

sionals, such as teachers, parents, and caregivers, explaining the importance of the findings to these people.

Student Perceptions of Cooperative Learning Groups

Responses of 17 students on a course evaluation survey indicated that they were not averse to group work. For example, all students disagreed with the statement "I would not have taken this course if I knew that we would be expected to work in teams." The students also perceived that group members worked as a unit rather than as individuals; 94% agreed with "Every person in our group gets a chance to share his or her ideas; we encourage each other." Responses also indicated that the students believed the other group members helped them learn. For example, all students agreed with the statements "My teammates usually give me ideas I hadn't thought about" and "The team discussions usually helped me to clarify my ideas," and 94% agreed with "As I explain things to my group, I find that I understand the material better."

Conclusions

A large body of research demonstrates that cooperative learning methods can be used effectively in the college classroom, and our attempt to include them in a cognitive psychology course was successful. We hope the information presented in this article will encourage instructors of cognition courses to supplement their lectures with cooperative learning activities.

References

- Giordano, P. J., & Hammer, E. Y. (1999). In-class collaborative learning: Practical suggestions from the teaching trenches. *Teaching of Psychology*, 26, 42–44.
- Hartley, J., & Davies, I. K. (1978). Note-taking: A critical review. *Programmed Learning and Educational Technology*, 15, 207–224.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1991). *Learning together and alone: Cooperative, competitive, and individualistic* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- King, A. (1993). From sage on the stage to guide on the side. *College Teaching*, 41, 30–35.
- Lindholm, J. A., Astin, A. W., Sax, L. J., & Korn, W. S. (2002). *The American college teacher: National norms for the 2001–2002 HERI faculty survey*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute.
- McKeachie, W. J. (1994). *Teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers* (9th ed.). Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Meyers, C., & Jones, T. B. (1993). *Promoting active learning: Strategies for the college classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyers, S. A. (1997). Increasing student participation and productivity in small-group activities for psychology classes. *Teaching of Psychology*, 24, 105–115.
- Millis, B. (1993). Cooperative learning and the "Seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education." *Cooperative Learning*, 13(3), 10–11.
- O'Donnell, A. M., & Dansereau, D. F. (1992). Scripted cooperation in student dyads: A method for analyzing and enhancing academic learning and performance. In R. Hertz-Lazarowitz & N. Miller

(Eds.), *Interaction in cooperative groups: The theoretical anatomy of group learning* (pp. 120–141). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Rickard, H. C., Rogers, R., Ellis, N. R., & Beidleman, W. B. (1988). Some retention, but not enough. *Teaching of Psychology*, 15, 151–152.
- Springer, L., Stanne, M. E., & Donovan, S. S. (1999). Effects of small-group learning on undergraduates in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 69, 21–51.
- Thompson, W. B., & Vermette, P. J. (2002). *Classroom practices of college instructors*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Vermette, P. J. (1998). *Making cooperative learning work: Student teams in K–12 classrooms*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Notes

1. Portions of this article were presented at the 1996 meeting of the American Psychological Association.
2. Send correspondence to W. Burt Thompson, Department of Psychology, Niagara University, Niagara Falls, NY 14109–2208; e-mail: wbt@niagara.edu.

The Power of Persuasion: A Field Exercise

Robert V. Levine and Nathanael Fast
California State University, Fresno

Philip Zimbardo
Stanford University

This article describes a field exercise, conducted at 2 universities, designed to teach students about the power of persuasion and to penetrate their illusion of invulnerability to persuasion. The assignment requires students to set themselves up as targets of a professional salesperson or other persuasion expert and to analyze their experiences using fundamental social psychological concepts. Postexercise evaluations indicate that students believe the exercise strengthens their resistance to uninvited persuasion both in the specific domain they chose for their exercise and for uninvited persuasion in general.

The psychology of persuasion is a cornerstone topic of undergraduate social psychology courses. In our teaching about persuasion, we attempt to (a) educate students about the fundamental psychological concepts of persuasion, (b) heighten their awareness of commonly used persuasion tactics, and (c) offer skills and knowledge that will help them resist unwanted persuasion. A formidable obstacle to accomplishing these objectives is the common belief among people that they are less vulnerable to persuasion than the average person. This belief is an expression of two related, well-established illusions: (a) The "illusion of invulnerability," people's tendency to believe that they are less likely to be victimized than their peers (e.g., Weinstein, 1987, 1989) and (b) the "better-than-average effect," the tendency for Westerners to rate themselves as above average on positive characteristics, such as intelligence, personal competence, and social skills (e.g., Brown, 1986; Dunning, 1993).

Because of these illusions, it is often not enough to simply offer armchair education about persuasion. In fact, teaching about the dangers of persuasion can sometimes backfire—if the illusions are a defense against reality, drawing attention to this reality can further stimulate their effects (Snyder, 1997).

To overcome these obstacles, we have developed a dual approach to teaching resistance to persuasion. First, based on the premise that to be forewarned is to be forearmed (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001), we teach students the basic concepts of the psychology of persuasion, highlighting the situations in which they are most vulnerable to influence (see, e.g., Cialdini, 2001; Levine, 2003; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). The second premise, however, is that simply being forewarned does not guarantee successful resistance. We introduce students to the illusion of invulnerability and the better-than-average effect, pointing out that these illusions may leave them psychologically disarmed and, consequently, more vulnerable to influence (e.g., Kulik & Mahler, 1987). To drive this point home, we not only teach students about persuasion, but also allow them to experience it firsthand. Following is a field exercise we have found useful.

Experiencing Persuasion: An Exercise

The exercise requires students to set themselves up as targets of a professional salesperson or other persuasion expert. Students (a) identify a situation in which they will encounter persuasion, (b) check with the instructor to have it approved, (c) expose themselves to the situation, and (d) write an analytical reflection paper on the experience. To give students a realistic experience we do not explicitly instruct them on how to approach the situation (e.g., emotionally detached, strongly resistant). Rather, we simply ask them to behave as naturally as they can.

Students have considerable leeway in selecting situations, as long as they will experience some of the psychological persuasion tactics covered in class. We introduce these concepts in lectures and assigned readings from multiple disciplines, including social psychology, sales, advertising, and studies of mass persuasion artists and cult leaders. Examples of the tactics and concepts covered include the foot-in-the door, door-in-the face, and that's-not-all techniques; slowly escalating commitments; the illusion of choice; conformity and social proof; conveying illusions of authority, honesty, and likeability; and the base-rate fallacy and negativity bias. We teach students how scam artists and other persuasion experts exploit these techniques and emphasize that the purpose of the exercise is for them to experience such exploitation firsthand.

Over the years, students have subjected themselves to a wide range of persuasion experts and situations such as car, jewelry, stereo, furniture, and insurance salespeople; timeshare seminars; parties to sell Tupperware, kitchenware, photo albums, and candles; military recruiters; funeral arrangement coordinators; street hustlers; scientology, Moonie, and other religious recruiters; and psychics.

After completing their field experiences, students write papers in which they (a) use social psychological concepts to analyze the tactics that were employed, (b) reflect on how they responded to the tactics, and (c) articulate how they could more effectively resist similar persuasion attempts in the future. Papers are evaluated based on students' abilities to draw

connections between the persuasion strategies they learned in class and their actual experiences as targets of influence. We conclude the assignment by inviting students to share what they learned from the exercise with the rest of the class.

Ethical Precautions

It is important to take precautions against students placing themselves in unsafe situations. Students must have their topics approved by the instructor before carrying out the assignment. Occasionally, it is necessary to suggest an alternative scenario if a proposed situation is too risky. Most cults, for example, are excellent illustrations of persuasion but we generally advise students not to subject themselves directly to their influence. Also, in situations where students will likely encounter hard-sell salespeople, we tell them beforehand at what point to exit the encounter. We counsel students visiting car lots, for example, not to go beyond the test drive. Last, we make ourselves available to any student who might encounter any difficulties. Thus far, no serious problems have occurred at either of our universities.

Evaluations

We evaluated student perceptions about the effectiveness of the exercise by giving a questionnaire to students at California State University, Fresno in Spring 2002 ($N = 30$). Based on a scale of 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*), students indicated that the assignment was helpful in revealing their vulnerability to unwanted influence ($M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.44$) and left them better prepared to defend against unwanted influence, both for similar situations ($M = 5.87$, $SD = 1.31$) and influence situations in general ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.37$). We also conducted focus groups to further evaluate the effectiveness of the exercise. Responses were consistent with the questionnaire findings. Students enjoyed the exercise and said it increased their awareness of both the psychological dynamics of influence and their responses to it. We note here the importance of further testing the effectiveness of the assignment by measuring changes in students' abilities to resist actual persuasion. As mentioned earlier, self-report can be prone to the illusion of invulnerability and the better-than-average effect.

Discussion

We believe the success of the field exercise derives, in part, from the effectiveness of "stinging" as a strategy for building resistance to persuasion. Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice, and Serna (2002) used this strategy in a series of studies involving deceptive advertising. They found that participants who were personally deceived by advertisements, and then shown that they were deceived, most effectively resisted future deception. Similarly, students in our class reported that the most effective experiences were those in which the persuasion process affected them more than they had anticipated; in essence, they were stung by the process.

Overall, the field exercise described in this article seems a valuable tool for helping students break through the illusion of personal invulnerability and, thus, motivating them to

take preventative measures in similar situations in the future. We have used it successfully at universities with two very different student bodies in both introductory social psychology courses and a specialized course entitled *The Psychology of Persuasion and Mind Control*. In addition to obtaining knowledge about fundamental social psychology principles, students experience persuasion directly, leading to the discovery of their own vulnerabilities to persuasion and fostering reflection on how to more effectively resist it in the future.

References

- Brown, J. D. (1986). Evaluations of self and others: Self-enhancement biases in social judgments. *Social Cognition*, 4, 353–376.
- Cialdini, R. B. (2001). *Influence: Science and practice* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Dunning, D. (1993). Words to live by: The self and definitions of social concepts and categories. In J. M. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (Vol. 4, pp. 99–126). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Kulik, J. A., & Mahler, H. I. (1987). Health status, perceptions of risk, and prevention interest for health and nonhealth problems. *Health Psychology*, 6, 15–27.
- Levine, R. (2003). *The power of persuasion: How we're bought and sold*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Pratkanis, A. R., & Aronson, E. (2001). *Age of propaganda: The everyday use and abuse of persuasion* (Rev. ed.). New York: Freeman.
- Sagarin, B. J., Cialdini, R. B., Rice, W. E., & Serna, S. B. (2002). Dispelling the illusion of invulnerability: The motivations and mechanisms of resistance to persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 526–541.
- Snyder, C. R. (1997). Unique invulnerability: A classroom demonstration in estimating personal mortality. *Teaching of Psychology*, 24, 197–199.
- Weinstein, N. D. (1987). Unrealistic optimism about susceptibility to health problems: Conclusions from a community-wide sample. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 10, 481–500.
- Weinstein, N. D. (1989). Optimistic biases about personal risks. *Science*, 246, 1232–1233.
- Zimbardo, P. G., & Leippe, M. R. (1991). *The psychology of attitude change and social influence*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Note

Send correspondence to Robert V. Levine, Department of Psychology, California State University, Fresno, CA 93740–0011; e-mail: robertle@csufresno.edu.

Essential Readings in Rehabilitation Psychology

Joseph J. Ryan and Heather A. Tree
Central Missouri State University

We surveyed all 70 American Board of Professional Psychology Diplomates in rehabilitation psychology to identify lists of essential books and journals. The return rate was 41.4%. Six of 168 books

and 5 of 127 journals met the inclusion criteria (i.e., endorsement by $\geq 20\%$ or more of respondents). The Handbook of Rehabilitation Psychology (Frank & Elliot, 2000) received the most endorsements for books. Rehabilitation Psychology received the most endorsements for journals. The results provide a preliminary reading guide for students and professionals who wish to gain familiarity with the specialty or to keep abreast of developments in the field.

Rehabilitation psychology is a growing discipline that involves the application of psychological knowledge and understanding on behalf of persons with disabilities (Frank & Elliot, 2000). Recognition as a specialty in the United States is evident by (a) endorsement of diplomate status in rehabilitation psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP), (b) postdoctoral training programs, (c) creation of numerous professional organizations, and (d) the appearance of specialty-relevant publications.

In-depth familiarity with the literature is one of many prerequisites for competent clinical practice and effective graduate training. However, with the proliferation of specialty-relevant publications, busy practitioners may have difficulty identifying the most appropriate books and journals for study. The situation may be even more problematic for students with an interest in rehabilitation psychology. Obviously, both groups would benefit from assistance in obtaining accurate information about the various types of material to consult.

We conducted this survey to generate lists of English-language books and journals that qualified practitioners consider essential readings in the field of rehabilitation psychology. A practitioner is considered sufficiently knowledgeable to judge the importance of books and periodicals if she or he has achieved diplomate status in rehabilitation psychology from the ABPP.

Method

In January 2002, we sent a survey letter to each of the 70 diplomates in rehabilitation psychology listed in the online *Diplomate Directory* of the ABPP (2002). We asked potential respondents to provide a list of 10 or fewer books and 10 or fewer journals that they believed every graduate student and psychologist with a serious interest in rehabilitation psychology should read, especially those planning to venture into the field from another specialty. We instructed them to list in rank order their 10 (or fewer) essential books and 10 (or fewer) essential journals in rehabilitation psychology. For each group, the most essential publication received a ranking of 1, the next most essential publication 2, and so on. We mailed follow-up surveys in March and April 2002 to maximize the return rate.

Results

A total of 29 individuals responded to the survey, which represents a return rate of 41.4%. Twenty-seven respondents provided lists of books and journals. Overall, participants endorsed 168 books and 127 journals. To simplify the data set,