

# PSY 102 HOMEWORK / DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Spring 2014)

## January 22

1) Suppose you were interested in conducting a study on the relationship between women's body image and experience with dating. Construct a hypothesis. In other words, what do you expect to find? 2) How would you operationally define the two variables "body image" and "dating experience"? 3) How might you go about getting study participants? Be specific, and remember that you have nothing to offer potential participants. Now, in what ways would these women probably not be representative of all women in the U.S.? 4) How might your answer to #3 affect what you find in your study? That is, in what ways might the nature of your sample lead to different results compared to what you'd find with all women in the U.S.?

## January 24

1) Suppose a researcher measures body image and dating experience and finds a positive correlation ( $r = .28$ ). The researcher describes the results to a reporter who then writes an article on the study which includes the following conclusion: "This research supports the idea that women who feel good about themselves attract more attention from men, and therefore have more dating experience." Is the reporter making a causal statement? Generate two other explanations for the correlation. 2) Suppose a survey reveals that 18% of women and 14% of men say they donated money to a charity within the past month, and that this male-female difference is a statistically significant one. A reporter does not provide the actual percentages, but describes that the research "showed that women are more generous than men." In what ways might you characterize this conclusion as misleading? What about the practical significance of the difference?

## January 27

1) What is your reaction to the ideas presented in the reading and in the video? Had you been taught that humans come into the world a blank slate? What questions do you have? 2) Think of three mental or emotional experiences that are part of human nature. That is, think of specific emotional reactions, preferences, patterns of thinking, etc. that are universal across people regardless of their culture or place in history. For example, *greed* seems to be a part of human nature; humans typically want more, regardless of how much they have. From what we can tell, this has always been the case and is true across cultures. For each of the three components of human nature you identified, explain why each one would have been adaptive or advantageous with regard to survival and having offspring among our distant ancestors. This is the same as explaining why these aspects of human nature were adaptive and have become universal.

## January 29

1) How do MZ and DZ twins differ? 2) At the very end of the reading, the author notes that researchers found a "genetic link to the likelihood of divorce" and the "time of death." Does it make sense to assume that this means there are genes that predispose individuals to divorce and to death at a certain age? What else might be influenced by genes that then makes someone more or less likely to divorce (or die earlier or later in life)? 3) When two children are raised in the same family, researchers assume they are exposed to the same environment, and so the extent to which the two children differ is attributed to differences in genes. Do you agree that two children in the same family experience the same environment? Why or why not? 4) The personality dimension of introversion-extroversion appears to have a substantial genetic component. Describe how the extent to which a person is "naturally" quiet versus outgoing influences what happens to that person socially, and how those experiences are likely to also influence introversion-extroversion. 5) If you could clone yourself, and raise the infant yourself, do you think the cloned you would end up being more like you than if the infant was raised by some other family? Why or why not? 6) If genes assert the largest influence on individuals' characteristics, what parenting strategy makes the most sense? Is this how you were raised?

## January 31

1) Be able to label each of the lobes of the brain, and know the primary functions associated with each. 2) Be able to recall the primary functions associated with each of the following brain structures: medulla, pons, reticular formation, cerebellum, thalamus, hypothalamus, limbic system.

### **February 3**

1) A stroke is when an a specific area of the brain dies because of a loss of blood flow (typically from a blood clot or a hemorrhage). Now that we have talked about the lobes of the brain, and you've read about the hemispheres, suppose that you saw someone in the mall who could not move her right arm. The stroke must have occurred in the \_\_\_\_\_ lobe on the \_\_\_\_\_ side. 2) Gazzaniga employed the case study approach in his research on split-brain patients. Why this method? What are its limitations? 3) You probably have heard people describe themselves or others as "right-brained" or "left-brained." What do they mean by these terms? How accurate is it to use these terms based on the research on the hemispheres of the brain and how the brain functions? 4) Now imagine the following test of a split-brain patient. The patient is asked to look at the center of a screen where the dot appears. The following is presented for only a fraction of a second.

**HORSE                      \*                      SHOE**

- 5) The word "horse" would be processed in the patient's \_\_\_\_\_ hemisphere.
- 6) The word "shoe" would be processed in the patient's \_\_\_\_\_ hemisphere.
- 7) What would the patient say if asked, "What did you see?" \_\_\_\_\_  
Now imagine that the experimenter shows a second split-brain patient the same screen used above, but then places a covered box containing several objects in front of the patient. The patient can reach in and feel the objects but cannot see them. The box contains a spoon, a shoe, a horseshoe, an apple, a shoelace, a toy horse, and a cup.
- 8) The experimenter has the patient reach in with the *left* hand and keep the hand on the object that corresponds to what the patient saw. What will the patient choose? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) What might the patient say when asked *why* he or she chose the object he or she chose? Explain.  
Now imagine that a split-brain patient is shown a photo of a bloody murder victim, but it is shown only to one eye. When asked what the patient saw, the patient says, "Nothing. I don't know."
- 10) The photo was shown on the \_\_\_\_\_ side of the screen and was processed by the \_\_\_\_\_ side of the brain.
- 11) Will there be any indication that the patient saw the photo? *How and why?*

### **February 5**

1) What apparently happens, physically and mentally, during REM sleep? 2) Describe how Dement made sure his participants did not spend time in REM sleep during the first part of the study. 3) Why did Dement have some of the participants return for a second phase of the study after a period of going back to their normal lives? 4) What is the REM-rebound effect? 5) According to the reading, what daytime effects were evident from sleep deprivation? Do these match what you have experienced and observed when deprived of sleep? 6) What effect does alcohol (and other depressant drugs) have on sleep? 7) Explain in your own words Hobson and McCarley's "activation-synthesis hypothesis" about why we dream. 8) What pieces of evidence do Hobson and McCarley use to support their idea that the dream state is more like a physiological, pre-programmed event rather than something that reflects a dreamer's life or unconscious?

### **February 7**

1) Before today's reading, how would you have described what hypnotism is and what it can do? How has your description changed after the reading? 2) In the reading it is noted that not everyone can experience hypnosis. What is required to be a successful hypnotism participant? 3) Spanos stated that when people are hypnotized the hypnotist usually suggests that certain things will happen to them under hypnosis. What is it about these suggestions that lead a person to interpret his or her behavior as involuntary? 4) In what way does a hypnotized person's depth of imagination (or "absorption") play a role in the perception that a behavior is involuntary? 5) The text points out that research has failed to support the claim that hypnosis is a uniquely effective treatment for smoking, weight loss, improvement of memory, and so forth. However, there are many people who swear that hypnosis was the only treatment that worked for them. How do you explain this discrepancy between research and some peoples' experiences?

## **February 12**

1) For both the "visual cliff" and "preferential gazing" studies, the methods the researchers developed were at least as important as their findings. Why? Be able to describe to someone not enrolled in this course what was done in each study, and the general findings. 2) The survival value of perceiving the visual cliff seems obvious. Why would infants' preferences for gazing at human faces be adaptive? 3) In the study on preferential gazing, the concept of "habituation" was introduced. This concept will recur throughout the semester. What does it mean? 4) In general, what roles do innate brain mechanisms (tendencies we're born with) versus experience play in our perception of the physical world? In other words, do our perceptions of the world rest on innate brain mechanisms, experience, both? Why? 5) What would you say to someone who asserts that we each came into the world a completely blank slate?

## **February 19**

1) Explain in your own words the proposed evolutionary advantage of humans possessing a basic set of facial expressions that are shared by all. 2) In a sentence or two, summarize in your own words the "facial feedback theory" discussed under the *Conclusion* section. Accordingly, what could you do to improve your mood if you're feeling down? 3) Do you agree with Tannen's conclusions about mother-daughter communication? What is a meta-message? 4) Do you agree with Tannen's conclusions about male and female conversation patterns? What are the meta-messages conveyed in conversation among males compared to females? How might your group experiences in this class be different if we had male students?

## **February 21**

1) The diagram on the web page is useful for understanding the different types of memory. Use the reading and the links to be able to describe / understand the following concepts: sensory memory, short-term memory, chunking, spontaneous decay, displacement, long-term memory, consolidation, declarative vs. procedural memory, episodic vs. semantic memory. What questions do you have about memory?

## **February 24**

1) According to Loftus, in what ways is memory a reconstructive process? In other words, what is it about humans that prevent memories from being purely a replay of events as they happened? 2) In her research Loftus employed "false presuppositions." What are these and why were they important? 3) By the time a case comes to trial months after the arrest, what factors may have affected the witnesses' memories? 4) Near the end of the reading the issue of repressed memories was addressed. A truly repressed memory exists in the person's brain, yet the person does not have any awareness of it. Do you think repressed memories occur? Why or why not? 5) Given Loftus's research do you think that the vividness of a memory is a good indicator of how accurate that memory is? Why or why not?

## **February 26**

1) Take a few moments to think about: "What is intelligence?" Then define "intelligence" in your own words. 2) Based on your definition, how could you go about measuring intelligence? 3) What is your reaction to Gardner's "multiple intelligences"? Do you think these are forms of intelligence or something else? Why? 4) Of the different intelligences Gardner proposes, which is your strongest? Weakest?

## **February 28**

1) In your own words, briefly summarize what Pavlov did and what he found. In other words, what was his contribution to psychology? 2) Be able to distinguish an unconditioned stimulus from a conditioned stimulus, and an unconditioned response from a conditioned response. 3) In your own words, briefly summarize what Watson did with Little Albert, and what happened apparently as a result. 4) Watson would have said that conditioning can be used to create a fear of anything. However, more recent research has found that certain fears (e.g., heights, snakes, insects, blood) are more easily conditioned than are others (e.g., cars, light switches, books). How would you explain this from an evolutionary perspective? 5) On pp. 77-78 the author describes a study examining phobias among participants in a national twin sample. Is likely that there is a gene for each type of phobia? What else may be genetic that leads to a tendency to develop some form of phobia? (*Recall our topic from January 29*)

### **March 10**

1) In behaviorism, what is "extinction"? 2) On p. 82 the author points out that a behavior that was reinforced sporadically (partial reinforcement) is more difficult to extinguish than is a behavior that was reinforced consistently every time it occurred. Why? 3) On the bottom of p. 83 the author distinguishes positive reinforcement from negative reinforcement. How are they different? Alike? Which is more likely to result in superstitious behavior? Why do you think this is so? 4) What superstitious behaviors have you performed, and how did they originate? [Use operant conditioning concepts to explain.]

### **March 12 – Group Evaluations Due**

1) Bandura's classic study included several steps that participants went through. Outline the experimental conditions and measures in Bandura's study. Be specific and be sure to understand what each participant went through, and how the variables of interest were operationally defined. 2) In your own words, briefly summarize Bandura's results. What is your judgment about the *practical significance* of the findings [how large the effects were – see Table 12-1]? 3) Do you think that Bandura's findings apply to children and watching violent movies, playing violent video games, etc.? Why or why not?

### **March 17**

1) For the first study (teachers' perceptions of students), summarize what was manipulated, and what was found. 2) What is your judgment about the practical significance of the findings? Were the findings consistent across age groups? Why or why not? 3) Based on subsequent research, *how* might teacher expectations actually influence students' academic achievement? How might such effects be explained by principles of operant conditioning? 4) Some schools "track" students by putting them together to form classes based on how those students performed on achievement tests. The rationale is that the students in each class are at the same level, making teaching easier and more effective. What implications does the study have for the potential risks with such an approach? As a student, what do you think about tracking? 5) Research not discussed in the readings has revealed that we hold positive expectancies regarding physically attractive people. For example, we believe they're nicer and friendlier than are ugly people. How might these expectancies lead to self-fulfilling prophecies?

### **March 19**

1) Understanding what this study was all about can be a bit tricky. In your own words, summarize the design of the study (what the researchers did) and what they found. If you can do that clearly, you're in good shape. 2) Suppose someone put a gun to your head and made you say "I respect Nazis." Assuming that you don't respect Nazis, your attitudes and behavior do not match. Would you experience cognitive dissonance in this situation? Would you be likely to become more positive toward Nazis? Why or why not? 3) Suppose your family did not think that you should attend Columbia College (CC), but you insisted and enrolled. As a result, there is conflict between you and your family, and when the topic of college comes up there is obvious tension. Assuming you stayed at CC, does cognitive dissonance theory predict that you would be more likely to have a positive or a negative view of CC and your experience there? Why? 4) Imagine that you are the principal of a high school in which there is a small group of racist students who are contaminating the school environment. Describe how you could use cognitive dissonance theory to potentially alter students' attitudes. What could you try to get the racist students to do that might result in decreasing their racism? Be able to explain how your strategy might have those effects.

### **March 21**

1) As you read each of the three brief articles about prejudice and discrimination, look for similarities across all three types. List as many similarities as possible. 2) Where does prejudice come from? In other words, what are the ways you can think of that could lead an individual to be prejudiced against a group of people? 3) What purposes does prejudice and discrimination serve? What does an individual "get" by holding prejudiced beliefs and discriminating against people based on the categories to which those people belong? 4) Last, explain how each of the following concepts from earlier in the course might contribute to prejudice: Expectancy Effects, Confirmation Bias, Just World Hypothesis, Fundamental Attribution Error.

### **March 24**

1) In your own words, summarize the methodology and results of Asch's study (what the researcher did and found). Make sure you explain the important role of the confederates (college students working for the researcher). 2) Describe each of the four factors that might influence the extent to which conformity is likely or unlikely to occur. 3) Describe a situation in which you felt pressure to conform. How did any of the four factors influence your behavior then? 4) The research involved conformity to behavior by other people, but most of the time we do not have others around to observe and imitate when we have to make decisions about our own lives. How might we end up conforming to mental images we carry of what people "like us" probably do when faced with situations we encounter? In other words, do you think we end up conforming to what we believe other people do, regardless of whether we have seen it with our own eyes?

### **March 26**

1) What were the specific things that were done to the "prisoners" to help induce the feeling that they really were prisoners? Do these seem similar to the kinds of things actual inmates experience? 2) How do the results from Asch's research (discussed last time) help explain why the guards who acted decently toward the prisoners did not report or speak up to the guards who seemed to abuse their power? 3) Imagine what it might be like serving in the current war zones in the middle-east. If those soldiers are then placed in charge of guarding prisoners suspected of terrorism, how might the soldiers' experiences facilitate abuse of the prisoners? In what ways might such soldiers be abusive yet not consider themselves to be abusive people? 4) Have you ever been in a role that ended up influencing you to behave against your norms?

### **March 28**

1) In your own words, summarize the methodology of the study. What important deceptions were used? 2) What were the findings of the study? Include description of the emotional responses of participants. 3) Milgram described several factors that might have influenced WHY participants were so obedient in his study. Describe each in your own words. 4) Afterwards, the majority of participants reported being glad that they participated in the study. Use cognitive dissonance reduction theory to explain this finding. 5) What is your opinion about the use of deception in this study? Was it justified? What do you think about the later suggestion that research participants should be told, prior to deciding whether to participate, that they will be deceived in some way (bottom of p. 316)? 6) Under what circumstances might psychologists be justified deceiving research participants? What are the potential *advantages* and *harms* of deceiving them?

### **March 31**

1) In your own words, summarize the methodology and findings of the study. What is your judgment about the practical significance of the findings? 2) If you needed help from strangers, would you rather be on a crowded street or in a store with only a salesperson? 3) Given how ambiguity and evaluation apprehension may negatively affect someone's likelihood of helping, what could you do to reduce these if you are the one who needs help? 4) How do the results of the "smoke" study (pp. 306-307) compare to Solomon Asch's study/findings (recall his study on conformity from two classes ago)? 5) How does shyness or concern about being criticized seem to relate to likelihood of helping? 6) Do you think that knowing about this research, and the diffusion or responsibility, will affect your behavior when you encounter an emergency?

### **April 2**

1) What would make you happy? If you consider yourself a happy person, what would make you happier than you are now? Be specific. 2) How did you feel about your own life and happiness after reading the interview with Christopher Reeves? Why? 3) What is the state of "flow," and what is required to enter it? How might the popularity of video games be explained by what you read about flow? That is, what is it about video games that relates to flow? 4) Why do suppose watching TV is related to decreased flow?

### **April 7**

1) We use the term "personality" all the time. Define what "personality" is to you. 2) What factors do you think affect or determine peoples' personalities? What do you think is the relative influence or degree of contribution of each factor? 3) How much do think personality changes over the life span? Do you think there are particular phases of life when personality changes most? Least? Why?

### **April 9**

1) In your own words, describe "internal locus of control" versus "external locus of control." 2) According to Rotter, *how* do people develop their generalized locus of control? In other words, what factors influence the locus of control you develop? How could you help ensure that your child develops an internal locus of control? 3) Look over Table 25-1 and make sure you can identify items that would reflect an internal locus of control versus those that would reflect an external locus of control. *Why* were filler items included in scales such as these? 4) Briefly summarize the research findings on the relation of locus of control to: a) gambling, b) persuasion and conformity, c) smoking, d) achievement motivation. 5) How does locus of control help you better understand friends who tend to engage in more self-pity than you do? 6) Believing God to be in control is sort of an external locus of control, but people do not seem to experience those beliefs that way (see p. 198). Why? 7) For Seligman's study, describe in your own words the methodology for both Day 1 and Day 2 of the experiment. 8) Examine Figures 31-1 and 31-2. Suppose someone said, "There really wasn't that big of an effect due to learned helplessness. I mean, it took the dogs in the learned helplessness condition 20-25 seconds longer to escape, but that isn't that long." What important point is the person missing about the results? [*Hint*: What about Fig. 31-2?] 9) Explain how learned helplessness could help us understand why someone who was raised in an abusive family would stay in an abusive relationship as an adult? 10) Consider the application to Americans' experience of 9/11. How does learned helplessness apply to the country's mood following the attacks? What positive effects of 9/11 did researchers note? Why do you think those benefits did not seem to last?

### **April 11**

1) In your own words, briefly summarize how Holmes and Rahe studied the possible relationship between life changes and health. What did they find? 2) Examine Figure 23-1. What do you think about the size of the effect (practical significance) of life changes as related to changes in health? What about the fact that item 6 in the list adds 53 LCUs to an individual's score? 3) Read through the life change events scale (Table 23-1). Very few of these events apply to traditional college students. Does that mean that students experience very little stress? Why? 4) In your own words, describe the difference between Type A and Type B personality. 5) In explaining the generally poorer health of those with Type A compared to Type B personalities, what behaviors may differ between the two groups that would then be related to differences in health? (There are many possibilities.) 6) Based on the follow-up research, what is the explanation for how Type A might lead to heart problems? 7) Do you think the Type A pattern is something that is inherently part of a person's personality, or can it be changed?

### **April 14**

1) Describe each of the three components of personality according to Freud. How does each one function in our lives? 2) According to Freud, *why* and *when* do we employ defense mechanisms? That is, what is their purpose? 3) Generate an original example for each of the five defense mechanisms (an example that is not provided in the text). 4) What do you think about the research on possible unconscious motives for homophobia in some individuals? 5) Describe in your own words what the Rorschach inkblot test is assumed to measure. Why use inkblots instead of questions? 6) One of the things a Rorschach test administrator is interested in is the amount of time taken to respond to the ink blot, as well as whether the respondent failed to interpret a particular blot. From a psychoanalytic perspective, *why* is this important?

### **April 16**

1) What makes a fear a "phobia"? What are the three clinical categories of phobia? 2) What is "reciprocal inhibition," and how did Wolpe demonstrate it in his laboratory studies with animals? 3) Outline the three steps in Wolpe's systematic desensitization. 4) Someone with a phobia tends to avoid the thing or situation that prompts the fear response. If the person suddenly is faced with that thing or situation, the person generally flees or creates distance. Use the concept of negative reinforcement from the reading and discussion on Skinner and behaviorism to explain how that response makes avoidance of the feared thing or situation more likely over time (in other words, the phobia gets worse). 5) Do you have a specific fear or phobia? How could you use systematic desensitization to eliminate that fear? What stops you?

### **April 21**

1) When you hear that someone is "depressed," what symptoms or signs come to mind? How would you know whether you are depressed? 2) If you were feeling depressed, would you consider taking anti-depressant medication? Why or why not? Do you think there is a stigma around taking medications for emotional or mental problems? Why? 3) The cognitive-behavioral approach you read about is the most common form of psychological treatment for depression. What do you think about this approach? What do you foresee would be the difficulties in using this approach if **you** were depressed? 4) Is there anything you took away from CBT that might be helpful to you even if you aren't depressed? In other words, how might some aspects of CBT improve your life generally? 5) Do you think depression is ever "normal"? Why or why not? Does that answer affect whether you would seek treatment?

### **April 23**

1) Does the description of fat talk match what you have observed? What about similar "food talk" about "good" foods, "bad" foods, and "being good" with regard to one's diet? What do young women "get" from engaging in fat talk and food talk with their peers? 2) Imagine that a young woman your age who struggles with an eating disorder overhears others engaging in fat talk or food talk. How might that affect the young woman's thoughts and feelings about herself? 3) When you hear a peer engaging in fat talk or food talk, how could you respond in a more helpful way than the usual, expected response? 4) From the page containing suggestions for improving one's body image, what is your reaction? Which ones seem most helpful? Least helpful? 5) Could you go a year without using a mirror? Why or why not? What did you think about the woman who did?

### **April 25 – Group Evaluations Due**

1) Summarize in your own words the criteria that generally are required for determining whether someone suffers from mental illness. 2) Summarize in your own words the general ways in which the staff and physicians interacted with the patients. 3) Do you think it was fair to judge the staff who admitted these pseudo-patients when, in reality, no one would try to be admitted to such places unless they needed help? 4) What do you think is different about mental illness that results in more stigma and discrimination than other forms of disability? 5) Before reading the online article, did you believe any of the myths about mental illness? Did any of the myths seem related to what the researchers found in the *Forty Studies* article? 6) How would you feel about hiring, or working with, an individual who has a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia? In what ways do you think peoples' reactions and attitudes toward those with mental illnesses influence their ability to function successfully in the community?

**Yaayy! You made it to the end!**