart and their knowledge of the Milgram study to answer questions on obedience.

MATERIALS

- The Obedience Analysis Worksheet
- Writing materials or computer access if completing questions online

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity should take 10-15 minutes to complete, plus time for class discussion.

- Provide students with the worksheet below and instruct them to study the chart and then answer the questions.
- Ask students to discuss their answers either in a small group or as a whole class.

The Obedience Analysis Worksheet (Social Influence Activity)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

OBEDIENCE ANALYSIS

Use the following chart to analyze the differences in conditions of Milgram's experiment and then answer the questions below.

EXPERIMENTAL REPLICATION	DESCRIPTION	PERCENT OBEDIENCE
Experiment 1:	Initial study: Yale University men and women	65%
Experiment 10:	The study is conducted off campus, in Bridgeport, CT	48%
Experiment 3:	The teacher is in the same room as the learner	40%
Experiment 4:	The participant must hold the learner's hand on the shock pad	20%
Experiment 7:	The experimenter communicates by phone from another room	20%
Experiment 13:	An "ordinary man" (presumably another research participant) gives orders	20%
Experiment 17:	Two other research participants refuse to give shock	10%
Experiment 11:	The teacher chooses his own preferred shock level	0%
Experiment 15:	One experimenter indicates that the participant should not shock	0%

Source: Table 7.2 Obedience, Power, and Leadership. Reprinted from Principles of Social Psychology Copyright © 2015 by University of Minnesota is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss in your group what you remember about Milgram's Obedience Study, then write a description in 3 sentences or less.

2. Using the data in the table, what conclusions can be drawn from the differences in conditions to Milgram's experiment?

3. List and describe factors that influence the likelihood of obedience.

4. What was the dependent variable in each of these studies?

Social Influence Deindividuation Activity

Adapted from an activity by Tiffany Karns and Abigail Mathew, Rowlett High School, Texas

CONCEPT

Deindividuation is a person's loss of self-awareness and a reduction of inner restraints that results in unusual and sometimes antisocial behavior (APA, n.d.-d). The Stanford Prison Study is a famous study on the power of roles and behavior. It has also raised many ethical concerns since it was conducted. Students are invited to read an article on this study and consider questions related to deindividuation.

MATERIALS

- Social Influence and Research: Deindividuation Worksheet

- Access to print or online article

- Writing materials or computer access if completing questions online

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity should take 20-25 minutes to complete, plus time for class discussion.

- Provide students with the worksheet below and instruct them to read the provided article and answer the questions.

- Ask students to discuss their answers either in a small group or as a whole class.

Social Influence and Research: Deindividuation Worksheet

Name: _____   Date: _____   Period: _____

SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND RESEARCH: DEINDIVIDUATION

Scan the QR code or type the link below to read an article about Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Study (Mcleod, 2023). The website will be a good resource to help you answer the questions on your handout.

https://www.simplypsychology.org/zimbardo.html

QUESTIONS:

1. Define "deindividuation" in 7 words or less.

2. Describe how deindividuation is used in Zimbardo's study.

3. What might be some ethical concerns for this study?

4. Many researchers have criticized the validity of the Stanford Prison Study. With a partner or group, discuss and write at least 2 aspects of the study that might harm the validity of the conclusions.

5. After considering the threats to validity, write a short paragraph about why you do or do not believe that the Stanford Prison Study is still valuable in Social Psychology.

Reference:

Mcleod, S. (2023, November 17). *Stanford prison experiment: Zimbardo's famous study*. Simply Psychology. https://www.simplypsychology.org/zimbardo.html

Reflection

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

Tiffany Karns, Rowlett High School, Texas

CONCEPT

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on what they have learned throughout the lesson and to consider how they can apply this knowledge to their everyday lives. This activity can help students develop critical thinking and reflective writing skills, as well as cultivate a greater sense of personal agency and responsibility in their lives. By reflecting on what they have learned and considering how they can apply this knowledge in their everyday lives, students can become more thoughtful and intentional in their behaviors and contribute to a more positive social environment.

MATERIALS

Tools for writing (e.g., paper, pencil or pen, computer)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Ask students to write a short reflection on one thing they learned about social influence during the lesson. Encourage them to consider how this knowledge might impact their own actions.

- Since learning about deindividuation, ask students how they may have lost their own sense of personal responsibility in social situations, and whether they will be more likely in the future to challenge their own thinking and behaviors. Why or why not?

ACTIVITY 4.1

Introduction to Attraction and Relationships

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The purpose of this class activity is to explore the factors that influence one's relationships and attraction to others. By asking students to share their thoughts and write them on the board, the teacher can create a list of qualities that students find attractive in a friend, romantic partner, or someone they admire. This list can then be used as a starting point for a discussion on the different factors that influence our relationships and attraction to others.

MATERIALS

- White board
- Markers

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Begin by asking students about the qualities they find attractive in a friend, romantic partner, or someone they admire.
- Ask students to share their thoughts and write them on the board.
- Discuss how the purpose of the lesson will be to explore which factors influence one's relationships and attraction to others.

Relationship Mapping

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The purpose of this activity is to help students develop a deeper understanding of the various factors that influence our relationships with others. Students can visualize and analyze the various connections and factors that have influenced the development of their relationships. By sharing their relationship maps in small groups and the subsequent class discussion, students can gain a greater appreciation and depth for the similarities and differences of the various factors that influence relationships.

This activity can help students develop empathy, communication skills, and a deeper appreciation of the complex dynamics of relationships, as well as cultivate greater self-awareness and reflection of their own relationships.

MATERIALS

Paper and pencil, pen, and/or markers, or computer access if maps are created electronically

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 15-20 minutes.

- Divide students into small groups and ask them to create a map of their relationships (e.g., friends, family, acquaintances) and the different factors that influenced those relationships.
  - This map could be in the form of a tree, a circle with them in the middle and branches extending from that, or whichever visual representation of a map would work best for the student. As long as it is a visual representation of their relationships with important people in their lives, then it is acceptable.
- Have students share their relationship maps with their small group and discuss the similarities and differences between their maps.
- Lead a class discussion on the different factors that influence relationships and how they can vary from person to person.

Media Analysis

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The concept behind this activity is to help students develop a critical understanding of the role that media plays in shaping our perceptions of attraction and relationships. By asking students to identify examples of media that depict different aspects of attraction and relationships, students can begin to analyze and evaluate the various social psychological factors that are present in media portrayals of relationships.

Through analyzing media examples, students can gain a deeper understanding of how media shapes our perceptions of attraction and relationships, including how media can influence our expectations, attitudes, and behaviors in relationships. Additionally, students can identify the various stereotypes and cultural norms that are often present in media portrayals of relationships and consider how these stereotypes and norms can impact our perceptions of relationships and attraction.

MATERIALS

None

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 15-20 minutes.

- Ask students to identify examples of media (e.g., movies, TV shows, music videos) that depict different aspects of attraction and relationships. Have students analyze the media examples and identify the social psychological factors that are present (e.g., physical attractiveness, similarity, proximity, familiarity, reciprocity, and social norms).

- Lead a discussion on how the media can influence our perceptions of relationships and attraction.

Reflection

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on what they have learned throughout the lesson and to consider how they can apply this knowledge to their everyday lives. This activity can help students develop critical thinking and reflective writing skills, as well as cultivate a greater sense of personal agency and responsibility in their interactions with others. By reflecting on what they have learned and considering how they can apply this knowledge in their everyday lives, students can become more thoughtful and intentional in their relationships and contribute to a more positive and respectful social environment.

MATERIALS

Tools for writing (e.g., paper, pencil or pen, computer)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Ask students to reflect on what they have learned in this lesson.

- Ask students to write a short paragraph on what they found most interesting and surprising, and how they can apply this knowledge to their everyday lives.

Aggression Questionnaire

Modified from an original activity by Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr.

CONCEPT

This activity is designed to generate class discussion on the definition of aggression. It exposes students to a large number of issues involved in defining aggression and helps them to understand the complexity of such a construct and, thus, the reasons why their classmates and psychologists disagree about its meaning.

MATERIALS

Aggression Questionnaire Worksheet

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity takes about 20 minutes but could be made shorter or longer.

Aggression is a topic included in virtually every textbook on introductory psychology. Some books discuss aggression in the section on motivation and emotion, whereas others cover it as part of social psychology. Most include it in reference to research on humans, but discussion of some animal studies of aggression is also common. Treatment of related concepts such as violence, anger, frustration, and assertiveness are also common topics.

This exercise should be used prior to any lecture on aggression and before the students have read their textbook coverage of the subject.

At the beginning of the class, give each student a copy of the Aggression Questionnaire containing 25 numbered statements. Instruct the students as follows: "Read each statement and decide whether or not you believe the situation described is one of aggression." Wording of this instruction is critical so as not to bias the responses.

Tell students to circle the number of each statement that describes aggression. They should respond according to their own beliefs and not how they think they should respond or how they think most people would respond. Compliance with this request can be enhanced by telling the students not to put their names on the questionnaires.

Allow the students about 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Most, if not all, of the students will finish before that time, so you should be ready to proceed when the last person has finished. Collect the questionnaires, shuffle, and redistribute them to the class so that each student gets a copy. Most students will be given a questionnaire other than their own.

Record the data on the board by reading each statement aloud and ask the students to raise their hands if the item is circled on the questionnaire they are holding. Tabulating the data on the chalkboard can be accomplished quickly, usually in less than 5 minutes, so that the bulk of the class time can be devoted to discussion.

DISCUSSION

Use the questionnaire results to get the students talking about how aggression is defined. You might begin with those items for which there is greater agreement and proceed to those on which the class is divided.

If there is time, or in a separate lecture in the next class period, you can present some of the definitions of aggression proposed by psychologists.

Consider the following examples defining aggression:

1. "Words or actions that are meant to hurt other people" (Rathus, 2010, p. 602)

2. "Any behavior that involves the intention to harm someone else" (Grison & Gazzaniga, 2023, p. 480)

3. "Any physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone physically or emotionally" (Straub, Myers, & DeWall, 2016, p. 162)

4. "Action meant to harm or destroy, [unfortunately] another typical reaction to frustration"(Ciccarelli & White, 2021, p. 404)

5. "Any behavior that is intended to hurt someone, either physically or verbally" (Weiten, 2013, p. 574)

You can use this exercise as a basis for discussion or as a lecture on the causes of aggression. Questions for discussion include the following: Is aggression instinctual? Is aggression a natural reaction to conditions such as frustration, conflict, and pain? Is aggression learned, and if so, how and from what sources? This last question presents a good opportunity to discuss aggression in the media, particularly television, and what effect it may have on the behavior of viewers. Other topics of interest include aggression in athletics, competitiveness versus aggressiveness, assertiveness versus aggressiveness, the positive role of aggression, violent crime, the relation of prejudice to aggression, and methods for the control of aggression.

Adapted From

Benjamin, L. T. (1985). Defining aggression: An exercise for classroom discussion. *Teaching of Psychology*, 12, 40-42. Used with permission of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Modified From

Benjamin, L. T., Jr. (1987). Defining aggression. In *Activities handbook for the teaching of psychology* (Vol. 2). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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Aggression Questionnaire

1. A spider eats a fly.

2. Two wolves fight for the leadership of the pack.

3. A soldier shoots an enemy at the front line.

4. The warden of a prison executes a convicted criminal.

5. The juvenile gang attacks members of another gang.

6. Two men fight for a piece of bread.

7. A woman viciously kicks a cat.

8. An individual, while cleaning a window, knocks over a flowerpot, which, in falling, injures a pedestrian.

9. A girl kicks a wastebasket.

10. Mr. X, a notorious gossip, speaks disparagingly of many people of his acquaintance.

11. A woman mentally rehearses a murder she is about to commit.

12. An angry son purposely fails to write to his mother, who is expecting a letter and will be hurt if none arrives.

13. An enraged boy tries with all his might to inflict injury on his antagonist, a bigger boy, but is not successful in doing so. His efforts simply amuse the bigger boy.

14. A woman daydreams of harming her antagonist, but has no hope of doing so.

15. A senator does not protest the escalation of bombing to which he is morally opposed

16. A farmer kills a chicken and prepares it for supper.

17. A hunter kills an animal and mounts it as a trophy.

18. A dog snarls at a mail carrier, but does not bite.

19. A physician gives a flu shot to a screaming child.

20. A boxer gives his opponent a bloody nose.

21. A Girl Scout tries to assist an elderly woman but trips her by accident.

22. A bank robber is shot in the back while trying to escape.

23. A tennis player smashes his racket after missing a volley.

24. A person commits suicide.

25. A cat kills a mouse, parades around with it, and then discards it.

Adapted From

Johnson (1972), Kaufmann (1970), and Krech, Crutchfield, Livson, Wilson, and Parducci (1982).

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Seeing Aggression in Our Everyday Life

Abigail Messerly, MEd, Groveport Madison High School, Ohio

CONCEPT

To understand aggression and draw conclusions about how our environment impacts incidents of aggression, students will record instances of aggression in the media and from the "real world."

MATERIALS

- Seeing Aggression in Our Everyday Life Worksheet

- Student access to different types of media

INSTRUCTIONS

This will take 25-30 minutes to complete. Part 2 is likely to be completed outside of school.

- Have students find examples of aggression in the media and record their observations on the worksheet.

- Then, likely outside of class, have students record examples of aggression in their world.

- *Disclaimer:* Part of this activity is for teacher discretion; if students are exposed to aggression and violence on a regular, day-to-day basis in their personal lives, you may want to skip Part 2 and modify Part 3, and/or be sure students know school resources for seeking help.

Seeing Aggression in Our Everyday Life Worksheet

Aggression in the Media

Directions: Find four various types of media and record the number of aggressive acts below. Your media examples can include examples from YouTube videos, television shows, movies, Tik Toks, commercials, advertisements, video games, cartoons, etc. Each example must be a different type of media, totaling 4 different types of media.

Type of Media	Length of Media	Number of Aggressive Acts	Description of Act (insult, attack, aggressive model, etc.)

PART 2

Aggression in Real Life

Directions: Find four instances of aggression in the "wild," or the world around you. Record your data below.

Description of Act (insult, attack, aggressive model, etc.)	Length of Act	Location

Reflection

Directions: Answer the following based on your findings.

1. In part 1, does the amount and type of aggressive act vary by the type of media? Why do you think that is?

2. In your opinion, what type of media might contribute to someone's aggressive behavior?

3. What can you conclude from your data in part 1?

4. In part 2, what was the most common location for aggressive acts? Why do you think that was?

5. What can you conclude from your data in part 2?

Reflection

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

Abigail Messerly, MEd, Groveport Madison High School, Ohio

CONCEPT

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on what they have learned throughout the lesson and to consider how they can apply this knowledge to their everyday lives. This activity can help students develop critical thinking and reflective writing skills, as well as cultivate a greater sense of personal agency and responsibility in their helping behaviors. By reflecting on what they have learned and considering how they can apply this knowledge in their everyday lives, students can become more thoughtful and intentional in their helping behaviors and contribute to a more positive social environment.

MATERIALS

Tools for writing (e.g., paper, pencil or pen, computer)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Ask students to write a short reflection on one theory learned about aggression during the lesson. Encourage them to consider how this knowledge might impact their own actions.

- Since learning about aggression, ask students if they will be more likely in the future to challenge their own thinking about aggression and aggressive behaviors. Why or why not?

ACTIVITY 6.1

Introduction to Helping Behavior

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The purpose of this class activity is to explore the factors that influence one's behavior to help others or not. By asking students to share their thoughts and write them on the board, the teacher can create a list of factors that students believe can influence someone to help others. This list can then be used as a starting point for a discussion on the different factors that influence helping behaviors.

MATERIALS

- White board
- Markers

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Begin by asking students what motivates people to help others.
- Ask students to share their thoughts and write them on the board.
- Discuss how the purpose of the lesson will be to explore which factors influence one's helping behaviors.

Altruistic Acts Journal

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The purpose of this assignment is to cultivate awareness, empathy, and critical thinking regarding altruism by having students observe, record, and reflect on acts of kindness and egoism in their daily lives.

MATERIALS

Notebook or laptop

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 25 minutes including 5-10 minutes of class discussion.

- Assign students to keep a journal for a week where they record helping behaviors they witness or participate in.

- At the end of the week, have students reflect on each act. Were they acts of altruism or egoism? Why?

- Ask students to share their observations and reflections on the impact of these actions.

- Ask students if any helping behavior can be truly altruistic. Ask for examples from their journals to support or refute their answers.

Helping Behavior in the Media

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The purpose of this assignment is to analyze how helping behavior is portrayed in popular culture and current events through media, while fostering discussions about its influence on societal perceptions and behaviors.

MATERIALS

Tools for writing (e.g., paper, pencil or pen, computer)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 20 minutes, plus time for class discussion.

- Ask students to find video clips or articles that depict helping behaviors from popular culture or current events. Ask students to analyze the helping behavior by identifying which factors influenced the person to engage in the helping behavior.

- Ask students to further analyze the helping behavior by understanding whether it can be altruistic or not.

- Afterward, ask students to volunteer their examples and explain them to the class. Facilitate a discussion about the portrayal of helping behavior in the media and its impact on society.

- How can prosocial models impact helping behavior? Ask students for examples of prosocial models in the media to help demonstrate their points.

ACTIVITY 6.4
Reflection

Amanda ElBassiouny, PhD, California Lutheran University

CONCEPT

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on what they have learned throughout the lesson and to consider how they can apply this knowledge to their everyday lives. This activity can help students develop critical thinking and reflective writing skills, as well as cultivate a greater sense of personal agency and responsibility in their helping behaviors. By reflecting on what they have learned and considering how they can apply this knowledge in their everyday lives, students can become more thoughtful and intentional in their helping behaviors and contribute to a more positive social environment.

MATERIALS

Tools for writing (e.g., paper, pencil or pen, computer)

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take about 5-10 minutes.

- Ask students to write a short reflection on one thing they learned about altruism and helping behaviors during the lesson. Encourage them to consider how this knowledge might impact their own actions.

- Since learning about altruism, ask students if they will be more likely in the future to help someone for a totally selfless reason. Why or why not?

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