

PSYCHO BABBLE

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Message from the Editors

Welcome to the 2nd issue of Psycho Babble for fall 2011! Psycho Babble is a continuing newsletter written by the newsletter committee in PSI CHI. It is meant to offer thoughtful insights and articles about psychology. We sincerely hope that Psycho Babble is providing interesting material for Psi Chi, psychology club, and other readers who share an interest in psychology. If you have any questions or suggestions please email us at UHPsychoBabble@gmail.com, and we will be more than happy to assist you.

From Your Editor,

Sonia Babu

Authors Note- This article is a response to an article published in a psychology journal earlier this year. The topic studied was of religious belief but of no particular religion. I in no way intend any disrespect to anyone who is an atheist, agnostic or member of any particular religion. The intention of this article is solely to discuss the article cited regarding its scientific accuracy. Sincerely, Richard Rodriguez

Answer the following questions before reading the article. The answers are at the end of the article (Box 2).

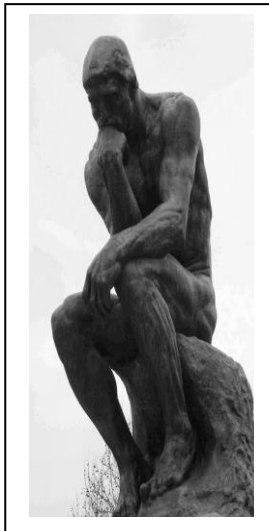
Cognitive Reflective Test (CRT; Frederick, 2005)

- (1) A bat and a ball cost \$1.10 in total. The bat costs \$1.00 more than the ball. How much does the ball cost? ____ cents
- (2) If it takes 5 machines 5 min to make 5 widgets, how long would it take 100 machines to make 100 widgets? ____ min
- (3) In a lake, there is a patch of lily pads. Every day, the patch doubles in size. If it takes 48 days for the patch to cover the entire lake, how long would it take for the patch to cover half of the lake? ____ days

What Do You Think?

By: Richard Rodriguez

In September of this year, the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* published an article entitled “Divine Intuition: Cognitive Style Influences Belief in God” (Shenhav, Rand, & Greene, 2011). The purpose of the article was to report the findings of three studies conducted to determine whether the cognitive decision styles of intuition and reflection had any effect on whether a person believes in God or not. The study designs were two correlational and one experimental. The only test used in the three studies to measure intuition and reflection was the Cognitive Reflective Test (CRT; Frederick, 2005) (Shenhav, Rand, & Greene, 2011). The CRT consists of only three mathematical word problems designed to cause an intuitive wrong answer to be provoked within the person answering, and only with reflective thought will the person answer correctly (see Boxes 1 and 2) (Frederick, 2005). The authors claim that intuitive thinkers are more likely to believe in God than reflective people are. The results of the studies were very interesting. However, the authors appear to have made no attempt to ensure that the reader is aware that there are some major limitations with their findings.



The constructs of intuitive and reflective judgments are well defined. Intuitive judgments are “made with little effort based on automatic processes,” and reflective judgments are those where the person stops to reflect critically upon their answer (Shenhav, Rand, & Greene, 2011, p. 1). However, the construct definition of God is completely missing. This lack of definition may have posed a serious problem when they asked people whether they believe in God or not. Only a person who either is an atheist (complete disbelief) or has a monotheistic (one god) belief could easily answer the question. Someone who is an agnostic (someone who is unsure whether a god or gods exist) or of a polytheistic (multiple gods) religion could have difficulty answering since their definition of “God” may differ from the researchers definition. Where does the question “do you believe in God” leave these people?



The Cognitive Reflective Test (CRT; Frederick, 2005) has never been proven for validity and reliability. While unproven, the CRT was used because the authors stated it is “reliably (positively) associated” with several standardized tests (Shenhav, Rand, & Greene, 2011). One of the sources they used was the most comprehensive study so far regarding the CRT. Yet, even in that study the authors Toplak, West, & Stanovich (2011) make it very clear that the CRT’s highest covariance (agreement or similarity) is with cognitive ability (IQ) and rational thinking skills, but only at .40 and .49 respectively (Results section, para. 3); making the CRT only “moderately associated” with the two (Discussion section, para. 1). Yet, even this moderate association still does not answer the question of does the CRT measure intuitive/reflective judgments or not, since a 49% agreement is no more accurate than flipping a coin.



Another limitation with the CRT is that it was designed as a way of trying to explain decisions people make involving primarily “time preference and risk preference” (Frederick, 2005, p. 26). The test was not necessarily designed to explain how people make major life decisions, such as, whom they should marry. After all, who makes such decisions in the same manner as something like “do I want dessert or not?” There is nothing wrong with using an unproven test in research. In fact, part of proving a test effective is by comparing it to other standardized tests for a particular construct. The problem, however, is when one assumes a test accurate despite remaining unproven.

Even though the experimental study the authors conducted was well done, it does have some limitations regarding its ability to represent the entire population in regards to their religious beliefs. For example, their finding that writing about some life event can alter a person’s belief raises the question “how strong was the belief to begin with?” There is a huge difference between casually believing something and carefully coming into a belief. This article is not meant to criticize the purpose and findings of the studies discussed; as stated in the beginning, the results of the studies were very interesting. The criticism is that the authors seem to have made no attempt to acknowledge some serious limitations between their findings and their claim that cognitive styles influence belief in “God.” Since it was an advance online publication and not the final version, perhaps the authors will mention some of the limitations when the article is printed. So, does intuitive as opposed to reflective thought cause someone to believe in God? What do you think? Why?



References

- Frederick, S. (2005). Cognitive Reflection and Decision Making. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19(4), 25–42. doi:10.1257/089533005775196732
- Shenhav, A., Rand, D. G., & Greene, J. D. (2011). Divine Intuition: Cognitive Style Influences Belief in God. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1037/a0025391
- Toplak, M. E., West, R. F., & Stanovich, K. E. (2011). The Cognitive Reflection Test as a predictor of performance on heuristics-and-biases tasks. *Memory & Cognition*, 39, 1275-1289. doi:10.3758/s13421-011-0104-1

Answers to the CRT (Frederick, 2005):

1) 5 cents, 2) 5 min., 3) 47 days.

If you have any questions or comments (good or bad), please e-mail me either at the Psycho Babble e-mail address UHPsychoBabble@gmail.com, or directly at rrodriguez4@uh.edu. I look forward to hearing from you!

Do Drug Abusers Respond To Punishment?

By: James Johnson

Behavioral Activation System
BAS

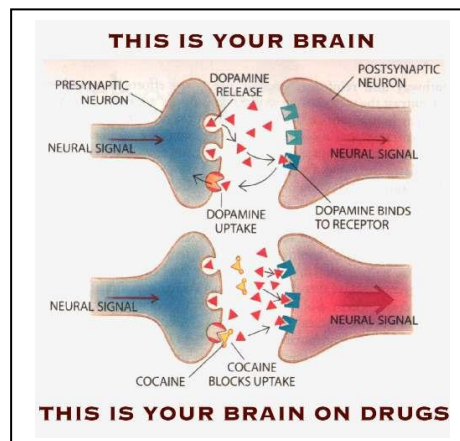


Behavioral Inhibition System
BIS

The United States has a policy of prohibition towards illegal drugs like marijuana, cocaine, heroin etc. That is, the Government has decided that the use of certain drugs is harmful to the users and **unrelated** others. Therefore, certain punishments like incarceration are implemented in order to discourage drug use. The logic sounds simple; if you attach a negative consequence (e.g. a jail sentence) to a positive experience (e.g. the use of cocaine) you can encourage an individual to not engage in a particular behavior such as abusing cocaine. But cocaine and other dangerous drugs already have plenty of negative consequences such as addiction, harm to health, harm to family, mental and overall dysfunction that greatly outweigh the perceived positive experience of being “high”. If the negative consequences of drug use outweigh the positive experience of a drug high, why do so many people continue to abuse drugs? The answer may lie in how the brains of drug abusers are configured in comparison to those of non drug users. In the brain there are two opposing systems: The Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS) and the Behavioral Activation System (BAS). The BIS responds to rewards and the BAS responds to punishments. The relative strengths of the BIS and BAS within an individual’s brain influence how that individual perceives rewards and punishments/risks. A person with a balanced BIS and BAS would perceive the negatives of drug abuse as greater than its positives. However, a drug abuser more likely to have a stronger BAS and weaker BIS would respond more strongly to the positive “reward” aspects of a drug high than its negative “punishment” aspects. This is why punishing drug abusers in the criminal justice system through incarceration etc. may not work in some cases. According to the article, “Behavioral Inhibition and Activation Systems: Differences in Substance Use Expectancy Organization and Activation in Memory” the brains of some drug abusers may not be wired to not respond to punishments being that the abuser may have a stronger BAS than BIS (315). This may explain why drug abusers continue to recidivate even though they may have been arrested and incarcerated several times for drug abuse or possession. Simply put, the research indicates that drug abusers may not have the capacity to respond to punishments the way that non-drug abusing individuals may because of their weaker BIS. In conclusion, being a drug abuser who may have a stronger BAS and weaker BIS, he or she might be more likely to respond to rewards than punishments. This counteracts traditional punishment tactics making drug abusers counterintuitive in the effort to suppress/eliminate drug use.

Works Cited

Lau-Barraco, C., Simons, J. S., & Dvorak, R. D. (2009). Behavioral inhibition and activation systems: Differences in substance use expectancy organization and activation in memory. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 23(2), 315-328.



Top 5 Holiday Shopping Season Tips

By: Christine Paul

Halloween kicks off holiday shopping season and like you, we are excited to start looking for awesome outfits and great presents! From costumes to party attire you wear for the 2012 countdown, you can be a smarter shopper by simply recognizing and applying a few simple Principles of Influence like those in *Influence: Science and Practice* by Robert Cialdini (5th Ed), just one of the texts being used in Psychology 4305 currently being taught by none other than Dr. Knee! Good luck and happy holiday shopping season!

5. RECIPROCITY

According to Cialdini, the rule of reciprocation is that we should try to repay in kind what another person has given to us (20). So beware of all those free samples, free gifts, or anything else starting with “free.”

4. LIKING

Cialdini imparts that we prefer to say yes to people we like (144). The salesperson is *trained* and *paid* to be nice to the customer. A nice salesperson that is polite and helpful is okay, just beware of the salesperson who loves everything you pick and somehow knows and understands all of your problems.

3. SCARCITY

The author provides that opportunities seem more valuable to us when they become less available (205). Do not be fooled by stores that hold mega-sales or closeout-sales every three months.

2. CONTRAST THEORY/PRINCIPLE

Cialdini teaches readers when the principle of human perception is employed. When one item is significantly different than another, we will see the other related items as important. So if you have to buy the dress don't get fooled into buying *all* the accessories, just get what you need.

1. INSTANT INFLUENCE

Finally, Cialdini explains throughout the text that we fall for these and many more influence tactics on impulse. This may be due to the fact that we do not have the cognitive resources to make a truly informed decision about the products we buy and the tactics used to get us to buy them (235). Dr. Knee explains further:

We are often rather unaware of the true power of the situational influences on our behavior, and that certainly goes for consumer purchases. We are quick to think that we are exempt from being influenced by others, which is our first mistake. The most significant persuasion attempts on us are often the ones that we don't even recognize (until we see how much money we spent). Why did I trust that salesperson so much? Why was the sale only for today? Similarly, if you are penny-pinching, you shouldn't go to the mall, especially when you feel tired, stressed, or of low cognitive capacity. Above all, we should educate ourselves on how interpersonal influence works, the steps that are often employed, and what to do to regain our control and awareness of what is happening in the moment. The most informed tend to make the best purchases and have the most fun while doing so.

-- C. Raymond Knee, Ph.D. (Chip), Associate Professor, University of Houston Director, Interpersonal Relations and Motivation Research Group Associate Editor, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin

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Cialdini, R. B. (2009). *Influence: Science and practice*. Harlow: Pearson Education.



Happy Thanks “Giri”

By: Christine Paul

Mo-Tse, a distinguished thinker and community leader of China, was founder of the Mohist School. His teachings contained in “Universal Love,” refer to the social public welfare in which people reflexively give to one another resulting in positive social progress. These acts are thought to facilitate human development because by social custom one gives of himself of his own free will for no material or any spiritual rewards. According to Qi Zhou, author of *“On Volunteer Spirit and Thought of Universal Love by Mo-Tse,”* Mo-Tse advocated that Universal Love would result in the expansion of one’s own love for himself to the eventual love of others. These teachings were promoted and were expected to bring about the abdication of a time in which people struggled with and invaded each other (184).

Furthermore, the author provides that Mo-Tse invented this theory of universal love and eventually mutual love and mutual benefit to convince the kings of ancient times to play their role of “where the wind passes, the grass bends,” so as to direct people in making contributions and showing fraternal love, mutual benefit and reciprocity. These thoughts of mutual love and mutual benefit were expanded by Mo-Tse to mean that one should love others as well as the common man in general to achieve mutual love and mutual assistance but not mutual complaint and harm. This is thought to be a reflection of the ancient model of the Great Harmony society designed by Mo-Tse according to the Yao and Shun. This social practice was meant to promote equality and selflessness that was by nature meant to supersede blood, closeness, proximity and social status for the greater benefit of society. Mo-Tse is cited to have pushed forward the thought of universal love whether in terms of resources or knowledge, because according to him human beings truly did have the ability to help others realize a stable life and the philanthropy thought of universal peace and order through the method of Universal Love (185).

Similarly, upholding the moral obligation to repay in kind a consideration or favor in many ways dictates social interaction and behavior in Japan. The concept of Giri is dynamic and extremely complex however, as explained by author Masayuki Yoshida, this way of social governance is relatively stable and perpetual in Japanese culture. Yoshida defines Giri as the reflexive “duty” or “obligation” which arises from a social interaction with another person as it’s most basic and general definition. So important and understood is this concept that to not follow it would be to violate your own “seken-tei” or honor of your name and status among your contemporaries (1). Many other human societies practice this type of sharing among each other like Akan of Ghana, Africa who live communally with others in order to promote compulsory altruism within the community. Mo-Tse firmly believed that human beings had the ability to practice universal love reflexively between one another. In conclusion, Qi Zhou stated Mo-Tse firmly believed that human beings had the ability to practice universal love reflexively between one another. As we enter this holiday season let us give of ourselves freely and with love in order to progress society not just for a great gift in return but as a way to achieve greatness within and throughout our own lives.

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Zhou, Qi. (2011). On volunteer spirit and thought of "Universal love" by Mo-Tse. *Asian Social Science*, 7(9), 184.

Yoshida Masayuki. (1996). Giri: A Japanese Indigenous Concept. Retrieved from <http://academic.csuohio.edu/makelaa/history/courses/his373/giri.html>



Fellow Psi Chi and Psychology Club Friends and Family, Meet Eeva Matikainen, Vice President and Chair of the Inductions Committee!!

By: Christine Paul



Eeva Matikainen

Spotlight Member for the
Month of November

So what is your full name? My full name is Eeva Karoliina Matikainen.

How long have you been in Psi Chi? I have been in Psi Chi for about two years.

Do you serve a position on the executive board? Yes, I am the **Vice President of the University of Houston Chapter.**

Are you a part of any other organizations? I am also a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS).

What do you like the most about the organization? What I like most about Psi Chi are the people. We have amazing members and I am happy to see so many more people joining this semester. It is a really friendly group to be in. We have a lot of fun in the office and at all of our events. And of course I enjoy the company of people who are as enthusiastic about psychology as I am!

What do you want the group to know about you? I was born and raised in Finland and moved to Houston only two years ago when I started at University of Houston. A lot of people do not realize that I am not American, at least until they hear my full name. UH is very diverse and it is really a great richness for the students to be able to meet people from all around the world.

You seem really busy, how many hours are you doing this semester? I'm taking 15 credit hours this semester, 3 of which are research credit hours.

To add to class and Psi Chi what else do you do? I am also the Lab Manager of Dr. Sharp's Developmental Psychopathology Lab. Outside of school I volunteer at the Houston Area Women's Center's Child Care Unit every week.

How has participation in research projects helped you? It has assured me that I am definitely in the right field. I have really enjoyed all of my psychology classes as well as applying that knowledge to practice in research and in every-day life.

What do you plan to do after you graduate? I am planning to graduate in the Spring/Summer of 2012 after three years of college. After graduating, I want to attend graduate school for clinical psychology. In the future, I want to work in a hospital setting or possibly have my own practice.

What schools are you considering? I am open to going anywhere in the world and have been considering many schools all around the States. University of Houston -Clear Lake is on the top of my list because of their excellent clinical psychology Master's program.

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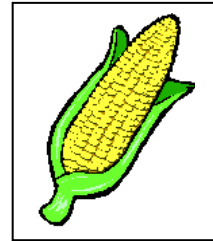
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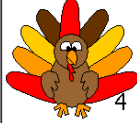



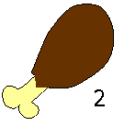





Thanksgiving Fun

By: Sonia Babu



Thanksgiving Sudoku

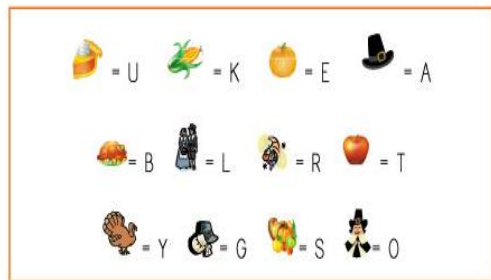
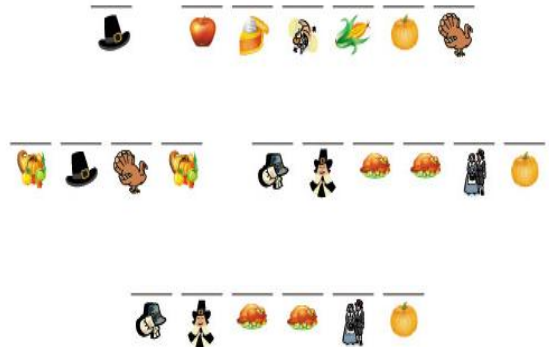
	 4	 2	
 1			 3
 2			 4
	 1	 3	

Each row, each column and each of the large four squares should have one of each image. Fill in the blanks!



Thanksgiving Secret Message Puzzle

Decode and solve the secret Thanksgiving message. Fill in the blanks with the letter that matches each picture from the box at the bottom of the page.



Thanksgiving Jokes

By: Sonia Babu

1. Who is not hungry at Thanksgiving?

A: The turkey because he is already stuffed!

2. What's the key to a great thanksgiving?

A: The turKEY!

3. Billy: I can't wait to go to grandmas for Thanksgiving. My cousin's going to be there, and he has three feet!

Willie: Wow! How did that happen?

Billy: I don't know. My aunt wrote my parents and said, "You won't recognize little Howie. He's grown another foot."

4. Why is the salad embarrassed?

A: He saw the salad dressing.

5. What are unhappy cranberries called??

A: Blueberries!

Upcoming Events

Chapter Dues Due/Meeting	Nov. 15
Inductions	Nov. 18
Thanksgiving Break	Nov. 23-27
Meeting	Nov. 29



Turkey Waddle

This is an embarrassing race that can be played with the whole family and will cause many fits of laughter.

Instructions: Set a starting and finishing line. Make as many teams as you wish. Each team must have a blow up balloon decorated as a turkey.

Game: During the turkey waddle, players must keep the turkey balloon between their legs. They must waddle to the end of the finishing line and back, to give their team mate the turkey balloon. The team completed the race first wins!