Exploring Social Psychology 8th edition Myers Solutions Manual

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Module 2
Did You Know It All Along?

Lecture and Discussion Ideas

1. The Hindsight Bias (The I-Knew-It-All-Along Phenomenon)

See Demonstrations 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3 in this chapter.

People tend to exaggerate their ability to have foreseen an event's outcome after learning the outcome. For example, before the 1985 Super Bowl, Brigham (1986) asked students to predict its outcome. An overwhelming majority (81 percent) predicted that the Miami Dolphins would win, and 40 percent had said that they would win by more than 10 points. A week after the San Francisco 49er's decisive victory, Brigham asked another group to remember their pre-game predictions. No one remembered thinking that Miami would win by at least 10 points.

More recently, Demakis (1997) reported the hindsight bias in connection with the pre- and post-verdict predictions of the outcome of the O. J. Simpson criminal trial. Students who made post-verdict ratings were more likely to say that they expected a not guilty verdict and less likely to have expected a hung jury than those who made pre-verdict predictions. Instructors may replicate the hindsight bias by having some of their students predict the outcome of a sporting event or an election (either local or national) and having other students remember their predictions after the outcome is known (this is most easily done if instructors have more than one psychology class). When this activity is combined with the Clarence Thomas case, like Brigham and Demakis, students found dramatic evidence for the hindsight bias.

Fischhoff and Beyth (1975) demonstrated how the hindsight bbias strengthens over time. Prior to President Nixon's trips to China and Russia in 1972, they asked students to estimate the probability for a number of selected events, such as "Would the United States establish a permanent diplomatic mission in Peking?", "Would President Nixon meet Mao Tse-tung at least once during his trip?", and "Would Nixon see Soviet demonstrators?" After the trip, students were asked in hindsight to remember their original estimates for the selected events. When the interval between the two tests was just two weeks, 67 percent of the students thought their original estimates were closer to the truth than they actually were. When a four-to-eight-month interval had elapsed, 84 percent of the students had showed the hindsight bias.

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Russo and Schoemaker (1989) suggested that people see more reasons for an event when it has already happened than when they are simply asked why it might occur. In one of their studies, researchers gave a brief description of a new employee to some managers and MBA students. They then asked them to list the reasons due to which the employee might quit six months from now. They generated a mean of 3.5 reasons per person. However, when told that the new employee had already quit, the hindsight group generated 25 percent more reasons on average (4.4 reasons). Moreover, the reasons were more specific and more closely tied to the description of the employee. The researchers further suggested that merely pretending that an event had occurred could lead people to see more reasons for its occurrence and ultimately assigning it a higher probability of becoming a reality. For example, one group of people who were asked as to why a woman had been elected as the President of the United States in 2012 came up with more reasons than the other group of people who were simply asked why a woman might be elected as the President of the United States in 2012. Moreover, when finally asked to estimate the probability of the hypothetical event becoming a reality, the former group of people gave a higher estimate than the latter group of people. Russo and Schoemaker concluded that although hindsight usually obstructs learning, sometimes "prospective hindsight" could be advantageous when contemplating the future. If people doubt whether others have sufficient insight into the myriad of causes that could make an important project successful or unsuccessful, it may be useful to have them engage in some "mental time travel."

Demonstration 2-1
Rokeach Value Survey

A list of 18 values that are arranged in alphabetical order is given below. The researchers are interested in finding out the relative importance of these values to you. Study the list carefully. Then, write a "1" next to the value that is of utmost importance to you; write a "2" next to the value that is of second most importance to you, and write an "18" next to the value that is of least importance to you. After ranking all the values in the list, go back and check your ranking of the list. Please take all the time you need to think about ranking this list to ensure that the end result is the true representation of your values.

A Comfortable Life (a prosperous life)
An Exciting Life (a stimulating, active life)
A Sense of Accomplishment (lasting contribution)
A World at Peace (free of war and conflict)
A World of Beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)
Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
Family Security (taking care of loved ones)

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Freedom (independence, free choice)
Happiness (contentedness)
Inner Harmony (freedom from inner conflicts)
Mature Love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
National Security (protection from attack)
Pleasure (an enjoyable, leisurely life)
Salvation (saved, eternal life)
Self-Respect (self-esteem)
Social Recognition (respect, admiration)
True Friendship (close companionship)
Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)

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Demonstration 2-2
Bolt & Myers
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Research suggests that the more romantically in love two people are, the more attractive they find all other members of the opposite sex. In a sentence or two, write down the reasons for this finding.

Does this finding strike you as surprising or not surprising?
_____ surprising
_____ not surprising

Research suggests that the more romantically in love two people are, the less attractive they find all other members of the opposite sex. In a sentence or two, write down the reasons for this finding.

Does this finding strike you as surprising, or not surprising?

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_____ surprising
_____ not surprising

Demonstration 2-3

Research suggests that people who have high self-esteem are more susceptible to flattery than people who have low self-esteem. In a sentence or two, write down the reasons for this finding.

Does this finding strike you as surprising, or not surprising?
_____ surprising
_____ not surprising

Research suggests that people who have low self-esteem are more susceptible to flattery than people who have high self-esteem. In a sentence or two, write down the reasons for this finding.

Does this finding strike you as surprising, or not surprising?
_____ surprising
_____ not surprising

2. "The Study of the Obvious"

Social psychology has sometimes been characterized as "the study of the obvious" because the findings after the fact seem like common sense. To illustrate how well people's minds

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generate explanations after the fact, but often fail to make accurate predictions before the fact, describe three studies to the students. Before the first study, tell them that they will probably find the results rather surprising and not so obvious, as it is often claimed. Then, proceed to describe results that are actually in direct opposition to the real findings. For example, briefly describe the Gergen, Gergen, and Barton (1973) study in which subjects entered a dark room with strangers. Report that subjects stayed to themselves, rarely communicated, and made limited physical contact. Ask students if they find this surprising and, if not, how would they possibly explain the results. There are always a few students who offer plausible explanations for their answers.

Then, tell them that they might find the next study surprising. Describe the study and give the students conclusions that are contrary to the results. Ask students who do not find it surprising to explain their reasons. Repeat the same steps with a third study.

After receiving very plausible after the fact explanations for each study, confess to the class that somehow the results were mixed-up. Tell them that the results presented were contrary to the actual findings of the study. Most students (but not all!) might quickly grasp what happened. Be sure to remind them that they generated very plausible explanations for results that were not actually true. It is easy for the human mind to make anything look plausible in hindsight. This demonstration helps set the tone for the course by having students realize that they should avoid jumping to quick conclusions. Of course, instructors can use any number of studies for this exercise. The more surprising the actual results of a study are, the better they will work for this activity.

3. Popular Sources for Additional Classroom Material

Kohn, A. (1990). *You know what they say . . . : The truth about popular beliefs.* New York: HarperCollins.
This book analyzes the truth of familiar proverbs, many of them relating to social behavior. Some of these proverbs are true, while others are not. The book also demonstrates the value of careful, systematic research.

Demonstrations

1. The Hindsight Bias (The I-knew-it-all-along Phenomenon)

The following exercise powerfully demonstrates the hindsight bias. Before students read Module 2, create copies of Demonstration 2-2 and Demonstration 2-3. Cut the sheets in half, and alternate the two versions among students. After the questions are distributed and completed, each student can compare with an adjacent person to confirm the contradictory

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versions. The procedure for the demonstration is simple. After everyone has answered the questions, explain the phenomenon and demonstrate it by asking students, "How many of you found the findings 'surprising'?" Most likely few students will raise their hands. Then, ask them, "How many of you found the findings, 'not surprising'?" Many students will now probably raise their hands. Then, tell them that half of them were given a result that is contrary to the result given to the other half.

The hindsight bias may also be illustrated using Demonstration 2-4, which is adapted from Fischhoff (1977). Give half the class the first version of this questionnaire. This version tells them the answers to the factual questions and asks them, in essence, whether they knew-it-all-along. Give the other half of the class the second version of the questionnaire. This version does not inform them that the answer they are rating is, in fact, the correct answer. Then, have the students average their probability estimates, and do a quick tally to see whether the answers seem more obvious to those who have been told them.

R. E. Goranson's experiment cited by Gordon Wood (1984) provided the basis for another quick yet dramatic illustration. Write the following anagrams with their solutions in parentheses on the chalkboard: WREAT (WATER), ETRYN (ENTRY), OCHSA (CHAOS), GRABE (BARGE). Ask the students to write down an estimate of how long it would have taken them to correctly solve each anagram if they had not been given the solution. Then, ask students to raise their hands if their estimates were lower than the actual solution times. Those reported by Goranson were 158, 182, 224, and 173 seconds, respectively. Knowing the outcome the answer seems so obvious, and students will grossly underestimate their solution times.

As Gordon Wood (1984) suggested, throughout the course it is probably wise to have the students predict the results of a study before presenting the findings. It is very likely that they will become less vulnerable to the hindsight bias.

Demonstration 2-4 (with permission from B. Fischhoff)

Seven factual questions, each of which has two possible answers, are given below. The researchers are interested in studying the perceived difficulty of these items. The correct answer has a blank beside it. Pretend you have not been told the correct answer. What probability would you have assigned to the answer with the blank beside it?

A sample question is as follows:

1. Absinthe is

   a. a precious stone

   ___% b. a liqueur

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Your task on this demonstration would be to pretend that the researchers did not tell you that absinthe is a liqueur and indicate the probability (from 0 to 100 percent) of you believing that absinthe is, indeed, a liqueur. If you would have been pretty sure that absinthe is a liqueur, you could write, say, 85 percent. If you would have felt equally sure that absinthe is not a liqueur, you could write 15 percent. If you felt the probability of you believing the option was 50-50 (or if you would have had no idea), you could write 50 percent. In summary, your task is to simply estimate the odds you would have given to the answer with the blank, if the researchers had not told you the right answer.

1. Approximately, how many known active volcanoes exist in the world?
   ___% a. 445
   b. 45

2. Which magazine had the highest circulation in 1970?
   a. Time
   ___% b. Playboy

3. Aesop, the fabulist, lived in:
   ___% a. the sixth century B.C.
   b. the sixth century A.D.

4. Potatoes are native to:
   ___% a. Peru.
   b. Ireland.

5. The first air raid in history took place in:
   ___% a. 1849.
   b. 1937.

6. Aladdin's nationality was:
   a. Persian.
   ___% b. Chinese.

7. Aardvarks mostly eat:
   a. ants.
   ___% b. termites.

8. Three-fourths of the world's cacao (used in chocolate) comes from:
   ___% a. Africa.

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b. South America.

Demonstration 2-4 (with permission from B. Fischhoff)

Seven factual questions, each of which has two possible answers, are given below. The researchers are interested in studying the perceived difficulty of these items. In each case, one answer has a blank beside it, which may or may not be the correct answer. In the blank, assign a probability that the option is, in fact, the correct answer.

A sample question is as follows:

1. Absinthe is
   a. a precious stone
   ___ % b. a liqueur

Your task on this demonstration would be to indicate the probability (from 1 to 100 percent) of you believing that absinthe is, indeed, a liqueur. If you are pretty sure that absinthe is a liqueur, you could write, say, 85 percent on the blank. If you felt equally sure that absinthe is not a liqueur, you could write 15 percent. If you felt the probability of you believing the option was 50-50 (or if you have no idea), you could write 50 percent. In summary, your task is simply to estimate the odds of you believing that the option with the blank is the correct answer.

1. Approximately, how many known active volcanoes exist in the world?
   ___ % a. 445
   b. 45

2. Which magazine had the highest circulation in 1970?
   a. Time
   ___ % b. Playboy

3. Aesop, the fabulist, lived in:
   ___ % a. The sixth century B.C.
   b. The sixth century A.D.

4. Potatoes are native to:
   ___ % a. Peru.
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b. 1937.

6. Aladdin's nationality was:
   a. Persian.
___% b. Chinese.

7. Aardvarks mostly eat:
   a. ants.
___% b. termites.

8. Three-fourths of the world's cacao (used in chocolate) comes from:
___% a. Africa.
   b. South America.

2. Social Psychology and Common Sense

Although the chapter does not maintain that most social psychological findings are counterintuitive, it can be demonstrated that some are. Students often incorrectly answer most of the questions in Demonstration 2-5. These questions can also serve to introduce the range of topics studied by social psychologists.

The answer key for Demonstration 2-5 is given below.

1. F	10. F	19. F
2. F	11. F	20. F
3. F	12. F	21. T
4. F	13. F	22. T
5. F	14. F	23. T
6. T	15. F	24. F
7. F	16. T	25. T
8. T	17. F	26. F
9. T	18. T	27. F

Demonstration 2-5
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True or False

1. Most of us have quite an accurate insight on the factors that influence our moods.
2. Most people rate themselves as worse-than-average while rating themselves on

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socially desirable characteristics.

3. Memory is like a storage chest in the brain. We deposit material into it and we can also withdraw material from it at a later time, if needed. Occasionally, something gets lost from the "chest," and then, we say we have forgotten it.
4. People's behavior is best predicted in terms of their personalities or inner dispositions.
5. To alter the way people act, they first need to change their hearts and minds.
6. People who are made self-conscious by looking into a mirror act more in line with their attitudes.
7. The greater the reward promised for an activity, the more one will come to enjoy the activity.
8. In overall vocabulary, the words "happiness" and "intelligence" and the words "males" and "females" are not noticeably different.
9. In countries everywhere, girls spend more time helping with housework and child care, while boys spend more time in unsupervised play.
10. Most people would disobey an authority who orders them to hurt a stranger.
11. Persuaders will always be more effective if they acknowledge opposing arguments.
12. In a formal debate, it is always to your advantage to be the last speaker.
13. People pull harder in a tug-of-war when they are part of a team than when they are pulling by themselves.
14. The greater the cohesiveness or "we" feeling in a group, the more likely the group will make a good decision.
15. When White and Black students are shown the faces of a few White and Black individuals and asked to pick these individuals out of a photographic lineup, both White and Black students more accurately recognize the faces of the White people than that of the Black people.
16. In a recent national survey, only a minority of Americans indicated that they would be willing to see a homosexual doctor.
17. To be mentally healthy, people need an opportunity to act out, and thus, vent their aggression.
18. The more often we see something—even if we don't like it at first—the more we grow to like it.
19. As suggested by the dumb-blonde idea, physically attractive men and women tend to be considered by others as colder, dumber, and less moral than the plainer people.
20. Opposites attract.
21. One of the best predictors of whether any two people are friends is their sheer proximity, or geographical nearness, to one another.
22. When we feel guilty, we are more likely to help those around us.
23. If you want to buy a new car at the best price, it is best to adopt a tough bargaining stance by opening with a very low offer rather than with a sincere "good faith" offer.

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24. Depressed persons tend to be unrealistic in their perceptions of themselves.
25. People who favor the death penalty are also more prone to vote a defendant guilty.
26. Eyewitnesses' certainty about their own accuracy in viewing a crime is highly related to their actual accuracy.
27. Research clearly shows a strong positive relationship between material wealth and life satisfaction.

3. Social Psychology and Classic Wisdom

Demonstration 2-6 contrasts the wisdom of various sages on topics pertinent to social psychology. Stress to students that the point of this demonstration is not to undermine the sages, but it is to point out that regardless of the answers revealed during the research, there will always be people who anticipated the findings of the study. Completing this demonstration should sensitize students to this point.

Demonstration 2-6
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The Wisdom of the Past: Who Is Right?

The following 15 questions will be discussed in the textbook (Chapter 1 will speak to question 1, Chapter 2 to question 2, etc.). Indicate your own hunches, prior to reading the chapter.

1. What is the relationship between science and common sense?
   ___ a. Do you agree with Thomas H. Huxley, who said, "Science is nothing but trained and organized common sense"?
   or
   ___ b. Do you agree with E. B. Titchener, who said, "Common sense is the very opposite of science"?

2. Do people more commonly have deflated or inflated self-images?
   ___ a. Do you agree with Carl Rogers, who said, "The central core of difficulty in people . . . is that in the great majority of cases they despise themselves, and regard themselves as worthless and unlovable"?
   or
   ___ b. Do you agree with Henry Ward Beecher, who said, "Conceit is the most incurable disease that is known to the human soul"?

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3. Concerning the rationality of our social thinking, who of the following is closer to the truth?
   ___a. Shakespeare's Hamlet: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! . . . in apprehension how like a god!"
   or
   ___b. Madeline L'Engle's Mr. Murry: "The naked intellect is an extraordinarily inaccurate instrument."

4. Consider the relationship between our actions and our convictions.
   ___a. Is it true that "The ancestor of every action is a thought" (Ralph Waldo Emerson)?
   or
   ___b. Is it true that "Thought is the child of action." (Benjamin Disraeli)?

5. Which sex exerts more social power?
   ___a. Is it more often true as Alfred Lord Tennyson declared: "Man to command, and woman to obey"?
   or
   ___b. Is it more often true as Thomas Moore believed: "Disguise our bondage as we will, Tis woman, woman rules us still"?

6. Are most evil acts willfully performed by evil individuals, or by ordinary people who have been corrupted by an evil influence? Whose experience of the following is more typical?
   ___a. Euripides: "I know indeed what evil I intend to do."
   or
   ___b. St. Paul: "The evil which I would not, that I do."

7. Are people more persuaded by reason or emotion?
   ___a. Was Shakespeare's Lysander correct in saying, "The will of man is by his reason sway'd"?
   or
   ___b. Was Lord Chesterfield correct when he said, "Address yourself generally to the senses, to the heart, and to the weaknesses of mankind, but rarely to their reason"?

8. Who makes better decisions—individuals ("too many cooks spoil the broth") or groups ("two heads are better than one")? Which of the following is truer?
   ___a. "The mass never comes up to the standard of its best member, but on the contrary degrades itself to a level with the lowest" (Henry David Thoreau).

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or

___b. “About things on which the public thinks long, it commonly attains to think right.” (Samuel Johnson)

9. How do people evaluate innocent victims of oppression?

___ a. Was Juvenal, the Roman satirist, correct in saying that people “Hate those who have been condemned”?

or

___ b. Was Ralph Waldo Emerson correct in saying, “The martyr cannot be dishonored”?

10. Is aggression instinctive?

___ a. Was George Santayana correct in saying, “To fight is a radical instinct. . . . To knock a thing down is a deep delight to the blood”?

or

___ b. Was Bronislaw Malinowski closer to the truth when he said: “Is war a biological necessity? As regards the earliest cultures the answer is emphatically negative. . . . Nor is head-hunting, body snatching, or killing for food instinctive or natural”?

11. How does repeated contact with another usually affect our liking for the person?

___a. Is it true that “familiarity breeds contempt” while “absence makes the heart grow fonder”?

or

___b. Is it true that “love depends on frequent meetings” (Leo Tolstoy)?

12. What motivates helpfulness?

___a. Is it true that “Men do not value a good deed unless it brings a reward” (Ovid)?

or

___b. Is it true that “True goodness springs from man’s own heart. All men are good” (Confucius)?

13. Is another person’s equal status more likely to trigger friendship, or rivalry and conflict? Who between the following two is right?

___ a. Samuel Johnson: “Friendship is seldom lasting but between equals.”

or

___b. Francis Bacon: “There is little friendship in the world, and least of all between equals.”

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14. What shapes our beliefs?
    ___a. Was Julius Caesar correct in saying, “Men freely believe that which they desire”?
    or
    ___b. Was Sophocles correct when he said, “The truth is always the strongest argument”?

15. Are juries more influenced by the evidence or by their personal biases and sympathies? Can a jury be impartial? Which of the following assumptions is accurate?
    ___a. The Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says, “The accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury.”
    or
    ___b. As Clarence Darrow says, “Jurymen seldom convict a person they like, or acquit one they dislike. . . . Facts regarding the crime are relatively unimportant.”

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