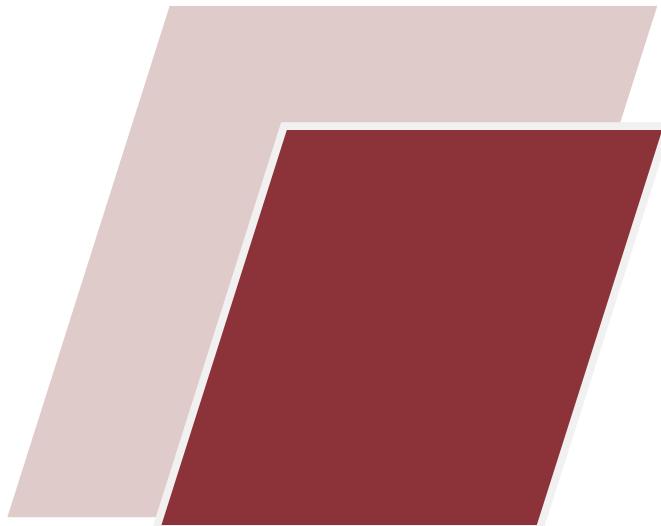


Learning Activities for Faith and Psychology

Second Edition

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Preface: Learning Activities for Faith and Psychology

This manual is a compilation of learning activities for integrating psychology and faith for introductory psychology students. Many professors are interested in teaching psychology from a Christian perspective, and some have already developed strategies for doing so. However, because of psychology's breadth it is extremely difficult for a single professor to develop useful integration materials for such a broad variety of subdisciplines. Rather than reinventing the wheel, so to speak, we solicited information, advice, activities, and recommendations of resources from professors who have already discovered useful strategies for teaching psychology from a Christian perspective. We have put these ideas together with our own for a more thorough consideration of integration learning activities. Feedback was solicited from professors within the CCCU (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities), and each professor who contributed is given credit.

In this manual we have provided learning activities for eight selected topic areas: introductory materials, psychological science, brain and behavior, nature and nurture, development, social psychology, psychological disorders, and therapy. These include commentary to guide the professor in teaching these topics from a Christian perspective. The learning activities include lectures, discussion, classroom exercises, student assignments, Bible readings, surveys, and videos.

What Is Integration?

"Integration" in the context of this manual is attempting to find ways to look at psychology from a faith perspective. We acknowledge that using the word *integration* already implies that we think the task of trying to relate the science of psychology and religious faith is an important one. In our preparation for this manual, we have discovered that Christians have various methods and means of integration, some not believing that Christians should integrate the Christian faith with psychology, and others believing that integration is a worthy endeavor but disagreeing with the specifics of how integration should be done.

Some Christian approaches claim that since all life is rooted in faith, the term *integration* (which implies putting together two separate fields of study, psychology and theology) is not appropriate. While we acknowledge that all of life is rooted in faith, we also acknowledge that mainstream psychology textbooks often do not include religion and faith in the discussion of human behavior and mental processes.

Our task, then, is to take concepts within the science of psychology studied by most students of introductory psychology and relate them to topics of faith. This is not unlike the pioneering work of Myers and Jeeves in their 1987 (rev. 2003) publication, *Psychology Through the Eyes of Faith*, written specifically for students studying introductory psychology. However, instead of writing a supplemental textbook, we have decided to take commonly explored topics in the various subdisciplines in psychology and to offer many different learning activities in a manual form. We hope that instructors of psychology will be able to pick and choose the activities that are helpful in teaching their students to look at psychology from a faith perspective.

We would like to especially thank the Kuyers Institute of Calvin College for funding this project and thereby making it possible. We would also like to thank the McGregor Fellowship program and the Calvin College Alumni Association for funding the students who worked with us.

No guarantee is made concerning the persistence of the URLs contained in these materials.

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References

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Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Introductory Materials



INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

Integration Resources

Lecture

Van de Kemp (1996) writes that the integration of psychology and religion has “emerged as a discrete specialty” (p. 77). She backs up this claim by citing several examples of the ways in which integration has emerged in the scientific academy. Psychologists commonly use the term *integration* for the task of relating psychology to Christian faith.

Examples of integration resources in the wider academic community are listed below. Note that this list is not exhaustive and is meant to introduce students to a few key resources.

Reference

Van de Kemp, H. (1996). Historical perspective: Religion and clinical psychology in America. In E. P. Shafranske (Ed.), *Religion and the clinical practice of psychology* (pp. 71–112). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Examples of Integration Resources Relating Psychology and Christian Faith

Professional societies:

- Christian Association of Psychological Studies (CAPS) was founded in 1956 by a group of Christians, mostly practicing psychologists who wanted to explore issues related to faith and psychology. The organization also focuses on therapeutic, research, theoretical, and theological issues.
<http://www.caps.net/>
- APA's Division 36 attained divisional status in 1976 under the name "Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues" (PIRI). In 1993 the division was renamed "The Psychology of Religion."
<http://www.apa.org/divisions/div36/>

Journals:

- *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, established in 1973 by the Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology.
<https://wisdom.biola.edu/jpt/>
- *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, established in 1982 by the Christian Association for Psychological Studies.
<http://www.caps.net/jpc.html>

Doctoral degree programs (APA accredited):

- Fuller Theological Seminary offers doctoral degree programs (PhD and PsyD) in clinical psychology. The first doctoral students were enrolled in 1965.
<http://www.fuller.edu/sop/>
- Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology at Biola University enrolled doctoral students in 1970. Rosemead offers doctoral programs (PhD and PsyD) in clinical psychology.
<http://www.rosemead.edu/>
- George Fox College Graduate School of Psychology received APA accreditation in 1998 and offers a PsyD program in clinical psychology.
http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/graduate/doctor_psyc/
- Wheaton College was accredited by the APA in 2008 and offers a PsyD program in clinical psychology.
<http://www.wheatongrad.com/?p=66>

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- Baylor University's PsyD program began in 1971. Baylor also offers a PhD in neuroscience.

<http://www.baylor.edu/psychologyneuroscience/splash.php>

Books (ordered by date of publication):

Carter, J. D., & Narramore, B. (1979). *Integration of psychology and theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

- This seminal book on integrating psychology and faith covers the basics of integration and provides several models of integrating faith and psychology. Although this book is almost 30 years old, the themes are still applicable to many of the issues currently being discussed in integration.

Fleck, J., & Carter, J. D. (Eds.). (1981). *Psychology and Christianity: Integrative readings*. Nashville: Abingdon.

- This book provides short, easy-to-read chapters on a variety of issues. It provides a good starting place for an understanding of approaches to integration.

Paloutzian, R. F. (1983). *Invitation to the psychology of religion*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

- This is a good resource for anyone interested in studying religion from a psychological perspective. Paloutzian discusses why psychologists ought to study religion.

Stewart Van Leeuwen, M. (1985). *The person in psychology: A contemporary Christian appraisal*. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity.

- This book is one of a series of books sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies that addresses different topics from a Christian worldview. Van Leeuwen reviews the history of how psychology has been studied, from past to present, and presents a challenge for the future. She argues that Christian psychologists should be open to studying the field of psychology using not only mechanistic experimental methodology but also a human-science orientation.

Jones, S. L. (Ed.). (1986). *Psychology and the Christian faith: An introductory reader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

- This book provides a foundational collection of writings by Christian psychologists who refuse to accept the divide between personal faith and academia. Engaging topics such as brain research, emotion, personality theory, and psychotherapy are addressed by a diverse group of Christian psychologists.

Philipchalk, R. P. (1987). *Psychology and Christianity: An introduction to controversial issues*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

- The author provides a brief overview of the major subareas within psychology from a Christian perspective. Each chapter centers on psychological findings or theories that potentially affect a Christian worldview, and includes discussion questions and resources for further discovery. While the book is over 25 years old, it is impressive that many of the issues addressed are still of interest to contemporary psychology.

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Jeeves, M. A. (1997). *Human nature at the millennium: Reflections on the integration of psychology and Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

- Jeeves addresses a variety of current issues that are at the forefront of discussions in psychology and Christianity, including neuropsychology, psychotherapy, consciousness, and determinism. This book is written for both undergraduate and graduate Christian psychology students. A few chapters may be difficult for undergraduate students to fully comprehend.

Johnson, E., & Jones, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Psychology and Christianity: Four views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- Each of the four major chapters of this book is written by an author who holds a specific view of the integration of psychology and Christianity: a levels-of-explanation view, an integration view, a Christian psychology view, and a Biblical counseling view. Following each chapter, the other three scholars provide their critique of the integration approach that was presented. The book includes an opening chapter on the history of Christians in psychology and a final chapter that attempts to find “one truth in four views.”

Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

- This updated and revised version of Myers and Jeeves's classic 1987 book provides a collection of essays that illustrate the relationship between psychology and Christianity. The chapters conveniently correspond to the chapters typically covered in an introductory psychology course.

Vanderstoep, S. W. (Ed.). (2003). *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

- This collection of essays considers some of the issues Christian psychologists encounter. It presents a variety of perspectives on a broad scope of contemporary issues.

Dueck, A., & Lee, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Why psychology needs theology: A radical-reformation perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

- The first three chapters of this book, written by Nancey Murphy of Fuller Theological Seminary, address the integration of psychology and theology from a radical-reformation perspective. The remaining six chapters provide extensions and alternatives to Murphy's model of integration from a variety of Christian scholars.

Dueck, A. (Ed.). (2006). *Integrating psychology and theology: Research and reflections*. Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press.

- The publication of this book coincided with the fortieth anniversary of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Psychology. Edited by Al Dueck, the Integration Chair, it provides a collection of writings from the psychology faculty on a variety of topics, including models of integration and integration within clinical psychology.

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Stevenson, D. H., Eck, B. E., & Hill, P. C. (2007). *Psychology & Christianity integration: Seminal works that shaped the movement*. Batavia, IL: Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Inc.

- This compilation of integrative writings exposes readers to scholars who shaped the integration movement. The history of the movement and the diversity of perspectives demonstrated in this collection serve as a thorough introduction to integration.

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Student Assignment

Professional societies

Look at the two professional societies listed above, under Integration Resources.

1. How would you expect Christian organizations of psychologists to express their mission?
2. Look at the Internet site for CAPS and describe the purpose of this organization.
3. Summarize the mission of APA's division 36.

Journals

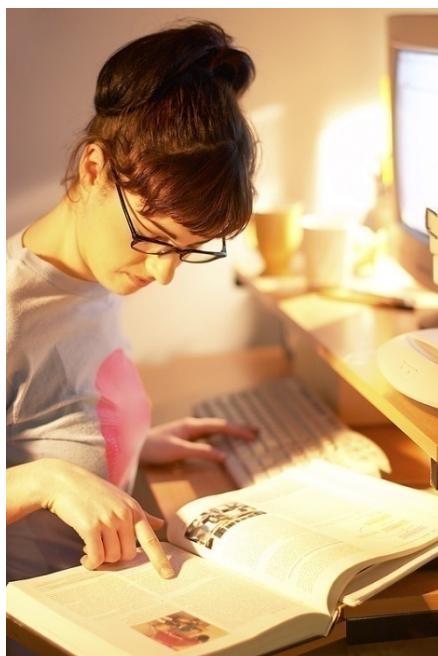
Look at the journals listed above, under Integration Resources.

1. Look through a recent issue of either of the journals listed.
2. Read an abstract of one of the articles that interest you.
3. Summarize the abstract and explain why this article interests you.
4. Provide an APA citation for the article.

Doctoral degree programs (APA accredited)

Look at the doctoral degree programs listed above, under Integration Resources.

1. What might you expect to be distinctively different in a Christian doctoral psychology program?
2. Choose one doctoral degree program to research via the Internet.
3. What are the requirements to enter the program?
4. What kind of integration between psychology and theology does the program provide?



Integration Checklist: What Does Integration Mean to You?

Survey

To start a discussion of different approaches to integration, have students complete the attached checklist to determine which style of integration best fits their current ideas of faith and psychology. The statements fit into one of three views of integration (phrases in quotation marks are found in Vanderstoep and Joldersma, 2003; see activity named "Three Views of Integration" for an explanation of terms).

Scoring

The responses are grouped as follows:

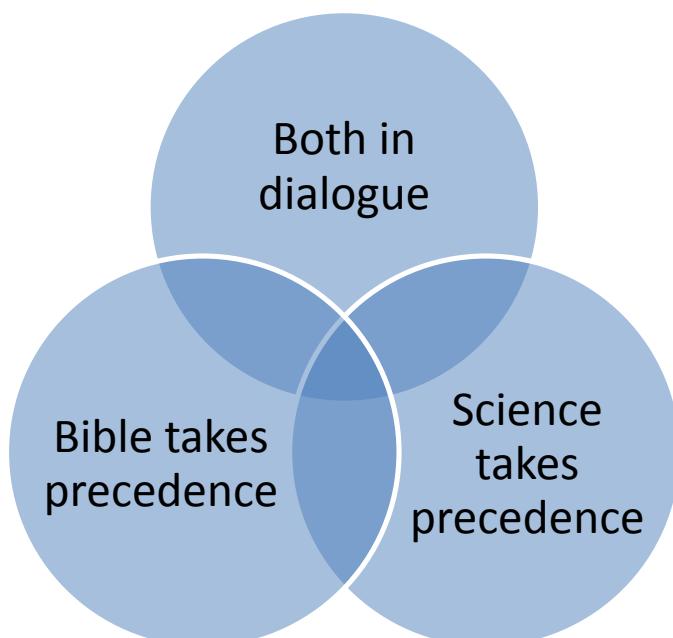
- **Bible takes precedence** (similar to "psychology is unnecessary or dangerous"): 3, 4, 6, 11, 14
- **Psychological science takes precedence** (similar to "psychology held in high regard"): 2, 7, 8, 10, 12
- **Both in dialogue** (similar to "psychology as incomplete or narrow"): 1, 5, 9, 13, 15

Discussion

1. Did you clearly fit into one style of integration?
2. Was there overlap between two or three styles of integration?

Reference

Vanderstoep, S. W., & Joldersma, C. W. (2003). Introduction. In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. xiii–xxi). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.



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Survey: What Does Integration Mean to You?

Listed below are several statements about the integration of psychology and Christian faith. Check the statements that best represent your own ideas:

- 1. Psychology and theology can both yield valuable information about human beings.
- 2. We should accept psychological research findings, even if they make us uncomfortable in terms of our faith.
- 3. Studying psychology is fine for some people, but I'm not convinced it has any use in my Christian life.
- 4. Psychology rarely discovers any knowledge that theology has not already addressed.
- 5. Although psychology is limited in its understanding of human behavior, it provides valuable insights about human nature.
- 6. Psychology's understanding of human beings is distorted since it does not acknowledge sin and instead claims that we are fundamentally good and can improve ourselves without God.
- 7. As a science, psychology helps us to understand human thought and behavior in ways that the Bible never could.
- 8. Psychological ways of knowing backed by scientific methodology take precedence over theological ways of knowing.
- 9. We must respect psychology, keeping in mind that it only tells a part of the human story.
- 10. If there ever seems to be a conflict between theological and psychological research, we ought to reexamine the biblical teachings and traditions.
- 11. It's a shame that people run to counselors before seeking out pastors and church elders.
- 12. As a well-established discipline psychology allows us to gain valuable insights into human nature that cannot be gained elsewhere.
- 13. As Christians we need to engage psychology just as we engage all other disciplines so we can explore parts of God's truth wherever they may be found.
- 14. Psychology is merely a pseudoscience that tries to take the place of religion and tradition.
- 15. Both psychology and theology are essential for gaining a more complete view of humanity.

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Scoring

Total up your responses in each category, using the scoring information provided by your instructor:

Bible takes precedence: Total: _____

Science takes precedence: Total: _____

Both in dialogue: Total: _____



Three Views of Integration

VanderStoep and Joldersma (2003) provide a summary of integration that is accessible for introductory psychology students. Have the students read this chapter and complete one of the following three student assignments. A brief summary is provided for professors who want to include these points in a lecture.

Lecture

There are three main ways in which Christians approach the role of psychology:

1. **Psychology is unnecessary or dangerous.** Some Christians believe that psychological findings are unnecessary because they are not helpful and add nothing to Christian teachings. Others may believe that psychology is dangerous in that psychological findings contradict the Bible and are incompatible with Christian faith. A disadvantage of this approach is that Christians who hold this view will not be receptive to general revelation, meaning that they are not open to the ways in which God reveals himself in the world apart from the Bible.
2. **Psychology held in high regard.** This group of Christians believes that psychology has much to teach us about human nature and that it is an important way of learning about God's creation. They argue that one should not dismiss psychological research that contradicts Christian teachings, but instead should reconsider the biblical teachings. A disadvantage of this approach is that psychological findings may take precedence over theological beliefs.
3. **Psychology as incomplete or narrow.** Christians who hold this position find psychology to be important but incomplete in its understanding of human nature. They argue that both psychology and theology are necessary to understand the complexity of human nature and behavior. A disadvantage of this position is that it may minimize psychology's unique role of understanding human nature through empirical research.

Reference

Vanderstoep, S. W., & Joldersma, C. W. (2003). Introduction. In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. xiii–xxi). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Student Assignment #1

Adapted from an exercise submitted by Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe (Calvin College)

Write a two-page, double-spaced paper addressing the following points:

1. Indicate which of the three views of integration (Vanderstoep & Joldersma, 2003) best fits the ideas of your parents. Be sure to include examples of behaviors and attitudes that you have observed. You may need to interview your parents to have a better sense of which approach they use.
2. Indicate which of the three views you use. In addition, state whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with your view. Indicate strengths and weaknesses of your view. Include examples of behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate your view of integration.

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Student Assignment #2

Adapted from an exercise submitted by Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe (Calvin College)

Discussion

How would people who hold these views of integration understand the causes and treatment of depression?

1. **Psychology is unnecessary or dangerous.** Depression is a spiritual problem only. The Bible provides all the answers necessary to address depression. Faith in God and turning away from sin enable the individual to live a life according to God's purpose.
2. **Psychology held in high regard.** Depression is a natural problem caused by the malfunctioning of the neurotransmitters, a genetic predisposition, and stressful life events. Appropriate treatment includes the use of medication and/or therapy that have been empirically shown to be effective. Once the depression is alleviated, the individual will be better able to address any spiritual concerns outside of therapy.
3. **Psychology as incomplete or narrow.** Depression is both a natural problem and also the result of the fall. As fallen people we are vulnerable to the effects of mental and physical illnesses. Treatment includes a combination of spiritual and therapeutic interventions. In addition to providing the best psychological treatment available, through medication and/or therapy, the therapist also addresses such issues as the individual's relationship with God and how the individual's faith and current depression impact each other.

Student Assignment #3

Read the following article from the Chicago Tribune:

Manier, J. (March 31, 2006). In this study, prayers aren't the answer. Retrieved from
http://www.templeton.org/pdfs/articles/060331Chicago_Tribune.pdf

Manier's article highlights the results of a large-scale Harvard study that suggests intercessory prayers for patients recovering from heart bypass surgeries were ineffective and, in some instances, even harmful.

Discussion

1. How would a representative of each of the three views respond to this prayer study?
2. What do the scientific results of this study tell us about intercessory prayer? As a scientist, what kinds of questions would you raise about this study?
3. What does the church tell us about intercessory prayer? (For example, What is prayer? Why do we pray? Should we pray?) As a Christian, what kinds of questions would you raise about this study?
4. As both a psychologist (scientist) and a Christian, how might you address this study?

To help students answer question number four, you might want to have them read the following statement written by a Christian psychologist:

<http://davidmyers.org/davidmyers/assets/prayer-letter.pdf>

In 1997, when the Harvard study on intercessory prayer received funding from the Templeton Foundation, David Myers preemptively issued a statement in which he predicted null effects. He chose to make this statement public at the onset of the study "so that such Christian thinking

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about prayer would not seem, if offered now [after the data were available], like after-the-fact backpedaling or rationalization."

A summary of Myers's 1997 statement:

We do not pray to get what we want from a Santa Claus-like God. Instead, the purpose of prayer is to acknowledge our dependence on God and our intimate relationship with Him.

Practical concerns:

- a. "The noise factor": most cardiac patients are already receiving prayers from people they know. Myers doubts that the additional prayers of strangers would cause God to change his mind.
- b. "The doubt factor": Myers questions whether prayers solicited by doubting scientists will be effective.
- c. "God is not mocked": The Bible tells us that we are not to put God to the test.

"[T]he evidence of history suggests that the prayers of finite humans do not manipulate an infinite God." Bad things happen even to those who pray, but we have "a promise that God is beside us in our suffering and a hope that out of defeat and suffering and even death we may gain new life."

For a response from Myers after the conclusion of the Harvard prayer study, see the following:

Myers, D. G. (2006, April 7). Arm-twisting with the Almighty: Prayer experiment yields predicted result. Retrieved from <http://www.davidmyers.org/Brix?pageID=133>



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Four Views of Integration

There are a variety of models that people use to explain integration between psychology and faith. The three views of integration model that was presented in the prior lecture may be more appropriate for introductory students. However, if you choose to go into greater depth on this topic, you may find the following material to be helpful.

Lecture

Each of the four major chapters of *Psychology and Christianity: Four views* (Johnson & Jones, 2000) is written by a person who holds one of four approaches to integrating psychology and Christianity. The other three authors respond to each chapter, thus providing critiques of the approach from a variety of perspectives.

Levels of Explanation (by David Myers)

Summary:

Myers asserts that science and religion do not conflict. They explain similar phenomena in different but not contradictory ways. We need both psychology and religion to understand the truth about the complexity of human nature. Science and theology answer different questions. Science answers *how*-questions, and theology answers *why*-questions. Myers argues that both psychology and theology are valuable and that we should not exclude either.

Critique:

One critique of Myers is that he overemphasizes psychology at the expense of theology. Also, he fails to appreciate that interpretations of psychological data are influenced by the values and worldviews of the psychologists who conduct scientific research; therefore, science's truths are not neutral and should not be wholly accepted.

Integration (by Gary Collins)

Summary:

Collins argues that integration has practical value in that it allows Christians to care for people through psychological counseling. Christian counselors can provide healing through God's power even though they are imperfect themselves. Collins believes that God reveals himself in both the Bible and through the world and that we need to bring these two sources of knowledge together to best understand people. However, the Bible provides a stronger foundation for understanding people than mainstream psychology does because the Bible addresses such issues as how sin affects human behavior, "the origin and ultimate future of human life, and our purposes for living" (p. 110). Therefore, Christian counselors must include these important tenets in their practice of psychology.

Critique:

One critique of Collins is that he underemphasizes the importance of psychological research in answering important, central questions about human nature. In other words, he may place too much emphasis on the Bible being able to answer complex questions about human nature.

Christian Psychology (by Robert C. Roberts)

Summary:

Roberts asserts that contemporary psychology has taught us some worthwhile things about human beings, but the Bible and Christian writers of the past offer us far greater insights into the understanding of human nature. As examples, he mentions Aquinas, Dostoyevsky, the desert fathers, and Kierkegaard. He argues that we should think of them as "primary psychologists, of

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equal or superior status with Freud, Erikson, Kohut" (p. 153). According to Roberts, "A primary aim of Christian psychology is to make available the distinctive psychology of the Christian tradition to the intellect and practice of persons in our time" (p. 155). Roberts argues that Christian psychology is a type of psychology. Christian psychology is best accomplished not by those who seek to integrate contemporary secular psychology with the Christian faith, but by those "in whom faith and psychology have an original union as tight as that between faith and theology. In them, psychological thought and practice is simply an aspect of faith" (p. 152).

Critique:

One critique is that Roberts looks too much to the past and is dismissive of contemporary psychological findings.

Biblical Counseling (by David Powlison)

Summary:

Powlison is skeptical that psychology can provide us with anything that is useful or significant beyond what the Bible has to tell us about our humanness. He cautions that psychology is not a unified field, but instead consists of multiple secular psychologies, each with its own theoretical understanding of people. Thus, psychological knowledge is neither neutral nor objective. What he refers to as "faith's psychology" is more comprehensive, as it considers our humanity from "God's point of view" (p. 202). According to Powlison, "The secular psychologies chase a rainbow: an explanation of what is wrong with us that is anything but sin against God, and a cure for the human condition that is anything but Christ" (p. 208).

Critique:

One critique of Powlison is that he is too skeptical and dismissive of the findings within secular psychology. Another critique is that Powlison is creating an "us versus them" stance between contemporary psychology and Christianity.

■ Discussion

The first three questions are taken directly from the first chapter of Johnson and Jones (2000, p. 42).

1. What is the author's understanding of the role of the Bible and theology within psychology and counseling?
2. How do the authors of these chapters differ in their degree of trust or mistrust for the contributions of non-Christian psychologists and their work?
3. Does Christianity provide a distinctive view of human nature that should bear on psychological theory-building, research, and counseling practice?
4. Where would you place these approaches on a continuum that has at one extreme the view that science is all sufficient and at the other extreme the view that the Bible is all sufficient?

■ Reference

Johnson, E., & Jones, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Psychology and Christianity: Four views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Faith and Psychological Science

Classroom Exercise

This classroom exercise works well before students have read the indicated material. It allows them to articulate their beliefs prior to encountering the opinions of the authors.

Write a journal entry that addresses the following questions:

1. Do Christianity and psychology mix?
2. What have your parents taught you about the role of psychology in faith?
3. What is the reputation of psychological therapy or psychological science in your church?
4. What have your schools taught you about the role of psychology in faith?

Student Assignment

Read the first three chapters of *Psychology Through the Eyes of Faith* (Myers & Jeeves, 2003). Identify themes from the reading assignment to answer these questions:

1. How do Myers and Jeeves define the relationship between faith and psychology?
2. Why do they suggest that a Christian should study psychology?
3. How did reading the chapters by Myers and Jeeves affect your opinion on the relationship between faith and psychology?

Lecture

Invite students to share their responses with the entire class. Students almost always pick up on the following points themselves. Write down their thoughts and expound on them by using the following categories:

- **Unity of Truth.** All truth is from God and we can find it in different places: John Calvin wrote that “the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. . . . We will be careful . . . not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.15, in Jones & Butman, 1991). Jones and Butman argue that science with its emphasis on replication and standard research methods can be very helpful in discovering truth. In fact, they assert that the Bible makes no claim to be the only source of truth: “Scripture is not declared to be the only and all-sufficient source for every word ever needed anytime by anyone for any purpose related to human need; rather it is called useful” (p. 26). Mary Stuart Van Leeuwen (2002) puts it this way: “Truth—including psychological truth—is therefore a gift of God, whoever its human mediators happen to be. The perpetual challenge of course, is to recognize it when we see it—to separate the chaff in the work of believers and unbelievers alike” (p. 28).
- **Cultural Mandate.** “Many think that the development of modern science was supported by Hebraic-Christian ideas . . . believing that whatever God found worth creating we can find worth studying” (Myers & Jeeves, 2003, p. 2). To discover the order of creation, we need to observe and experiment. This scientific pursuit applies to the study of all creation including humans. This “scientific enterprise may properly be seen as one way of fulfilling the call to stewardship; of obeying the command to manage and care for the created order” (p. 3). Van Leeuwen (2002, p. 34) summarizes work by Bert Hodges,

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saying, “God has created us with enough stability of perception to guarantee that we can carry out our mandate as stewards of the earth, but with enough uncertainty to keep us exploring, interacting and seeking after ever-clearer truth.”

- **“Multiple Perspectives and Co-operative Learning.”** Van Leeuwen (2002) advocates that seeking truth has to be a cooperative endeavor. Trusting science alone is not a good option, since scientists doing research carry their own biases and values that affect everything from choosing a topic to the methods employed for that study. This is not to say that science cannot direct us toward the truth; it certainly can. But it is a call to be explicit about biases and values. Christians also need not apologize for having certain perspectives and religious convictions that inform scientific pursuits, although they do need to be open and clear about convictions, which will hopefully open dialogue and bring a community of scientists closer to the truth. Myers and Jeeves (2003) talk about a Christian worldview. In other words, Christians attempt to view human nature through the eyes of faith in order to see which aspects of current psychological understandings fit with Christian faith and which do not.

References

- Hodges, B. H. (1986). Perception, relativity, and knowing and doing truth. In S. Jones (Ed.), *Psychology and the Christian faith: An introductory reader* (pp. 51–77). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Jones, S. J., & Butman, R. E. (1991). *Modern psychotherapies*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Van Leeuwen, M. S. (2002). Scuttling the schizophrenic student mind: On teaching the unity of faith and learning in psychology. In A. G. Migliazzo (Ed.), *Teaching as an act of faith: Theory and practice in church-related higher education* (pp. 21–40). New York: Fordham University Press.



Stanton Jones's 1994 *American Psychologist* Article: Why Is It Important?

Lecture

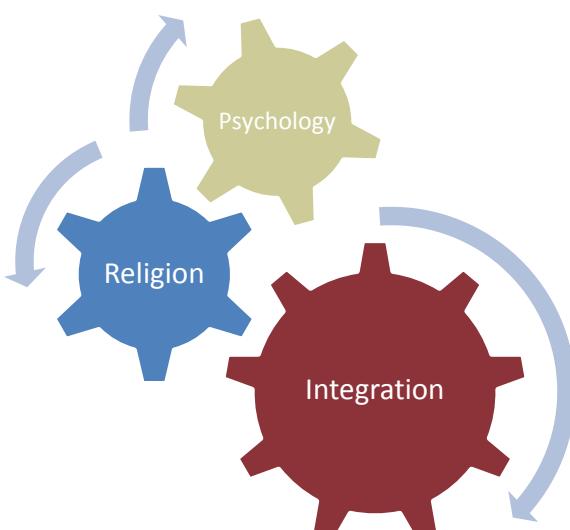
Jones's (1994) seminal article was published in the *American Psychologist*, a journal affiliated with the American Psychological Association (APA). The rigorous review process of the APA ensures that entries are reviewed by an editorial board and are therefore seen as credible. What is unique about this article is its discussion of the relationship between psychology and religion, a subject that has not always been embraced by mainstream psychology. This article represents a new openness to religious dialogue within the psychological community.

Jones argues that while psychological science has rigorous methods of examination, religion also has its own rigorous examination process that is different but equally as valid. Psychology and religion are often in contention with one another because each discipline attempts to answer questions about human nature and complexity. These answers often overlap, although they do not always arrive at the same conclusions. As a result, these disciplines can become competitive with one another as each advocates for its own answers to the human experience.

Jones argues that integration is important. Accordingly, he states, "religion is neither a peer nor a partner [to science]," but what we need is a "different sort of relationship between psychology and religion, a relationship based on mutuality and respect" (p. 185). Each discipline has something to learn from the other. Instead of focusing on defending their own territory, religion and psychology should work together to provide a more complete picture of humanity.

Reference

Jones, S. L. (1994). A constructive relationship for religion with science and the profession of psychology: Perhaps the boldest model yet. *American Psychologist*, 49, 184–199.



Letters from Friends

Adapted from an exercise submitted by Daryl Stevenson (Houghton College)

Classroom Exercise

Place yourself in the following scenario. Suppose that you are at a Christian liberal arts college, either majoring or minoring in psychology and planning to concentrate your vocational efforts in this field. You received e-mails this past week from four old high school friends. All of you are "people oriented" and are planning some future career in a professional role that allows direct service to others. Your friends Chris and Pat decided to attend Heavenly Times Bible Institute, while your friends Jamie and Alex went to Secular State University.

E-mail excerpts from Heavenly Times Bible Institute:

From Chris: "... not sure why you have ended up there. It just seems to me that you are wasting your time studying 'human wisdom' as expressed in psychology when there is no end to what we can learn about God's wisdom through His Word! You've said you want to be a Christian counselor and really help people in truly lasting ways, right? So why bother appealing to anything else but what is fundamentally Christian?"

From Pat: "... am wondering whether I made the right decision to come here. The classes focus so much on what the Bible says about counseling. It seems to me that we should be spending more time learning about the field of psychology. I mean, psychology has done a lot of studies looking at human behavior and I feel like I'm missing out on some important stuff. Well, enough of that. I'm having a great time here. I had no idea that there'd be so many parties on a Christian campus. If you get bored, come visit me here some weekend and I'll introduce you to some fun people."

Portions of e-mails from Secular State University:

From Alex: "... love my psychology classes and think I made a good choice coming here. Sometimes I wonder if I'm missing out by not looking to the Bible at all. I mean, I was raised to think about what the Bible says about everything. I still think that's important, but it's exciting to see that psychology really does answer a lot of questions about how to help people. I'm making some great friends and a group of us started a Bible study in our dorm. I was surprised that there are so many people here who are interested in knowing more about God. I love it here."

From Jamie: "... and am having a great time partying—more than I expected!! And my psych coursework—it's really challenging and I have lots of flexibility in my curriculum. I guess that you have to study the Bible or take religion courses there, don't you? Doesn't that seem like a waste of time when you want to get at the real stuff? It seems to me that religion has been unable to keep current with what people need. It seems outmoded in terms of specific ways to help people compared to the real scientific evidence available today, right? I'd be interested to know what you think."

Discussion

Remember to answer these questions in a way that shows sensitivity but also clearly states your rationale for studying psychology in a Christian liberal arts context.

1. How would you respond to each of your friends?
2. What advantages/disadvantages do you see in each of their perspectives?
3. What advantages are there to studying psychology in a Christian liberal arts context?

Christian Scholarship in Psychology

Lecture

Christian psychologists in the academy produce a variety of scholarly work. Evans (1999) described Christian scholarship as “scholarship that is done to further the kingdom of God” (p. 3) and outlined three forms of Christian scholarship.

1. **Vocational scholarship**, although not uniquely Christian, is conducted by the Christian scholar who is motivated by a desire to honor God and as a result engages in excellent work, contributes to the discipline's knowledge base, and demonstrates to the academy that a Christian can be “a thoughtful educated person” (p. 3).
2. **Implicit scholarship** differs from non-Christian scholarship in that the scholar's Christian faith serves as the foundation of their scholarship. The issues chosen and the hypotheses tested are shaped by the faith and worldview of the scholar. The scholarship, however, does not make this Christian bias explicit.
3. **Explicit scholarship** uses the Christian faith more directly to shape scholarly work. Explicitly Christian ideas and theories are stated and form the basis of the scholarly work.

Classroom Exercise

Write these three forms of scholarship on the board. Have students identify activities that Christian psychologists might engage in, and help them decide what form of scholarship best typifies this kind of work. The exercise will help students understand the variety of scholarship that Christian psychologists produce and will help them to see that there might be some overlap in these forms of scholarship.

Use the following list to help generate student discussion and to provide concrete examples of current work that is being produced by Christian psychologists.

Vocational Scholarship

- Be faithful to reality by telling the truth about what we discover in God's world (Myers & Jeeves, 2003).
- Be humble and acknowledge our tendency toward error and bias (Myers & Jeeves, 2003).
- Conduct excellent research.
- Employ high ethical standards in research laboratories.

Implicit Scholarship

- Choose topics of study that are related to issues of faith. For example, Charlotte Van Oeyen Witvliet (Hope College) and Everett Worthington Jr. (Virginia Commonwealth University) study forgiveness because of its relevance to the Christian faith.
- Choose methods of investigation that are consistent with Christian values. For example, avoid the use of deception with human subjects in an experimental study.

Explicit Scholarship

- Critique psychological theories on both a scholarly and theological level. For example, Jones & Butman (1991) critique models of psychotherapy using a Christian framework.
- Use Christian theories and ideas as a basis for psychological work. For example, Mary Stewart VanLeeuwen (Eastern University) uses a Christian model of personhood to

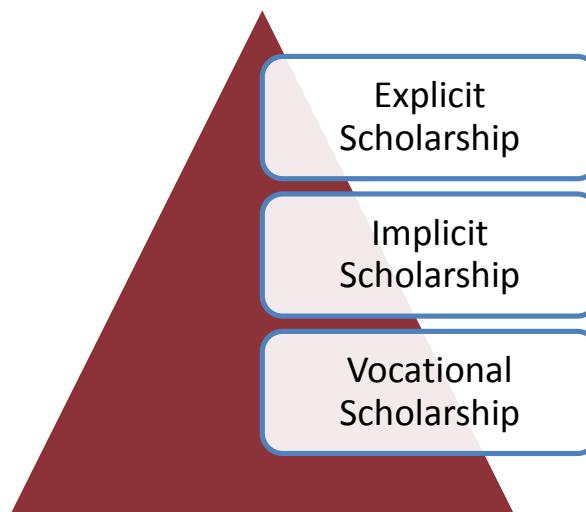
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better understand human nature; Mark McMinn (George Fox College) writes about ways to approach therapy from a Christian perspective.

- Challenge psychological evidence that seems contrary to Christian belief. For example, David Myers (Hope College) critiqued the Harvard study of intercessory prayer.
- Apply psychological concepts to Christian practices. For example, use psychological findings about memory to aid in the memorization of Bible passages.

References

- Evans, C. S. (1999, fourth quarter). Christian scholarship and the biblical drama. *Southern Baptist Educator*, 3–6.
- Jones, S. J., & Butman, R. E. (1991). *Modern psychotherapies*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.



Psychology of Religion

Lecture

The psychology of religion is most commonly described as the field of study that attempts to find psychological processes involved in both religious behavior and religious experience (Paloutzian, 1983). Initially, this field attracted many critics of religion, but in recent years both religious and non-religious scholars have contributed to the body of knowledge.

Some Christian psychologists believe that studying religious behavior and experience allows us to see God's hand in human functioning and therefore to have a greater appreciation for God's creation. Paloutzian (1983) argues that by studying religion psychologically, we realize that both disciplines complement and enhance each other.

The following topics are taken from the table of contents in Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch (2003). They represent a few of the many areas that are studied in psychology of religion.

- Human development and religion
- Religion and death
- Religious experience
- Mysticism
- Religious conversion
- Religion and morality
- Religion and mental disorders

Student Assignment

Visit this APA-endorsed Web site (provided by Dr. Michael Nielson, Georgia Southern University) that includes multiple resources on the psychology of religion. You may need to use the library to find the sources listed. Then answer the following questions.

<http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/>

1. List two topics within the psychology of religion that interest you.
2. What about these titles or topics caught your attention?
3. How are religion and psychology integrated in these topics?

References

- Spilka, B., Hood, R. W., Hunsberger, B., & Gorsuch, R. (2003). *The psychology of religion: An empirical approach* (3rd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
Paloutzian, R. F. (1983). *Invitation to the psychology of religion*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Anti-integration Approaches

Anti-psychology Approach

Lecture

Key views of the anti-psychology approach:

- The Bible and psychology fundamentally contradict each other, because each gives conflicting information regarding human nature.
- Christians should only turn to Scripture and the Holy Spirit for help with their problems.
- Scripture is the source of all knowledge (“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work,” 2 Timothy 3:16–17).
- A Christian’s goal is to develop a better relationship with Jesus Christ, which will inevitably include pain and suffering; however, the goal of psychotherapy is to minimize personal pain. These two goals are contradictory.

Student Assignment

Choose one of the following Web sites and answer the questions below.

The Bobgans’ Web site, espousing an anti-psychology perspective:

<http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/mainpage.html>

An article by Ed Bulkley listing reasons “fad therapies” should not be trusted:

<http://www.biblicalstudies.com/bstudy/contempry/cons1ng1.htm>

1. What are some reasons listed on the Web site for not using psychology?
2. What does the Web site propose instead?
3. What aspects of the anti-psychology approach are consistent with your beliefs? What do you disagree with?

Anti-Christian Approach

Lecture

Key views of the anti-Christian approach:

Religion is unnecessary because all knowledge can be obtained through science.

- Religion is an antiquated way of explaining the world which has now been updated and replaced by science.
- Science is objective and should be free from subjective religious beliefs.

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Student Assignment

Choose one of the following Web sites and answer the questions below:

A radio interview with Sam Harris, who takes an anti-Christian perspective:

<http://www.wpr.org/book/060611a.html>

A summary of a lecture given by Richard Dawkins on religious debate:

<http://www.simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldOfDawkins-archive/Dawkins/Work/Articles/1994-12religion.shtml>

A transcript of a lecture about religion and science given by Steven Pinker:

http://pinker.wjh.harvard.edu/articles/media/2004_10_29_religion.htm

1. What reasons does the author give for holding science above religion?
2. What elements of the anti-Christian approach seem logical? What elements do you question?



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Application of Psychology to Faith

Exercise submitted by Don Tellinghuisen (Calvin College)

Student Assignment

Psychological research is ultimately meant to be applicable. Review your psychology textbook for ideas about how psychological insights can aid Christians' efforts to live out their faith. Explore the book with an eye toward aspects of your faith life that might be enhanced by the findings of psychological research.

Your paper should include three sections:

- Cite a specific psychological research finding that is applicable to living out your faith. (Reference the page number from the text.)
- Specifically outline how you would apply this research finding to a particular aspect of your faith.
- Provide Scripture references that relate to your chosen topic.

Student Assignment (variation)

Exercise submitted by Susan Howell (Campbellsville University)

Read Sappington (1994), which provides a practical guide for using psychology to facilitate Christian living. Then complete the assignment above.

References

Sappington, A. A. (1994). Psychology for the practice of the presence of God: Putting psychology at the service of the church. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 13(1), 5–16.



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Web sites for the Application of Psychology to Spiritual Life

Student Assignment

Review one of the following Web sites, which give examples of scientists applying psychology to practical spiritual life. Then answer the questions that follow.

Psychology for living (Narramore Christian Foundation):

<http://www.ncfliving.org/>

Resources on psychology and faith (David Myers):

www.davidmyers.org/religion

Psychology serving the church (Mark McMinn):

<http://www.churchpsych.org/>

Psychology and religion research group (University of Cambridge):

<http://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/pcp/>

S.P.i.R.i.T. research team (Bowling Green State University):

<http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/psych/page31068.html>

Forgiveness (John Templeton Foundation):

http://www.templeton.org/funding_areas/core_themes/forgiveness/

ChildFaith (Donald and Brenda Ratcliff):

<http://childfaith.net/>

Questions

1. What is the mission of the organization?
2. How is psychology used to enhance practical faith life?



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Bible Readings

Proverbs 2:1–11

My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.
Then you will understand what is right and just
and fair—every good path.
For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
Discretion will protect you,
and understanding will guard you.

God is the author of all wisdom and all knowledge. Studying psychology is a way of gaining more knowledge of God.

Psalm 119:65–66

Do good to your servant
according to your word, LORD.
Teach me knowledge and good judgment,
for I trust your commands.

The passage from the Psalms may be used as a prayer to God, requesting his help as we seek to use psychology to better understand the people that he has made.

James 3:13, 17

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. . . . But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

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The verses from James may be used to remind us to be humble as we seek to gain wisdom and understanding. It also reminds us that true wisdom demands living in a new way.

Psychological Science



Research Methods and Christian Belief

Lecture

VanderStoep (2003) describes four challenges that Christians encounter when they are confronted with psychological data:

1. **The “Data Don’t Lie” Challenge**, the belief that psychological research done well will reveal the truth. This may lead to emphasizing the scientific evidence at the expense of the biblical understanding of human nature.
2. **The “Don’t Believe It” Challenge**, the tendency for Christians simply to reject or dismiss research findings that contradict their beliefs. This shows a lack of respect for what psychological research has to offer and prevents Christians from truthfully engaging in the world.
3. **The Importance Challenge**, the belief that while psychological data may be true, they are unimportant and irrelevant. This leads to a low opinion of psychological research.
4. **The “I Don’t Care” Challenge**, the belief that research can add to our knowledge but that this new knowledge is ultimately subsumed by our Christian beliefs. This may lead to accepting the data that fit with Christian beliefs and avoiding those that do not.

VanderStoep concludes the chapter by encouraging Christians to value psychological research while at the same time holding their faith in high esteem. By doing so, they will be able to acknowledge God’s truth in this world while thinking critically about psychology and some of its claims.

Student Assignment

Read the chapter entitled “Psychological Research Methods and Christian Belief” in VanderStoep (2003) and write a paper addressing the questions below:

1. VanderStoep poses four challenges that face the Christian psychologist. Identify these four challenges and briefly (in two to three sentences) describe each.
2. In one of the four challenges, VanderStoep claims that people hold a very low opinion of psychological research, while in another challenge people hold a very high opinion of it. Identify which challenge holds a low opinion and which holds a high opinion of psychological research. Explain why this is the case. What are the dangers inherent in each?
3. One remedy that VanderStoep presents for the “Don’t Believe It” challenge is that “psychological data are descriptive and not prescriptive” (p. 102). What does he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. Answer VanderStoep’s question: “If we are called to love God with our minds, and psychological research is seen as a legitimate window on God’s world, then can we and should we be selective about the research findings we affirm?” (p. 109).

Reference

VanderStoep, S. W. (2003). Psychological research methods and Christian belief. In S. W. VanderStoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul* (pp. 97–110). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Ways of Knowing: General and Special Revelation

Lecture

According to some Christians, there are two different ways of getting at the truth.

1. God reveals himself to us through *special revelation* in the Bible. Although the Bible addresses important issues about what it means to be human and to be in a relationship with God, it is not intended to be a medical text about mental illness and therapy. We also need to remember that although the Bible is perfect, the interpretations that we as human beings make are not always perfect.
2. God also reveals himself to us through *general revelation* in the world. One of the ways that psychologists seek to better understand the world is through the scientific method. Although research has provided us with a lot of valuable information about human beings, it is also limited. Research is not perfect. Scientists can interpret data in a variety of ways.

For further reading:

Mouw, R. J. (2002). *He shines in all that's fair: Culture and common grace*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.



Critiquing Research Methods of a Prayer Study

Classroom Exercise

Have the students read the following newspaper article, "In this study, prayers aren't the answer," from the Chicago Tribune:

http://www.templeton.org/pdfs/articles/060331Chicago_Tribune.pdf

Manier's article highlights results of a large-scale Harvard study that suggest intercessory prayers for patients recovering from heart bypass surgeries were ineffective and, in some instances, even harmful.

Discussion

1. What kinds of scientific methodology are used in this study?
2. Does this study use sound research methods to address whether intercessory prayer is effective?
3. Critique this study from a Christian point of view.
4. Do you think this study should have been conducted? Why or why not?

Lecture

After the discussion, refer students to the following statement written by David Myers, a Christian psychologist:

<http://davidmyers.org/davidmyers/assets/prayer-letter.pdf>

Myers has no quarrel with the scientific methodology of the study for the following reasons:

- Patients ($n = 1802$) were randomly assigned into three groups.
- The experimenters controlled for alternative explanations by keeping two of the groups unaware of whether they were receiving prayers.
- The study replicated earlier studies but used a larger sample and better controls.

Myers predicted that prayer would not result in significant healing for the following reasons:

- We do not pray to get what we want from a Santa Claus-like God. Instead, the purpose of prayer is to acknowledge our dependence on God and our intimate relationship with him.
- Practical concerns:

The noise factor. Most cardiac patients are already receiving prayers from people they know. Myers doubts that the additional prayers of strangers would cause God to change his mind.

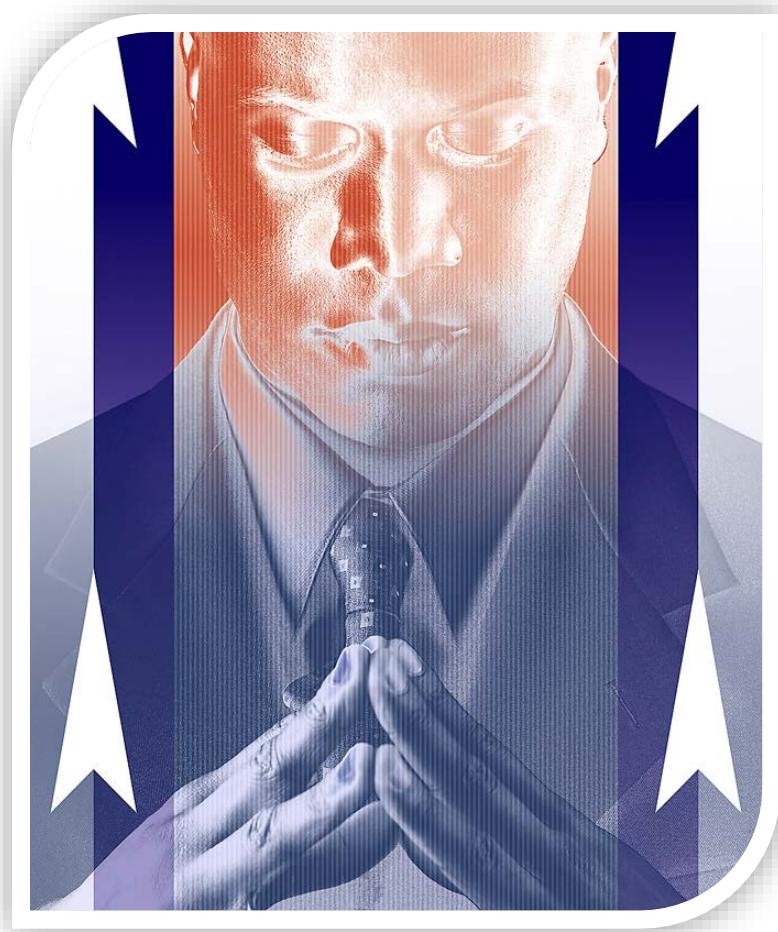
The doubt factor. Myers questions whether prayers solicited by doubting scientists would be effective.

God is not mocked. The Bible tells us that we are not to put God to the test.

"The evidence of history suggests that the prayers of finite humans do not manipulate an infinite God." Bad things happen even to those who pray, but we have "a promise that God is beside us in our suffering and a hope that out of defeat and suffering and even death we may gain new life" (par. 5).

Reference

Manier, J. (2006, March 31). In this study, prayers aren't the answer. *Chicago Tribune*, p. 4.



Scientific Data and Religious Belief

Video

Show “The Scientific Attitude: Testing Therapeutic Touch” (5:27 minutes). This clip from *Moving Images: Exploring Psychology Through Film* (2006) is available through Worth Publishers. The video is available free of charge to professors who use the Myers textbook, *Psychology*.
www.worthpublishers.com/mediaroom

This brief video clip shows the power of belief to affect people’s behavior and the usefulness of scientific data to examine the validity of certain beliefs. In the video clip a woman with leukemia who receives therapeutic touch states, “I don’t need explanations, because I have faith in the process.” Later, the narrator notes that the therapists’ “faith in their skills was not dimmed” even though Emily Rosa’s findings negated the validity of therapeutic touch. Use the following questions to help students understand the strengths and limitations of the scientific method.

Discussion

1. Are there areas of life in which scientific data are limited in what they can tell us?
2. Which of your beliefs are essential to your faith (e.g., Jesus’s resurrection, Jesus as the Son of God, God as Creator)? How do these essential beliefs influence your decisions to either accept or dismiss research findings?
3. If the placebo effect is so powerful, then what is wrong with using a method like therapeutic touch (or administering a sugar pill), even if it is just a placebo?

Lecture

The scientific method offers one way to know more about the people that God has created. Adopting the scientific attitudes of curiosity, skepticism, and humility helps us to give up false beliefs (such as that therapeutic touch is effective). Some people argue that faith in God and the core beliefs of the Christian faith are not supported by empirical evidence. Christians might assert that the findings of science are limited and do not have the capacity to explain everything. Both psychology and theology are necessary to understand the complexity of human nature and behavior. In other words, scientific and religious explanations can be ways of looking at the same phenomena through different lenses.

If you would like to provide a comment following the students’ discussion, it would be appropriate to use the lecture summary of Wendell Berry’s “Views on Science and Religion,” found on the following page.

Wendell Berry's Views on Science and Religion

Classroom Exercise

Show these three statements to your students and ask for reactions.

- Science is entirely good.
- Science leads to unlimited progress.
- Science has (or will have) all the answers.

Lecture

Berry (2000) criticizes scientists who hold to the beliefs expressed above by Edward O. Wilson in his book, *Consilience* (p. 24). Berry argues that science makes religious claims when it assumes that (1) everything can be known and (2) all human problems can be solved. Instead, he asserts that not everything can be known, that mystery is an essential component of our world, and that religion helps us to know different things, in a different way, than science does. Berry asserts that we need to be more critical of science and acknowledge what it can and cannot offer us.

Discussion

1. What examples from your personal experience support these statements? What examples from your personal experience do not support these statements?
2. What kinds of problems might result from believing these three statements?
3. Why do many scientists claim that these statements are true?

Have the students respond to one or more of the following quotes from Berry's book.

Quote 1 and Discussion:

While many scientists believe that science has the potential to enable us to know all, Berry states that "the only science we have or can have, is a *human* science; it has human limits and is involved always with human ignorance and human error. It is a fact that solutions invented or discovered by science have tended to lead to new problems or to become problems themselves" (p. 32).

1. For example, consider alternative energy sources. What are the benefits? What are the problems?
2. What does Berry mean when he says that we have a *human* science?
3. What other solutions invented or discovered by science have led to new problems or become problems in themselves?

Quote 2 and Discussion:

In response to scientists who claim that we will eventually know everything, Berry states: "Scrupulous minds, in this age as in any other, not only must be constrained occasionally to confess ignorance, but also must continue to live with the old proposition that some things are not knowable" (p. 38).

1. Why might it be important to occasionally confess ignorance?
2. What kinds of things might not be knowable through science?

3. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.) defines scrupulous as "having moral integrity; acting in strict regard for what is considered right or proper." How might we develop scrupulous minds?

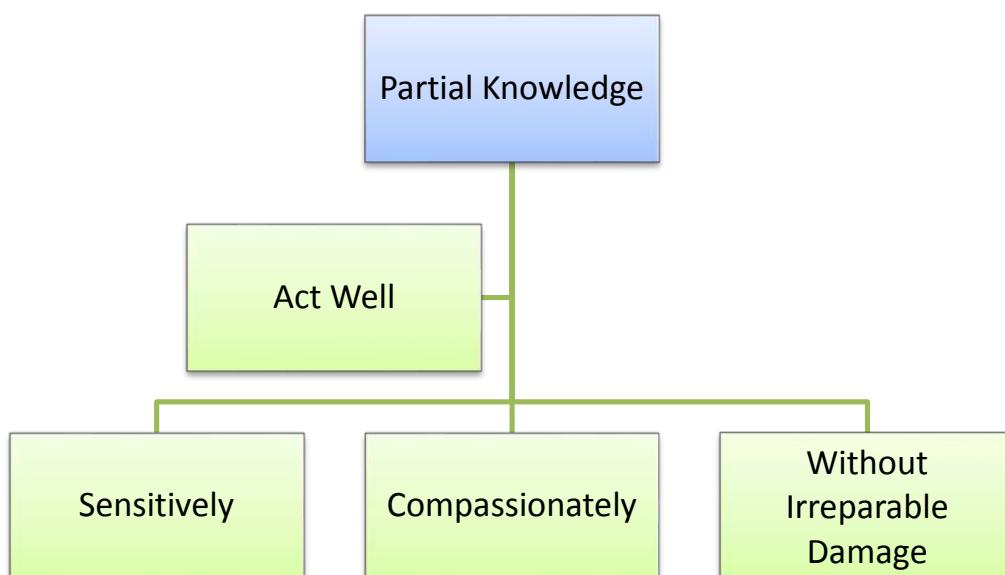
Quote 3 and Discussion:

"Thus the proposition that it would be good to know everything is probably false. The real question that is always to be addressed is the one that arises from our state of ignorance: How does one act well—sensitively, compassionately, without irreparable damage—on the basis of *partial knowledge*?" (p. 149).

1. What does Berry mean by the phrase "*partial knowledge*"?
2. Do you believe that there will come a time when we will not have to live with partial knowledge? If so, what evidence do you have for this belief?
3. Attempt to answer Berry's question: How does one act well—sensitively, compassionately, without irreparable damage—on the basis of partial knowledge?
4. Give examples of people who have shown you how to act well on the basis of partial knowledge.

References

- Berry, W. (2000). *Life is a miracle: An essay against modern superstition*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint.
 Wilson, E. O. (1998). *Consilience: The unity of knowledge*. New York: Knopf.



Experimentation: Can We Measure Christianity?

Exercise suggested by Trevor Milliron (Lee University)

Classroom Exercise

This activity introduces students to the concept of experimentation and the complexities of measuring certain constructs, in this case Christian strength. The following is an example of one type of study that would be conducted in the subdiscipline of psychology of religion.

Ask the students to devise an experiment based on the following question: Does chapel attendance increase one's level of Christian strength? Using the following questions, have the students supply the following: hypotheses, operational definitions, variables, random sampling and assignment, and control groups.

1. What is your hypothesis?
2. What are the factors of interest, and how can we operationally define them?
 - a. How will we measure chapel attendance?
 - b. How will we measure Christian strength or commitment? Example: behaviors such as prayer, Bible reading, church attendance—but how much? how often? Personal character, fruits of the Spirit—but how to measure? Could we use a measure of Christian strength? (See the next activity, entitled "Scales and Measurement: A Religious Strength Scale.")
3. What is the dependent variable? Example: religious strength is the behavior we want to measure and the factor that might be affected by changes in the independent variable.
4. What is the independent variable? Example: chapel attendance is the experimental factor we manipulate. In this experiment, we have to modify or do something and then measure the effects. What will we modify? How would you get some students to go to chapel and force others to skip? Are there any ethical issues that need to be addressed?
5. Many students already go to chapel while others do not. How can we be sure that the change we see is a result of our manipulation?
 - a. Random sample: all students have an equal chance of being chosen for this study and random assignment—assigning participants to experimental and control conditions by chance, thus minimizing preexisting differences between those assigned to the different groups.
 - b. Control group (no chapel attendance) and experimental groups (various experimental groups, attending chapel different numbers of times per week).

Additional question about research design:

6. How would this study be different if we used descriptive methods or correlational methods of study? What would be the benefits and shortcomings of using those methods? Example: case studies and observation might help to generate theories, but we would be left with a generalizability problem. Correlational studies might help us to look at the relationship between chapel attendance and Christian commitment, but we would then have a directionality problem as well as a potential third variable problem (strong parental support, Christian friends, etc.).

Scales and Measurement: A Religious Strength Scale

Survey

Experimenters use psychological scales to quantify the dependent variable by operationally defining a particular phenomenon. The concepts and limits of scales can be explored by looking at the Santa Clara Religious Strength Questionnaire, provided at the following link:

<http://www.scu.edu/cas/psychology/faculty/upload/Strength-of-Religious-Faith-Questionnaire.pdf>

Discussion

Have the students complete the scale and explore the following questions.

1. What are the research benefits of using a scale on religious strength?
2. What challenges arise when trying to measure religious strength?
3. Are there aspects of faith that this scale leaves out?



A Modification of the Scientific Method

Lecture

Van Leeuwen (1985) questions the historical scientific method that psychology has adopted. She notes that textbooks in introductory psychology quickly introduce students to the methodologies used within psychology to study persons. The natural scientific method is presented as *the way of understanding people*. This method includes experimentation to show cause and effect, relying on controlled conditions to rule out extraneous variables.

Van Leeuwen argues that the study of psychology needs a new paradigm, which would include another form of knowing, called the human-science approach, borrowed from the humanities. She sees the current type of experimentation as incomplete because it does not account for people's complex and flexible cognitive abilities, which cannot be discounted when participating in an experiment. In other words, humans are continually perceiving and judging situations, and this capacity for self-monitoring affects human behavior. Experimenters have methods to control this self-monitored behavior in order to get a more "authentic" response; however, Van Leeuwen's very point is that when experimenters control these variables, they overlook a crucial component of human nature (i.e., our capacity for self-monitoring). Van Leeuwen (1985) believes that this self-monitoring capacity should be recognized, valued, and studied instead of limited through deception and other methods experimenters employ.

Instead of abandoning the experimental methodologies used in psychology, Van Leeuwen argues that psychology should embrace both the experimental method and a human-science approach when studying human behavior. Rather than relying solely on observations and interpretations of data, researchers should consider how each participant will interpret the study. Researchers themselves also have to look at how their own backgrounds, values, and biases affect their work and their relationships with the participants. By doing so, researchers study whole persons with complex choices and behaviors, not just pieces and parts of behavior.

References

- Van Leeuwen, M. S. (1985). *The person in psychology: A contemporary Christian appraisal*. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity.
- Van Leeuwen, M. S. (2002). Scuttling the schizophrenic student mind: On teaching the unity of faith and learning in psychology. In A. G. Migliazzo (Ed.), *Teaching as an act of faith: Theory and practice in church related higher education* (pp. 21–40). New York: Fordham University Press.

Video

"The Social Connection: Video Modules for the Teaching of Social Psychology," segment 7: "Conformity and Obedience."

Have students watch the first seven minutes of this segment, which shows an updated version of the Asch experiment. You can order this video by contacting McGraw-Hill Publishers, education division, at 1 (800) 338-3987. The ISBN is 0-07-238582-0 and the price is \$197.00.

The above video clip is also available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 19, "The Power of the Situation." At the top of that Web page, click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." The Asch experiment runs from minute 7:05 to 8:03. To make the video show as full screen, left-click the video to select it. Then, right-click and select "Zoom > Full Screen."

Discussion

1. What was being studied in this experiment? Is there another way to study this phenomenon more directly?
2. Are there circumstances in which we should use deception or other indirect means to gather data?
3. What kind of debriefing should be provided to the participants? Do you think that this debriefing would counter the possible negative effects of the use of deception?
4. How would you feel after the experiment if you realized that you had been deceived? (*If you have already used mild deception on your students, you might want to ask them how that experience made them feel.*)
5. How do you think it felt for the accomplices to lie and deceive?
6. According to Van Leeuwen, when researchers use deception they miss out on data that might help to explain the complexity of human behavior. What understanding of human behavior may have been missed because of the use of deception?



The Templeton Foundation

Lecture

The Templeton Foundation is a source of funding for scholarly research on the integration of religion and science. Sir John Templeton, a successful business investor and Yale graduate from Winchester, Tennessee, created the John Templeton Foundation in 1987 as a reaction against those who had largely ignored any moral and spiritual facet of life. By promoting high standards in research and methodology, the foundation has remained a leader in the forefront of studies on spirituality and morality.

Student Assignment

This activity is designed to introduce you to the Templeton Foundation, a source of funding and scholarly research for the integration of religion and science. Visit their homepage to answer the following questions about this foundation and its mission:

<http://www.templeton.org>

1. After visiting the link "About the Foundation," describe in your own words what the Templeton Foundation is about as well as when, how, and why it was founded.
2. Choose one of the green subareas from the bar on the left side of the site. Within that subarea, browse through the programs or topics until you find one that deals explicitly with the integration of faith and psychology. Describe the program or topic.
3. Do you think the program/topic you read about deserved funding? Why or why not?
4. Describe an integration project that you would like to see funded. Provide rationale for the value of your proposed project.



Statistics and the Church

Lecture

The following are examples of research studies that have benefited Christians and the church:

- Research has been used to help new churches decide the best fit for location and community (Barna, 2006).
- Statistics have been used to track church growth and to look at the causes of church growth or decline (Barna, 2006).
- Research has studied behaviors of Christians such as church attendance, giving money to church, and frequency of prayer (Barna, 2006).
- Research has found positive correlations between practicing one's faith and variables such as physical health and social well-being (Myers, 2010).

References

Barna Group Web site. For many different statistics related to the church, visit

<http://www.barna.org/>

Myers, D. G. (2010). *Psychology* (9th ed.). New York: Worth Publishers.



Bible Readings

2 Chronicles 1:7–12

That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have."

This well-known passage tells the story of Solomon's request for knowledge and wisdom. Note that God is pleased with Solomon's request. The knowledge we gain as we study psychology can honor God when we use that knowledge in wise ways and for God's glory. It is worth our time and effort to gain knowledge and develop wisdom.

Job 38:36–38

Who gives the ibis wisdom about the flooding of the Nile,
or gives the rooster understanding of when to crow?

Who has the wisdom to count the clouds?
Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens
when the dust becomes hard
and the clods of earth stick together?

This passage encourages us to remain humble. Our knowledge is limited compared to God's.

Brain and Behavior



Case Studies: Brain Dysfunction and Responsibility

Activity submitted by Paul Moes (Calvin College)

Classroom Exercise

Case Study 1:

John Hinckley shot President Reagan and his press secretary in 1980. During Hinckley's trial, evidence was presented by the prosecution that he had admitted to copying the movie "Taxi Driver." This movie depicts a "deranged" killer that stalks a public figure to impress a female character played by Jodie Foster. Like the movie character, Hinckley wanted to impress Foster by writing her letters, etc. Finally, he imitated the movie by attempting to assassinate the president in order to impress Foster. The defense pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, suggesting that Hinckley was not able to comprehend the nature of his actions. They also presented CT scans of Hinckley's brain that revealed enlarged ventricles, which are a possible indicator of schizophrenia. Hinckley was acquitted and is currently in a treatment center for persons with a history of mental illness and violence.

Questions

1. Do you think that the specific act of attempted murder was influenced by schizophrenia? Why or why not?
2. How would you determine if Hinckley did or did not have an understanding of what he did?
3. Was Hinckley morally responsible for his actions? Was this act inevitably determined by his biology, or was he free to make a different choice?

Case Study 2:

A female church member, who has been a faithful member of the church for ten years, begins to develop a fairly serious depression following the birth of her second child. After a period of time, she has suicidal thoughts and even makes one suicide attempt. With drug treatment and talk therapy, she makes some initial recovery but remains mildly depressed for several years. During these years she continues to attend church but refrains from taking communion because she can't understand how God could let her go through this terrible experience. Some of the elders of the church want to insist that she take communion to remain in good standing with the church; others want to give her a gentle warning; and still others feel that she should be left alone to deal with this issue.

Questions

1. Do you feel that the specific act of refusing the sacraments was in fact determined by the condition of depression? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel that this woman's faith is weak, or is this just a physiological problem, a biological disease? Explain and defend your position.
3. If you were an elder, what would you suggest?

Case Study 3:

A member of your church "comes out of the closet" and declares that he is a practicing homosexual. He confesses that he has done wrong in the past and says that he will attempt to refrain from homosexual practices. However, he feels that his "condition" is actually due to physiological and biological factors and that he has not chosen his sexual orientation. Later, church elders find out that he has in fact continued to engage in homosexual relationships. The

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church council is torn about what to do because they recently read articles suggesting that homosexual males have "altered brains."

Questions:

1. Do you feel that a specific sexual act can be determined by a physiological condition? Why or why not?
2. Imagine that there is sufficient evidence to support the theory that homosexuality is biologically based. What would this church member's responsibility be?
3. If you were a church leader, how would you respond to the person?

Case Study 4:

A person you know seems to have a serious anger problem. He "blows up" at the slightest provocation, and he often looks visibly angry even when there is little reason to be angry. He also seems regularly depressed, despite being a fairly competent and successful business man. Some mutual acquaintances suggest that he has always been that way, and they suggest that "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, because his parents were both the same way." His ex-wife (whom he physically abused on two or three occasions) suggests, "Well, he's just a typical man, aggressive and insensitive." He recently asked his doctor for some Prozac, and, amazingly, the drug has had very positive effects on his behavior (less aggression, more pleasant and polite) and mood (less depressed). The husband is now fighting for custody of his children.

Questions:

1. How does this man's relationship with God affect his behaviors?
2. To what extent do you think that he has learned this behavior? To what extent do physiological factors affect his behavior?
3. If you were a judge, what decision would you make regarding child custody?

Case Study 5:

A 45-year-old woman sustains damage to the front part of her brain in a car accident. Before the accident, she was pleasant, thoughtful, and organized. She was also polite, moral, and a good member of her local church. Following the accident she became vulgar, crude, and rude, often making coarse jokes and inappropriate remarks to strangers. She stopped going to church and often accuses church-goers of being hypocritical. Despite no loss in IQ, she lost her job because she often failed to plan her daily activities and her problem-solving abilities were greatly diminished. Her family doesn't understand how her moral character could change so drastically, and they have even begun to question the condition of her soul. Her husband claims that this woman is very different from the person he married 20 years ago.

Questions:

1. To what extent do you think physiological factors affect her behavior?
2. How would you respond to the family's concerns?
3. What would you say about the condition of her soul?

Optional Readings

- Brown., W. S., & Murphy, N. (2007). *Did my neurons make me do it? Philosophical and neurobiological perspectives on moral responsibility and free will.* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason and the human brain.* New York: HarperCollins. (See chapters 3, 4, and 6)
- Evans, S. C. (1996). *Wisdom and humanness in psychology: Prospects for a Christian approach.* Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishers. (See chapter 6)
- Jeeves, M. A. (1997). *Human nature at the millennium: Reflections on the integration of psychology and Christianity.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. (See chapters 3, 6, 7, 11, and 12).



Brain Damage and Free Will

Lecture

An article in *The New Yorker* by Malcolm Gladwell called “Damaged” addressed the topic of brain damage and serial killers. Two scientists—Lewis, a psychiatrist, and Pincus, a neurologist—tried to establish a relationship between brain damage and violent tendencies. After working with many violent criminals, Lewis concluded that people who commit serious crimes have a deadly combination of abusive childhoods, brain injuries, and psychotic symptoms.

Her contention is that certain criminals’ brains don’t work the way brains are supposed to work; thus, certain biological and psychiatric problems diminish responsibility for actions. This is a radical shift from just 50 years ago, when criminals were thought to behave the way they did because of “bad home lives” or “irresponsible parents.”

Lewis and Pincus often testify for the defense in cases against violent criminals who they believe have brain damage, often the result of serious abuse to parts of their cortex that influence later behavior. “Together they have published a series of groundbreaking studies on murderers and delinquents, painstakingly outlining the medical and psychiatric histories of the very violent. . . . They believe that the most vicious criminals are, overwhelmingly, people with some combination of abusive childhoods, brain injuries, and psychotic symptoms (in particular, paranoia), and that while each of these problems individually has no connection to criminality (most people who have been abused or have brain injuries or psychotic symptoms never end up harming anyone else), somehow these factors taken together create such terrifying synergy as to impede these individuals’ ability to play by the rules of society” (pp. 134–135).

Student Assignment

Read the following article by Gladwell (1997) and write a short reflection paper answering the questions below:

http://www.gladwell.com/1997/1997_02_24_a_damaged.htm

1. What is the central theme of this article?
2. In your own words, summarize the article’s discussion of the implications of neuroscience for our understanding of free will and moral responsibility. What is the moral responsibility of people who have brain damage, like those described in the article?
3. Does the information in the article change your views on how to try, convict, and rehabilitate violent criminals?

Reference

Gladwell, M. (1997, February 24). Damaged. *New Yorker*, pp. 132–137.

Dualism Scale

Survey

Have students take the attached dualism scale survey. (The scale is reprinted with the permission of the author, Keith Stanovich, University of Toronto.)

Scoring

- Reverse-score items: 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27
- Scoring range: 27–135
- Higher score = stronger belief in dualism

Lecture

Myers and Jeeves (2003), in their chapter entitled “The Brain-Mind Connection,” summarize a variety of views regarding the connection between mind and brain:

- Dualism states that mind and body are separate. The mind is non-physical and the body is physical, yet they interact with each other. This view is articulated by Descartes, who believed that the body was merely a container for the more important mind.
- Monism states that humans have only a body. Strict monists believe that people are solely material and therefore their behaviors are determined by the physical components of genetics and biology.
- Alternative Views: Nonreductive physicalism is a term used by Brown and colleagues (1998), who agree with the physicality of people but want to steer away from strict determinism. Although people are biological beings, they are not solely a product of their biology. In other words, the whole is more than a sum of the parts. Myers and Jeeves offer their own unique terminology (irreducible intrinsic interdependence) in order to avoid the connotation that consciousness actually is a “force” or an entity.

Summary

According to Paul Moes (Calvin College), the main points for most Christian neuroscientists are these:

1. We are completely dependent on the structure and function of brain and body to maintain humanness and to engage in any behaviors and thoughts.
2. There is not necessarily anything extra “plugged in” to make a person a human being (soul, non-material mind, consciousness, etc.).
3. Yet we remain responsible agents.

References

- Brown, W. S., Murphy, N., & Malony, H. N. (Eds.). (1998). *Whatever happened to the soul?: Scientific and theological portraits of human nature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- P. Moes (personal communication, July 13, 2007)
- Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Stanovich, K. (1989). Implicit philosophies of mind: The dualism scale and its relation to religiosity and belief in extrasensory perception. *Journal of Psychology*, 123, 5–23.

Survey: What Is Your View of the Mind/Brain Relationship?

Instructions: This is a questionnaire that tries to assess how people think about mind, brain, and behavior. There are no right or wrong answers. Please read each statement and try to answer in a manner that accurately reflects your genuine opinion. Using the following scale, write the number that reflects your opinion to the left of each statement. Remember, your responses to the questionnaire are anonymous, so please answer as honestly and accurately as you can. Please answer every question, even if you are not certain what it means (take your best guess). *Please respond to the statements in order and do not look ahead in the questionnaire.*

5 = strongly agree

4 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

- _____ 1. The mind is not part of the brain, but it does affect the brain.
- _____ 2. When I imagine a scene in my mind, I am in a state that will forever be beyond explanation by science.
- _____ 3. When I use the word *mind*, it is just a shorthand term for the complicated things that my brain does.
- _____ 4. The mind is a special form of energy (currently unknown to humankind) that is in contact with the brain and affects it.
- _____ 5. Minds are, in principle, independent of bodies, to which they are only temporarily "attached."
- _____ 6. Hundreds of years in the future, when we know how brain states and thoughts are related, it might be possible for a physiologist to measure my brain states and know what I am thinking.
- _____ 7. Sometimes when I give reasons for my behavior, those reasons are wrong. That is, my behavior can be affected by things that I am not aware of. When this happens, I might give a "reason" for my behavior that is wrong.
- _____ 8. Perhaps it will never make sense to talk about computers having emotions, but sometime in the future it may be the case that computers will think as well as humans.
- _____ 9. Mental processes cause changes in brain processes.
- _____ 10. When people talk about their minds, they are really just talking about what their brains seem to be doing. Talk about the "mental" is really just shorthand for brain processes that we are not aware of.
- _____ 11. The fact that I can know my own thought processes (which I can introspect) means that my thought processes cannot be just brain processes.

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- _____ 12. Just as we no longer talk of witches, in the future when we know in detail how brains work, we might not talk about minds anymore.
- _____ 13. My mind is the thing that causes me to behave as I do.
- _____ 14. Full knowledge of the mind will forever be beyond the understanding of sciences like physics, neurophysiology, and psychology.
- _____ 15. For each thought that I have, there exists a certain state that my brain is in.
- _____ 16. The mind is a nonmaterial substance that interacts with the brain to determine behavior.
- _____ 17. Hundreds of years in the future, when we know much more about the brain and behavior, we might change the way we talk about our behavior and our minds. That is, we might find better ways to talk about our thoughts, feelings and emotions.
- _____ 18. The “self” that I introspect about controls both the mind and the brain.
- _____ 19. Minds are inside brains, but they are not the same as brains.
- _____ 20. When we say that a person has a creative mind, this just means that the person tends to produce things that people judge as creative. The statement really has nothing to do with the person’s mind.
- _____ 21. Some mental processes have no connection to brain processes.
- _____ 22. In a hundred years or more, it might make sense to refer to a computer as having a mind.
- _____ 23. My consciousness will survive the disintegration of my physical body.
- _____ 24. Not much would be lost if we dropped the word *mind* from our vocabularies. For example, rather than say, “I made up my mind,” a person might say, “My brain decided.” Although this might sound funny at first, no meaning would be lost.
- _____ 25. Mental processes are the result of activity in the nervous system.
- _____ 26. The mind and the brain are two totally separate things.
- _____ 27. We talk of the sun rising, but we all know that the sun does not rise; instead, the earth turns. This is a case of our language not responding to changes in physical knowledge. Some neurophysiologists think this might also be the case for our language about the mental. For instance, if we had adequate physiological knowledge it might be possible to say, “My C-fibers are firing!” instead of “I’m in pain!” Just as phrases such as “The sun is rising” are expendable (not needed, since the sun really *doesn’t* rise), some mental terms may be eliminated or drastically changed in the future when we have better physiological knowledge.

Source: Stanovich, K. (1989). Implicit philosophies of mind: The dualism scale and its relation to religiosity and belief in extrasensory perception. *Journal of Psychology*, 123, 5–23.

Dualism and Science

Lecture

Bloom (2005) argues that people are born with a tendency to see the world in dualist terms, and that this incorrect view leads people to believe in a soul, a spirit-like God, and an afterlife. He asserts that this tendency is an accident of evolution, stemming from an innate predisposition to divide the world into animate and inanimate objects and beings. Following are two quotes from Bloom:

Indeed, the belief that the world teems with ancestor spirits—the souls of people who have been liberated from their bodies through death—is common across cultures. We can imagine our bodies being destroyed, our brains ceasing to function, our bones turning to dust, but it is harder—some would say impossible—to imagine the end of our very existence. The notion of a soul without a body makes sense to us. Others have argued that rather than believing in an afterlife because we are dualists, we are dualists because we want to believe in an afterlife. This was Freud's position. He speculated that the “doctrine of a soul” emerged as a solution to the problem of death; if souls exist, then conscious experience need not come to an end (p. 110).

This notion of an immaterial soul potentially separable from the body clashes starkly with the scientific view. For psychologists and neuroscientists, the brain is the source of all mental life; our consciousness, emotions, and will are the products of neural processes. As the claim is sometimes put, *the mind is what the brain does*. I don't want to overstate the consensus here; there is no accepted theory as to precisely how this happens, and some scholars are skeptical that we will ever develop such a theory. But no scientist takes seriously Cartesian dualism, which posits that thinking need not involve the brain. There is just too much evidence against it (p. 109).

Discussion

1. What were you taught in church and at home about the body-and-mind distinction?
2. How do your ideas of the soul fit with the scientific case against the nonmaterial soul?
3. If Christians embrace the idea of an “embodied soul,” what will eternal life look like? What happens to people after they die?
4. How would you respond to the idea that our belief in God is simply an evolutionary accident?

Reference

Bloom, P. (2005, December). Is God an accident? *The Atlantic Monthly*, 296(5), 105–112.
Available online at <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200512/god-accident>

The Story of Phineas Gage

Video

Choose one of the following videos:

Video #1:

The Brain Series, 2nd ed. The following video clip is available online. Sign in to this free site and locate “The Brain: Teaching Modules—25. Frontal Lobes and Behavior: The Story of Phineas Gage” (12 minutes):

<http://www.learner.org/resources/series142.html>

To make the video show as full screen, left-click the video to select it. Then, right-click and select “Zoom > Full Screen.”

Video #2:

Show film segment 3, “Brain and Behavior: A Contemporary Phineas Gage” (7:38 minutes). This clip from *Moving Images: Exploring Psychology Through Film* (2006) is available through Worth Publishers. The video is available free of charge to professors who use the Myers textbook, *Psychology*.

www.worthpublishers.com/mediaroom

In 1848, Phineas Gage had a horrific accident as a railroad worker. While trying to break up a fight between his team members, a tamping rod exploded and flew through his skull, leaving his frontal lobes severely damaged. He lived through this ordeal, but his behavior and personality were affected long-term.

Discussion

1. Why do you think Phineas Gage’s accident was such an important event in history?
2. What parts of the brain did the tamping rod damage, and what were the effects of the damage?
3. Phineas Gage’s personality was permanently affected by this accident. How might this limit Phineas’s choice in how he relates to others (e.g., the social brain) and to God?
4. Respond to the following quote in terms of someone like Phineas Gage: “The greatest gift which humanity has received is free choice. It is true that we are limited in our use of free choice. But the little free choice we have is such a great gift and is potentially worth so much that for itself life is worthwhile living” (Singer, 1968, p. 19).

Reference

The Paris Reviews Interviews (1968). Isaac Bashevis Singer: The art of fiction no. 42. *The Paris Review*, 44. Retrieved from <http://www.theparisreview.org/viewinterview.php/prmID/4242>

Temporal Lobe Epilepsy and Religious Experience

Video

NOVA: "Secrets of the Mind" (2001) with V. S. Ramachandran

Available online for \$19.95 at <http://shop.wgbh.org/product/show/8160>

This video clip is the last case study out of five. It shows a man who has temporal lobe epilepsy and the effects it has on his emotional and spiritual life. V. S. Ramachandran, a neurologist, talks about the connection between the electrical activity in the temporal lobe and one's experience of God.

Discussion

1. Ramachandran wonders if humans have evolved with an area in the brain associated with religious belief because it is conducive to the stability of society. Why do you think we might have a part of the brain that better prepares us for religious experience?
2. Since scientists have found an area of the brain that is related to religious belief, Ramachandran states that God and religion can now be addressed by science. What might we be able to learn from science about God and religion? Is there anything we can't learn from science?
3. Why might some Christians fear that these types of studies explain away the mysteries of God? Why might some Christians embrace these types of studies?
4. Why is the man in the movie resistant to treatment for his epilepsy? Do you believe that his epilepsy is a disorder, or is it a gift from God?
5. How is religious experience defined in the video, and how does it compare to your experience or ideas of religion?



Religion and the Brain

Classroom Exercise

Play a Christian hymn such as "The Solid Rock"

<http://www.letgodbetru...com/worship/songs/the-solid-rock.htm>

The song should start playing automatically when you visit the Web site.

1. On a scrap piece of paper, rate the level of emotion that you felt while listening to the song, on a scale from 1 (no emotion) to 5 (much emotion).
2. Briefly explain why you felt the emotion you did (or did not).

Collect the papers and briefly describe to the class the variety of responses.

Ask students, How do you explain these individual differences?

Lecture

Begley (2001) examines the link between brain activity and the spiritual feelings that many people have when they pray, meditate, or perform some other religious activity. Begley raises the question of whether the brain creates these spiritual experiences, or whether the brain is responding to a spiritual connection of God's making.

The article also addresses individual differences in religious experience. It is important to remember that religious *experience* is not the same as religious *belief*. Christians may have varying religious experiences due to brain construction or psychological issues. Some Christians may have a strong relationship with God, and yet do not necessarily feel these experiences.

Student Assignment

Read the following article by Begley (2001) and answer the questions below:

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/79341>

1. What is the central issue presented in the article?
2. Might brain functioning vary, such that some people are better able to experience God?
3. How do many of the scientists in the article define religious experience? How does it compare to your idea of religious experience?
4. Can a person be religious without having experiences like the ones described in this article?
5. Why do some Christians fear that these types of studies might explain away the mysteries of God?
6. Why do some Christians embrace these types of studies?
7. What is your personal opinion about these studies?

Reference

Begley, S. (2001, May 7). Religion and the brain. *Newsweek*, 52–57.

Religion and Neuroscience

Exercise submitted by Heather Looy (King's University College)

Student Assignment

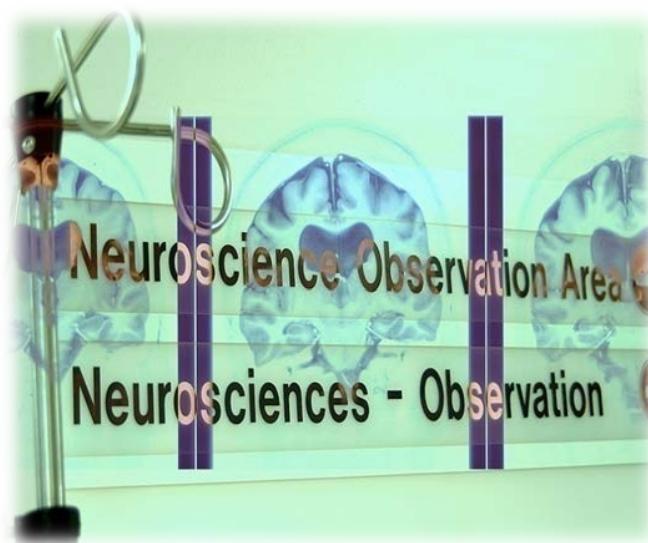
Read the following article online by Vedantam (2001) and then answer the questions below:

<http://www.maps.org/media/vedantam.html>

1. What is the main question or theme of the article?
2. How is “religion” defined by the (a) scientists (b) atheists and (c) religious believers mentioned in the article?
3. What scientific evidence is presented to suggest that religious experiences involve the brain? Describe it clearly.
4. What arguments and statements support the contention that finding religion in the brain means that religion has no objective/external reality?
5. What arguments and statements support the contention that finding religion in the brain means that religion probably does have an objective/external reality (or at least does not rule it out)?
6. What are the qualifications of the experts/authorities mentioned in the article? Are they credible sources of information on this topic? Why or why not?
7. What is your response to the article? Do you find it balanced? Persuasive? Disturbing? Why or why not?

Reference

Vedantam, S. (2001, June 17). Tracing the synapses of our spirituality: Researchers examine relationship between brain and religion. *The Washington Post*, p. A1.



Neuroscience and Free Will

Exercise submitted by Heather Looy (King's University College)

Student Assignment

Read the *Economist* article “The Ethics of Brain Science” and then answer the questions below.

1. What is the main thesis of this article?
2. What are the three main concerns the article raises about the application of neuroscience/technology?
3. What evidence does the author provide to support the validity of these concerns?
4. Summarize, in your own words, the article’s discussion of the implications of neuroscience for our understanding of free will and moral responsibility.
5. Some views within Christian theology are based on the beliefs that humans have moral responsibility and that God is the all-knowing Creator of an orderly, lawful creation. Within this context, how should Christians respond to this article and the issues that it raises?
6. Should we stop or encourage the development and use of neurotechnologies?
7. Should we refuse to accept deterministic interpretations and applications of this research?
8. What are some legitimate (plausible) alternatives to these deterministic interpretations and applications?

Reference

Open your mind: The ethics of brain science. (2002, May 25). *The Economist* 363, 93.

Electronic version (requires online subscription) available at http://www.economist.com/science/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_TTQPPTS

Unofficial copy available at <http://www.mindcontrolforums.com/news/ethics-of-brainscience.htm>

Bible Readings

Genesis 1:27, 31a; 2:4–7

So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. . . . God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. . . .

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

This description of creation is beautiful in its simplicity; yet, psychologists have only begun to understand the complexity of the nervous system and the brain. Through this process, God's wisdom, intelligence, and creativity continue to be revealed.

Psalm 8:3–9

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,

what are mere mortals that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

You have made them a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned them with glory and honor.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:

all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

God created humans and holds them in high regard. The complexities of our bodies and especially our brains attest to God's good creation.

Nature and Nurture



Evolutionary Psychology

Lecture

1. A Brief Description of Evolutionary Psychology

Wacome (2003) states that “evolutionary psychology’s central claim is that *much* of the way people emote, reason, and act is the result of the ways in which natural selection shaped our species” (p. 184). Natural selection proposes that throughout human history, those inherited traits that lead to increased reproduction and survival will most likely be passed on to succeeding generations. Wacome asserts, “To understand why our brains process information the way they do and thus why we reason, emote, and behave as we do, we must understand our minds as adaptations. These adaptations are solutions to problems faced by our ancestors” (p. 184). Early in our human history, some individuals engaged in behaviors that enabled them to survive, reproduce, and thus send their genes into the future. The genes of those who made less fortunate choices were lost from the human gene pool. The genes that were most successful in meeting these environmental challenges gradually spread throughout the species, creating a tendency for people to behave in similar ways, even though they are largely unaware of this.

2. How might Christians Reconcile Evolutionary Psychology and Faith?

According to Wacome (2003), since evolutionary psychology does not attempt to explain the origins of the earth or to explain how living things came into being,

there is therefore no necessary conflict between acknowledging God as the creator of all things and accepting the theory of evolution. It is at face value entirely plausible for someone to believe that God created this universe, complete with the natural laws that govern it, and that over time the operation of law-governed natural processes brought forth all the different things that now exist. Darwinian evolution by means of natural selection would simply be the obvious candidate for the natural process that brought forth the current diversity of living things. God’s place as creator of nature and author of nature’s laws would not be challenged.

Christians, unlike deists, believe that God miraculously intervenes in his creation, but our essential commitment is to God’s intervening in human history; in human experience; in the history of the people of Israel; in our own experience; and above all, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—not to God’s intervening in nature as such. (p. 200)

Note that Wacome’s statement may not have completely solved the problem of deism.

3. Christian Critiques of Evolutionary Psychology

1. Critics of evolutionary psychology argue that it adopts a view that genes determine a person’s behavior, known as genetic determinism. If this is the case, then we cannot hold people morally responsible for their behaviors, since their genes caused them to behave in such a way. In defense of evolutionary psychology, Wacome argues that it explains the tendency to engage in certain behaviors. Even though the process of natural selection may have caused human beings to have certain tendencies, they are free to choose whether to act on them and thus are morally responsible.
2. If much of our human behavior is to be explained by evolutionary adaptation, does this mean that we must fatalistically accept the way we behave and are limited in our ability to change? Evolutionary theory does not imply that behaviors cannot be changed. According to Buss (2004), knowledge of our evolved psychology gives us more power to alter our behavior when change is desired.

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3. Evolutionary psychology and the Christian faith use different language to explain what goes wrong with human behavior. Christians tend to explain bad behavior as a result of personal sin and/or the brokenness of the world. Evolutionary psychology, on the other hand, asserts that behavior that is currently unacceptable was hard-wired into the brain earlier in human history when such behavior was adaptive. Our brains do not evolve quickly, and thus some behaviors are not appropriate in our contemporary environment.

Discussion

1. How has this summary changed the way you think about evolutionary psychology?
2. Identify a human tendency to behave in an undesirable way (i.e., coveting, overeating, consumerism). What ideas do you have for changing these behaviors? Using both the language of sin and the language of evolutionary psychology, how might you explain the difficulty in changing this behavior?

References

- Buss, D. M. (2004). *Evolutionary psychology: The new science of the mind*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Joldersma, C. (2003). Response to Donald Wacome's "Evolutionary psychology." In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. 209–211). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Wacome, D. H. (2003). Evolutionary psychology. In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. 183–208). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Suggested Reading

- Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). *Psychology through the eyes of faith*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, pp. 34–38.



Evolution and Mate Selection

Classroom Exercise

1. Write the five most important attributes you would look for in a partner.
2. In small groups, compare your list of attributes with each other. Look for similarities and differences.
3. Compare your list to the chart below in which Buss compares the ranking of males and females for partner preferences (Buss, 1998, p. 420). Buss is an evolutionary psychologist who has researched mate preferences in 37 different cultures over several decades.
4. Was religious orientation one of the five attributes you listed in partner preference? Note that it is the lowest ranked characteristic on Buss's list.

Characteristics Commonly Sought in a Mate

Rank	Characteristics Preferred by Males	Characteristics Preferred by Females
1	Kindness and understanding	Kindness and understanding
2	Intelligence	Intelligence
3	Physical attractiveness	Exciting personality
4	Exciting personality	Good health
5	Good health	Adaptability
6	Adaptability	Physical attractiveness
7	Creativity	Creativity
8	Desire for children	Good earning capacity
9	College graduate	College graduate
10	Good heredity	Desire for children
11	Good earning capacity	Good heredity
12	Good housekeeper	Good housekeeper
13	Religious orientation	Religious orientation

Lecture

David Buss is known for his evolutionary psychology research on human sex differences in mate selection. According to evolutionary psychology, mates are selected for the purpose of procreation and assuring offspring survival. Men select women for factors that show fertility and women select men for their ability to provide for their offspring. In this view, religious orientation is not an essential characteristic for offspring survival.

Wacome (2003), a Christian philosopher, reminds us that even though religious orientation is not an essential characteristic for offspring survival, beliefs can override genetic proclivities in choosing a mate. He concludes, "Fortunately, we are noting here only general tendencies, more

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pronounced in some individuals than in others, and that can be overridden by countervailing beliefs or desires" (p. 194).

Discussion

1. How would you explain that some of your choices are different from the Buss model?
2. What role do your Christian beliefs play in ranking your mate preferences?

References

- Buss, D. M. (1998). The psychology of human mate selection. In C. Crawford & D. Krebs (Eds.) *Handbook of evolutionary psychology*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Wacome, D. H. (2003). Evolutionary Psychology. In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. 183–214). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.



Article and Response to Steven Pinker

Student Assignment

Pinker is a self-proclaimed atheist writing from an evolutionary psychology perspective about why humans have a moral code. He writes God out of his understanding of morality.

Read the following article, called "The Moral Instinct," from the *New York Times*, Jan 13, 2008:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/magazine/13Psychology-t.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print

Pinker's article is long and the concepts might be somewhat difficult. However, Pinker's writing is also humorous and accessible and will acquaint you with someone who writes on the topic of evolutionary psychology from a non-faith perspective.

Answer the following questions:

1. Summarize Pinker's view of morality.
2. Explain Pinker's five moral realms and give an example of a behavior relevant to each.
3. What commonalities can you find between Pinker's understanding of morality and a biblical understanding of morality? Are there tensions between the two?

Haidt: primary colors of our moral sense



Harm



Fairness



Community



Authority



Purity

Sex Reassignment and the Nature-Nurture Issue

Video

Show film segment 5, "The Nature-Nurture Issue: Sex Reassignment" (5:00 minutes). This clip from *Moving Images: Exploring Psychology through Film* (2006) is available through Worth Publishers. The video is available free of charge to professors who use the Myers textbook, *Psychology*.

www.worthpublishers.com/mediaroom

This clip provides an interview with "John/Joan," who at birth was a genetic and anatomical male. After a botched circumcision, doctors changed his anatomy to female. His parents raised him as a female and at adolescence he was given hormone therapy. However, John/Joan tells of his struggle to function successfully as a female. This clip suggests that nurture alone does not determine identity. Both nature and nurture shape who we are.

Discussion

1. What was the nature-nurture perspective of the doctors in the John/Joan case, and how did this affect their treatment/decision?
2. If you could go back in time, just following the botched surgery of John/Joan, what medical decision would you make based on your knowledge of the influence of nature and nurture on gender identity?
3. What might be a compassionate Christian response toward John/Joan?



Do Parents Matter?

Classroom Exercise

Present the following scenario to your students:

Sarah, a 17-year-old female, who has been raised by diligent Christian parents starts dating Tyler, a 21-year-old male. Tyler takes her to parties and introduces her to drugs. After several months, Sarah becomes pregnant and is regularly using drugs. Sarah's parents feel overwhelming guilt and wonder what they did wrong.

Consider the relative influence of parents and peers on Sarah's behavior. Respond to the parents and address their feelings of responsibility.

Video

Show film segment 6, "Do Parents Matter? Peer Influence" (5:15 minutes). This clip from *Moving Images: Exploring Psychology Through Film* (2006) is available through Worth Publishers. The video is available free of charge to professors who use the Myers textbook, *Psychology*.

www.worthpublishers.com/mediaroom

Discussion



1. Respond to Sarah's parents now that you have watched the video.
2. According to Dr. Alan Sroufe, peers influence superficial behaviors such as smoking, vocabulary, and dress, while parents influence behaviors such as values, conscience, and religious beliefs. What evidence do you have from your personal experience that suggests this to be true or false?
3. Based on the video's conclusion that peer's influence behavior, think about your own choice of friends. How have your friends influenced you in ways you regret and in ways for which you are thankful?

The Fruit of the Spirit: Nature or Nurture

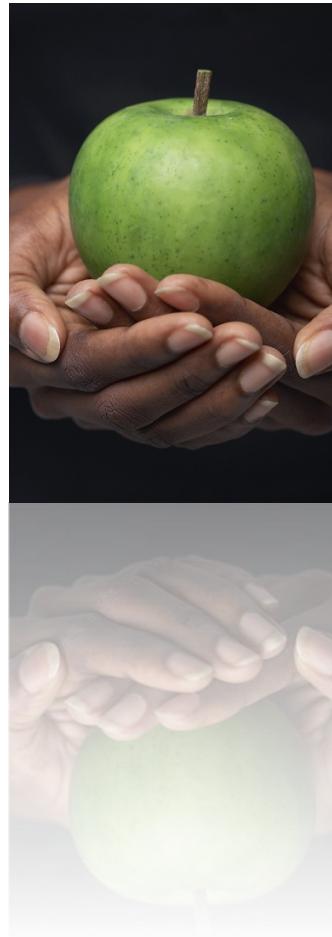
Classroom Exercise

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Have students complete the questionnaire on the following page and then discuss the following questions:

1. Consider the three personal traits that best describe you. Did you tend to attribute these traits to natural/biological causes, environmental influences, or a combination of both?
2. What would it mean if some people are born with temperaments more in line with the fruit of the Spirit?
3. How might you cultivate the fruit of the Spirit?



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Fruit of the Spirit Questionnaire

For each of the following personal traits, circle the number that best indicates to what extent each trait describes you. Rate yourself on the following scale from 1-5:

1	2	3	4	5
Doesn't describe me at all		Describes me somewhat		Describes me very well
1. Loving	1	2	3	4
2. Joyful	1	2	3	4
3. Peaceful	1	2	3	4
4. Patient	1	2	3	4
5. Kind	1	2	3	4
6. Good	1	2	3	4
7. Faithful	1	2	3	4
8. Gentle	1	2	3	4
9. Self-controlled	1	2	3	4

Using your answers to the above questions, choose the three personal traits that describe you best. Write them in the blanks below, and then circle the number that best indicates to what extent you attribute each trait to natural, biological tendencies or environmental influences.

1	2	3	4	5
I'm naturally, biologically this way		It's a mix of biology and environment		I'm this way because of my environment
1. _____		1 2 3 4 5		
2. _____		1 2 3 4 5		
3. _____		1 2 3 4 5		

Genes and Religiousness

Discussion

Think about how religious you are. How do you think you got to be this way? Did it come from your environment (nurture) or from your genes (nature)? Or perhaps a better question would be, what percentage of your religiousness comes from nurture and what percentage from nature? What evidence would you use to support your conclusion?

Lecture

Until recently, we assumed that how religious you are came from environmental influences. However, according to McKee (2005), more recent studies “suggest genes contribute about 40% of the variability in a person’s religiousness.” (Introduction, para. 2). Interestingly, the effects of nature and nurture on religiousness seem to change over time. Researchers at the University of Minnesota asked 169 pairs of identical twins and 104 pairs of fraternal twins about their religious practices. The twins believed that when they were younger they shared similar religious behavior with their families. However, only the identical twins reported maintaining that similarity as adults. The fraternal twins “were about a third less similar than they were as children” (Religious Discussions, para. 3). This would suggest that over time, genetic factors have more of an influence on religious practices than does growing up together.

Discussion

1. What difference does it make for you to know that about 40% of how religious you are is influenced by your genes?
2. How have your religious practices changed over time? What has influenced those changes? Nature, nurture, something else?

Reference

McKee, M. (2005, March 16). Genes contribute to religious inclination. Retrieved from <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn7147-genes-contribute-to-religious-inclination.html>



God and Genes

Lecture

Kluger, Chu, Liston, Sieger, and Williams (2004) raise the issue of whether God places knowledge of himself in humans at a genetic level or whether our genetic code creates God out of a basic human need for morality, organization, and avoiding the fear of death.

Kluger et al. explore the possibility that God might have created people with a “god gene” so that they could know and experience Him. The divine is a concept that is present in human cultures worldwide, which makes sense if God created humans with the capacity to have a relationship with Him.

Student Assignment

This may be a difficult article for you to read, as it introduces you to concepts of faith that you may have never before considered. Yet, issues of religion and genetics are being studied by many scientists today. The scientific debate represented in this article is one that you will encounter in ordinary life, throughout the media, and perhaps in discussions with friends. We will take time to consider how Christians might respond to this research. You will have the opportunity in class to share any thoughts and questions that this article generated for you.

Read the article, “Is God in Our Genes,” at the site below and answer the following questions.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,995465-1,00.html>

1. Critique the scientific methodology used in the god gene research. (i.e. How have other scientists responded to the god gene research and what is your reaction to their critique?)
2. How might the god gene research be beneficial/useful to believers?
3. If there is a god gene, or multiple god genes, how would you respond to these genes being distributed differently? For example, what would it mean if some people have a greater genetic predisposition for spiritual experiences or connection with God than others?
4. Respond to the following question raised by Kluger et al. (2004): “Or, assuming the [god] gene exists at all, could it somehow be embraced by both science and religion...?” (par. 9).

Discussion of Student Assignment

Divide the class into small groups and have them share their responses to the questions. Ask each group to summarize their discussion for the class and to share any interesting points that were made or any differences of opinion. Many students struggle with making a distinction between religious belief and spiritual experience and thus have a difficult time answering question number 3. You may provide some remarks that will help them to think through this:

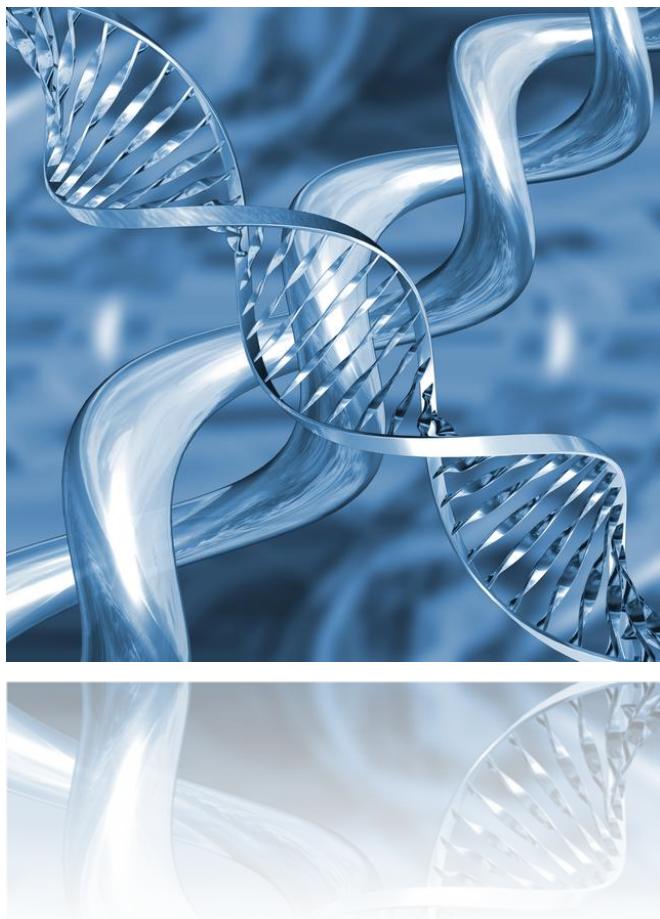
Spiritual experience is not the same as religious belief. Christians may have varying spiritual experiences that result from differing personal characteristics such as brain functioning, genetic factors, and psychological issues. For example, Emily, a college student may believe that God exists and engage in behaviors consistent with that belief, such as going to church, being kind to others, and living according to a high moral standard. However, she may not have a spiritual experience of the presence of God—she may not feel elated in church, never having the desire to raise her hands in worship or experiencing the warm feeling of God’s closeness. What would we conclude about Emily? Would we say of Emily that she does not believe in God? Or would

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we say that even in the absence of spiritual experiences she is able to maintain belief in God? Another thing to consider is that an individual's ability to have spiritual experiences may change over time. So although Emily does not currently have deeply-felt spiritual experiences, she may when she is in her 30s. Perhaps then, we cannot use the presence of spiritual experiences as the sole judge of whether or not a person believes in God.

Reference

- Kluger, J., Chu, J., Liston, B., Sieger, M., & Williams, D. (2004). Is God in our genes? *Time*, 164(17), 62-72. Available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,995465-1,00.html>



Molecular Genetics

Lecture

Students can examine the field of molecular genetics from an ethical and faith-based worldview. The following article and video clip provide students with current information on this field as well as hypotheses about what may happen in the future.

Genetic studies are currently available to allow people to look at genes they have inherited from ancestors which they may pass to the next generation. In the past, people have been privy to this information through professionals in the medical field. However, this information can now be gleaned privately through internet companies that provide genetic information in return for money and a DNA sample.

Amy Harmon is the author of a Pulitzer Prize-winning series of articles in the *New York Times* about genetic technology. One of these articles is about internet companies that help customers have access to their own genetic information. These companies can provide information on disease proclivities as well as provide tools for tracing ancestry.

Student Assignment

Have students read the following article from the New York Times: "My Genome, Myself: Seeking Clues in DNA."

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/17/us/17dna.html?_r=1

1. How might you use this personal genetic information?
2. How might you use information about your children's genetics?
3. What specific questions do you think need to be asked about this market on the basis of Christian faith?

Video

Gattaca, 1997, Andrew Niccol, Columbia Pictures. Start with minute 8:04 of Gattaca, at the line "The most unremarkable of events . . ." and continue for 4 minutes, 34 seconds. This sequence is a fictionalized account of future genetic testing on embryos before implantation. The clip is available by purchasing the movie Gattaca. It is also available on YouTube.

Discussion

1. If there were technology that allowed you to look at genetic markers on embryos before implantation, would you want to take advantage of it?
2. What genetic markers would you rule out and what would you leave to chance (e.g., obesity, homosexuality, disease, shyness, mental illness)? Make a list of both.
3. What Christian moral convictions do you think are relevant to discussing this branch of research?

Reference

Harmon, A. (2007, November 17). My genome, myself: Seeking clues in DNA. *The New York Times*. Available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/17/us/17dna.html?_r=1

Francis Collins and the Human Genome Project

Student Assignment

Francis Collins, Director of National Institutes of Health, was the head of the Human Genome Project. He helped map out all of the approximately 30,000 genes in the human body. He is an evangelical Christian and believes that all findings of science serve to glorify the Creator God. Collins has been highly criticized by scientists, some suggesting that being a Christian interferes with his ability to do good science.

Francis Collins was interviewed by *Christianity Today* in an article entitled "The Genome Doctor."

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/october1/2.42.html?start=1>

Read this article and respond to the following quotes from Francis Collins:

"I could go on for hours listing the conditions that could benefit from this research because they all have at least some hereditary contribution. Uncovering those hereditary factors will allow us to make predictions about who's at risk for what, and hence to practice better prevention."

1. If your genetic information were available, would you want it? Why or why not?

"If someone in your family has colon cancer, you may be able to find out whether you're at risk or not. If you are at risk, you can take steps to save your life."

"If we can do gene therapy safely and ethically, and if we can cure terrible diseases that afflict children and adults, we are almost obligated to do that."

2. Do you agree with Collins? If genetic therapy were available to alter potentially life-threatening genetic proclivities, would you want it? Why or why not?

"The notion that we could eventually take charge of our own evolutionary state and improve ourselves is a chilling one for most people, and especially, I think, for people of faith. The idea is that we would re-engineer the human race by deciding which features we would like to improve upon, such as making ourselves smarter and stronger. But who's going to decide what's an improvement? I think any kind of activity where we systematically change our very nature jeopardizes our relationship with God, who I believe was intent on creating humankind in our current state."

3. Which genetic manipulations may jeopardize our relationship with God? How?

Reference

Collins, F. (2001, October 1). The genome doctor. *Christianity Today*, 45 (12). Available online at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/october1/2.42.html?start=1>

Behavior Genetics

Classroom Exercise

Researchers have tried to link specific genes with certain behavioral characteristics (e.g. the link between genotypes and phenotypes). These links have been speculative and difficult to predict with any certainty. The links are strongest with specific gene aberrations which cause diseases such as cystic fibrosis but are weaker and more difficult to predict with diffuse behavioral traits such as personality characteristics, homosexuality, or intelligence.

Even if researchers one day have a better understanding of gene-behavior predictions, the environment would still be a factor in mediating these genetic proclivities.

The following exercise may help students to think about future possibilities in the application of genetic research as well as the important link between nature and nurture. This exercise can be combined with a class lecture on behavior genetics. Divide the class into small groups and give each group a description of one of the following children.

Child 1: Male	Child 2: Male	Child 3: Female	Child 4: Female
High religiosity	High religiosity	Low religiosity	Low religiosity
High shyness	Extraversion	High shyness	Low chance of depression
High chance of homosexuality	Low chance of homosexuality	High chance of depression	Low to medium intelligence
High intelligence	High intelligence	Low to medium intelligence	High chance of contracting cancer
Low chance of addictions (e.g., alcoholism)	High chance of addictions (e.g., alcoholism)	High chance of ADHD	High chance of addiction (e.g., alcoholism)

Discussion

1. How would this information affect how you might raise your child? To which factors would you give more or less consideration?
2. Specifically, how might your knowledge of your child's religiosity affect the spiritual practices you might adopt with your child?
3. If given the choice, would you want this list of genetic proclivities or not? Why or why not?
4. Does this exercise give you any thoughts on genetic determinism versus free will?

Lecture

This last question is important for Christians to wrestle with in terms of our faith and relationship with God. As embodied people, how does God use our genes and environments to shape us, and what is our level of responsibility for our actions even if we have strong genetic proclivities to act in certain ways?

Heather Looy (2003) wrote a chapter called "Is Our Fate in Our Genes? Behavior Genetics" in *Science and the Soul*, and states "we fear that the discovery of a genetic aspect to traits such as personality, altruism, political preference, mate selection, and even religious faith means we must lose our senses of freedom and agency" (p. 151). However, our inheritance of genetic proclivities is directly mediated by our parents, peers, settings, and circumstances. Therefore in most cases, genes that are implicated in behavior give us predispositions, not a predicted course for our lives. Even the combination of genes and environment, as powerful and predictive as they might be, still do not completely determine the outcome of our choices.

In Looy's thoughtful response to this matter, she states, "one possibility is that, while our beliefs, desires, and reasons for acting are the results of causes present within an orderly-determined-world, our decisions to act in particular ways based on those beliefs, desires, or reasons are in some sense free" (p. 157).

Reference

Looy, H. A. (2003). Is our fate in our genes? Behavior genetics. In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. 151-176). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.



Christian Response to Behavior Genetics

Discussion

Heather Looy (2003) wrote a chapter called “Is Our Fate in Our Genes? Behavior Genetics” in *Science and the Soul* which discusses the field of behavior genetics and then raises questions for Christians about this field. In the last section of her chapter, entitled “Christian Concerns and Responses” she states, “lurking behind behavior-genetic research are questions of the meaning of normality and abnormality, the discernment of God’s good creation and the brokenness of sin” (p. 174). *She then poses the following questions which you can pose to your own students.*

1. Examine the following list of traits/conditions that Looy presents on p. 174.

- Nonheterosexual orientation
- Aggression
- Color blindness
- Deafness
- Antisocial personality
- Autism

Are these broken, sinful conditions or God’s way of diversifying his people? How do you decide on the difference (e.g., culture, tradition, theology, etc.)?

2. “If we view our genes as God-given, then we must consider whether it is sinful to tamper with those genes – the ultimate purpose of most genetic research. On the other hand, if genes can be ‘broken,’ is it part of our calling to use the minds God gave us to develop methods to heal that brokenness?” (p. 174). Which view do you favor and why?

Lecture

Students are often hesitant about behavior genetics, using the argument that scientists should not “play God.” In a response to Looy’s article, Gunnoe offers the following critique of those who argue against genetic manipulation:

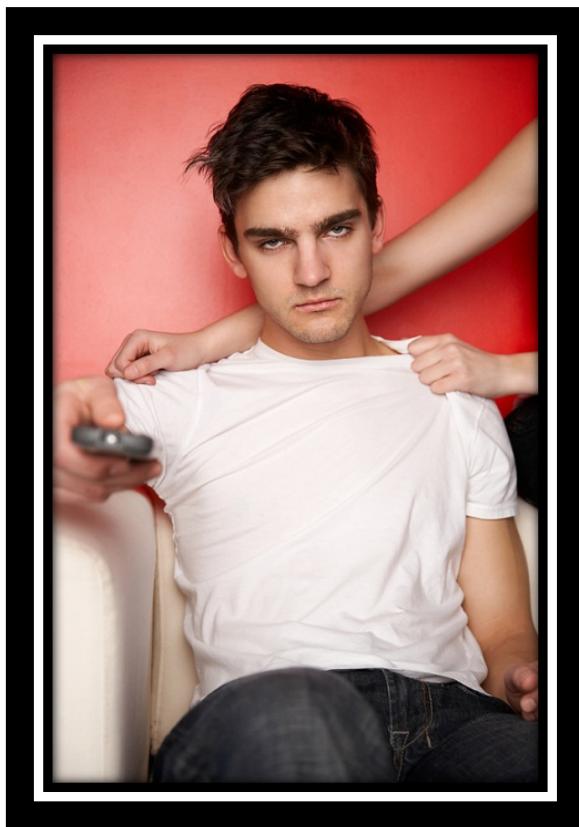
1. “First, it implies that humans can limit God’s power over his creation” (p. 177). Those arguing against “playing God” are concerned with genetic modification and not other interventions such as medication or surgery. As Gunnoe states, “Are we suggesting, then, that God is powerful enough to counter human interventions such as medicine and surgery but impotent in the face of genetic modification . . . certainly Christians ought to reckon genes as something over which God is transcendent” (p. 177–178).
2. Second, Gunnoe states that “this mindset undermines Christians’ responsibility to care for and, more importantly, restore creation” (p. 178). Finding genetic cures for diseases is one example of this. However, traits such as those listed above are more difficult. Again, “do they constitute brokenness or God’s intended variation within the human species?” (p. 177).

Discussion

Respond to Gunnoe’s critique.

References

- Gunnoe, M. L. (2003). Response to Heather Looy's "Is our fate in our genes?" In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. 177-179). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Looy, H. A. (2003). Is our fate in our genes? Behavior genetics. In S. W. Vanderstoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul: Christian faith and psychological research* (pp. 151–176). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.



Bible Readings

Galatians 5:22–25

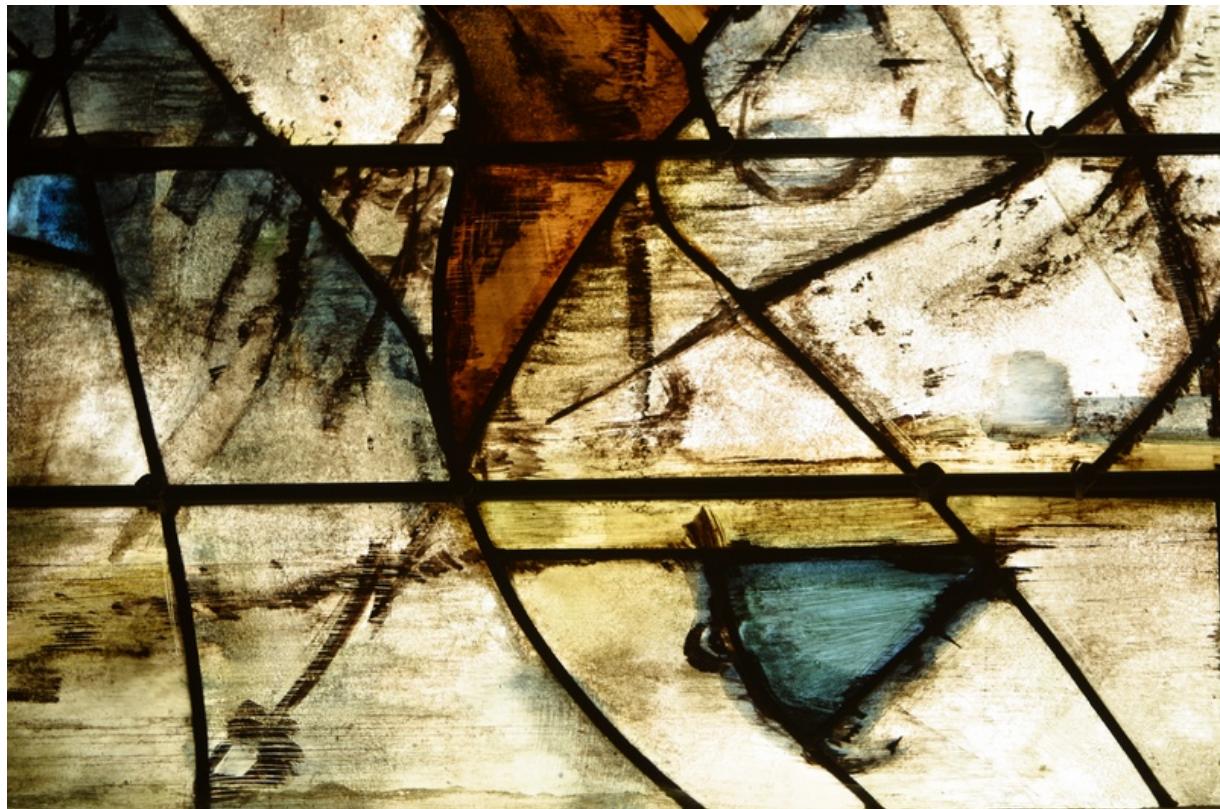
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Once we belong to Christ, the Holy Spirit strengthens us to accept the fruit of the Spirit. This verse challenges us to follow the Spirit rather than our sinful inclinations.

Colossians 3:5,12

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.... Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Biology and environment alone do not determine our behavior. As Christians we have access to the Holy Spirit who makes these virtues available to us despite our limitations.



Development



The Beginning of Life

Adapted from Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe and Laura De Haan (Calvin College)

The following exercise will require students to think about the beginning of life from biblical and scientific perspectives.

Video

Show the last 12–16 minutes of *The Miracle of Life* to provide a visual depiction of the process from conception to birth. The video is available on the PBS Web site:

<http://www.shoppbs.org/product/index.jsp?productId=1402973>

The video uses special photography to give glimpses into the mother's uterus as the baby grows. The following developments are highlighted.

- 1 day: fertilized eggs, called zygotes, move along the fallopian tube to the uterus
- 10 days: the cell mass is planted firmly in the uterus and is called an embryo, and is nourished by the placenta
- 2 weeks: the cell mass is elongated
- 4 weeks: arm buds form
- 6 weeks: leg buds form, embryo is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long
- 7 weeks: fingers and internal organs are visible
- 8 weeks: fingers are well defined, toe joints appear
- 10 weeks: the embryo is considered a fetus
- 15 weeks: the sensory organs are nearly formed

Lecture

When we deal with the question of when life begins, a common struggle is defining what “life” means. For example, when referring to life do we mean biological life, the beginning of the soul, or conscious life? The scientific community has used the following developmental stages as markers of the beginning of life:

- Conception
- Visual presence of a brain (top of the neural tube): 4 weeks
- Brain waves detected: 6 weeks
- Physical formation of the heart: 9 weeks
- “Quickeening”: approximately 18 weeks (mother feels movement)
- Age of Viability: capable of life outside uterus
 - 1960: 33 weeks
 - 1980: 28 weeks
 - 2005: 21–23 weeks
 - 2020: ???
- First breath

Journal Reflections

Have your students take out a piece of paper and ask them to journal on the following questions.

- a. These are some verses that have been used in the abortion debate. Is it appropriate to use these verses to make a claim about when life begins? Some Christians think that

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these verses clearly define the beginning of life while others are less certain of their usefulness. What do you think?

■ Genesis 1:27

So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

This verse has been used to say God values life; what does it say about when life begins?

■ Psalm 139:13–16

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

What kinds of conclusions about the beginning of life might it be legitimate to draw from these verses? (Notice that these verses are written as poetry, rather than prose.)

Does the phrase “when I was woven together” imply that a living being is present from the very beginning of the process?

■ Jeremiah 1:4-5

The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Note the various ways that this verse has been interpreted:

- This verse says that life begins at conception, so we should hold life sacred from conception.
- This verse says only that we came to be through a process of formation in the womb, but does not tell us exactly when in that process we became persons, so we should not conclude too much.
- This verse says that God knew us as persons even before we began to be formed in the womb, which suggests that we are not in a position to determine when conceived beings become people.
- “Before I formed you” is a poetic parallel to “before you were born,” so the verse is just talking in general terms about the time before birth and should not be pushed further.

Which of these interpretations do you find persuasive? Why?

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To what extent do the text itself and your own prior convictions influence which you find plausible?

Does taking these three texts together add anything to any one of them?

- b. From a scientific perspective, when do you think life begins? Use information from the video, legal decisions, and stages of prenatal development to help you answer this question.

In 1973, in a famous court case known as Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decided that a mother may abort her pregnancy before viability, which is when a fetus can live outside the womb. Since then, regulations have been made state by state, some allowing a mother to abort her pregnancy before the age of viability and some allowing this later in the pregnancy. Some of these state legislators may argue that life does not begin until live birth.

- c. Based on scientific knowledge and your biblical perspective, what are your thoughts about the following issues?
- Stem-cell research
 - Abortion
 - Contraceptives, including Plan B
 - In vitro fertilization



Domestic Corporal Punishment

Classroom Exercise

Post the following numbers around the classroom:

1 (Never) 2 3 4 5 6 (Definitely)

Ask students to position themselves by the number that best describes their answer to the following question: Should parents spank?

After students are standing by their number, ask them to turn to the people directly by them (e.g., 1s and 2s, 3s, 4s, and 5s and 6s). Then in small groups, discuss the following questions:

1. What is your definition of spanking?
2. What were your childhood experiences of spanking? What were your family traditions surrounding spanking?
3. What did your religious traditions teach you about spanking?

Lecture

Consider these biblical texts in regard to parental discipline.

Many Christians quote Proverbs 13:24, "Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are careful to discipline them." Bruce Narramore (2002), a Christian advocate of spanking, states that the "Bible supports the occasional, restrained use of physical discipline" (p. 5). He goes on to say that "this verse makes it clear there is a place for spanking but it also tells us something about how to go about it. Like all good discipline, spankings should flow from love and be done for our children's welfare" (p. 5).

However, other Christians disagree that spanking is appropriate for children and quote such verses as Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children: instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

1. How do you understand these texts?
2. If one of these texts contradicts your stance on spanking, how do you deal with it?

Consider the psychological scientific literature about spanking.

The American Psychological Association has not given concrete guidelines on nonabusive spanking, only saying that psychologists differ in their opinion concerning the effectiveness of spanking in the home. Some psychologists advocate strongly against using corporal punishment with children. They cite studies that show negative outcomes from children who are spanked by parents. Psychologists also argue that frequent spanking may teach children aggressiveness. Other psychologists and sociologists argue that the studies that show spanking to be detrimental have too many methodological flaws and are therefore not reliable: for example, some samples are skewed by parents who are abusive in their spanking. They advocate for the rightful place of proper nonabusive spanking. Gunnoe and Mariner (1997) found that most children can accept spanking as helpful before the age of eight but that it becomes less helpful as they get older.

1. Some psychologists advocate for nonabusive spanking. In your opinion, what does that look like?
2. What impact does this psychological literature have on your stance toward spanking?

Consider some of the domestic and international legal guidelines regarding spanking.

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Spanking or corporal punishment is commonly defined as an open-handed swat that leaves no mark. The corporal punishment of minors within the home is lawful in all 50 states. Michigan's law Sec. 750.136b states that the "parent / guardian / other person permitted by law, or authorized by parent, or guardian can take steps to reasonably discipline a child, including the use of reasonable force." Starting with Sweden in 1979, over 20 countries such as Austria, Chile, New Zealand, and Romania have outlawed domestic corporal punishment (e.g., spanking in the home). In some countries, the penalty for spanking may be required attendance at a parenting class.

1. Do you agree with Michigan's law, or would you advocate for stricter regulation on spanking such as in Sweden?
2. How has your view of spanking been modified by this discussion?
3. Would you change the number you initially chose? Why or why not?

References

- American Psychological Association. (2002). Is corporal punishment an effective means of discipline? Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/releases/spanking.html>
- Gilbert, S. (1997, August 20). Two spanking studies indicate parents should be cautious. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/20/us/2-spanking-studies-indicate-parents-should-be-cautious.html?pagewanted=1>
- Gunnoe, M. L., & Mariner, C. L. (1997). Toward a developmental-contextual model of the effects of parental spanking on children's aggression. *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine* (151), 768–775.
- Narramore, B. (2002). Discipline by spanking: Is it child abuse? *Psychology for Living* (pp. 3–7).



Faith of a Child

Adapted from an exam question submitted by Laura DeHaan (Calvin College)

Student Assignment or Exam Question

Use this as a student paper assignment or an essay exam question.

In Mark 10:14-15, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Citing specific theories or research studies from the textbook or lectures, discuss three qualities unique or especially pronounced in infancy and childhood that you consider to be important ingredients of the Christian faith.

Some examples:

- Children have the ability to form a secure attachment to adult caregivers and use this secure base to explore the world. Christians can imitate this childlike quality by finding security and peace through an attachment to God. This attachment provides a safe base to interact in the world.
- Children use vocalizations including crying to communicate their needs. Christians are free to communicate with God in childlike (open and uninhibited) ways. The Psalms provide many examples of open, uninhibited prayers to God.
- Children develop a sense of object permanence by knowing that something exists even when it is out of sight. This quality of knowing that something exists even when it is out of sight is important for the Christian faith as well. We worship a God who we cannot see.
- Children are adaptable and learn at an accelerated rate (consider language development, for instance). Children demonstrate a desire to learn and grow which Christians can imitate by desiring to learn and grow in the Christian faith.

For further reading

Marty, M. E. (2007). *The mystery of the child*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.



Attachment and Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence

Lecture

Granqvist and Dickie (2006) provide a review of the attachment literature as it relates to spiritual development. They argue that parallel development occurs between the parent-child attachment and the relationship a child has with God.

Attachment and Faith in Early Childhood (3–6 years old)

- As children move from infancy to childhood, they are able to maintain more distance from their parents, in part because they have developed object constancy. Children's main emotional connection continues to be with their parents.
- At this age, children develop a concept of God as a person who is loving but relatively distant.
- God is not yet a perfect substitute for their parents.

Attachment and Faith in Middle Childhood (7–11 years old)

- Children develop a growing ability to be separate from their parents and to rely more on other authority figures. The shift to peer attachments is beginning, but children remain attached to their parents.
- At this age, children experience God as closer and more loving, nurturing, and powerful than their parents.
- “God becomes the more perfect attachment substitute, available at all times; the child need not feel alone” (p. 202).

Attachment and Faith in Adolescence

- Adolescence is a time of attachment transition from parents to peers.
- It is also a time of religious transition when attachment is transferred to God or away from God.

Journal Reflection

1. Write a letter that you might have written to God at age 6, 12, and 16.
2. What changes do you notice over the course of your own spiritual development?

Lecture

Granqvist and Dickie (2006) discuss the compensation and correspondence hypotheses to explain how individual differences in attachment styles affect religiosity:

Compensation Hypothesis

- Those who have developed an insecure attachment with parental figures “are in greater need to establish compensatory attachment relationships to regulate distress and obtain felt security. In the context of religion, God was suggested to function as such a surrogate attachment figure” (p. 199).
- The literature suggests that children who are insecurely attached may “find God to fulfill the role of an attachment figure, to be close and available, particularly in times of stress, or when feeling alone” (p. 203).

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- Adolescents who are insecurely attached are more likely to experience changes in their religiosity than are those who are securely attached. These changes are influenced by the adolescents' view of self and others. They are more likely to have a dramatic religious conversion if the view of self is negative and God serves a compensatory function. If they have a negative view of others, the tendency is for adolescents to move away from God.

Correspondence Hypothesis

- Those who have developed a secure attachment with parental figures "(1) have established the foundations on which a corresponding relationship with God could be built . . . and (2) are successfully socialized to adopt the attachment figure's religious or nonreligious standards" (p. 200).
- The literature suggests that "children's God concepts most followed the correspondence model in that children's images of loving and powerful parents predicted images of a loving and powerful God" (p. 202).
- Adolescents who are securely attached tend to have more stability in their religiosity and show greater similarity with their parents' religiosity. In addition, those who have nurturing images of their parents tend to have images of God as nurturing, caring, and loving.

Journal Reflection

1. Which of these two hypotheses best describes your faith development? How is this explanation helpful?
2. Is this a sufficient explanation of your faith development?

Reference

Granqvist, P., & Dickie, J. R. (2006). Attachment and spiritual development in childhood and adolescence. In E. C. Roehlkepartain, P. E. King, L. Wagener, & P. L. Benson (Eds.), *The handbook of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence* (pp. 197–210). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Cognitive Development of Children

Lecture

Piaget's stages of cognitive development clearly show that children think differently than adults.

Video

The following video clip is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 5, "The Developing Child." At the top of that Web page, click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." Show students the video clip of Piaget's stages of cognitive development (minutes 9:54–18:51).

Lecture

Myers and Jeeves (2003) identify two lessons regarding children's minds and how they differ from adults. First, we must remember that children think differently than adults and take this into account as we teach them about the Bible. One of the authors of these ancillary materials offers a personal example of how adults may fail to understand how the minds of children work differently than their own:

When my niece Anneke was five years old, I received the following email from my sister-in-law: "Today Anneke's teacher told me that they were all sitting in the circle on the ground having Bible time. When it was time to pray, the teacher said that they would each take a turn praying, and they'd just go around the room. She told Anneke to go first, so Anneke closed her eyes, stood up, and started praying out loud, walking around the room with her eyes closed, bumping into things!! The teacher realized she had taken it literally, and was going around the room praying!"

The second lesson that Myers and Jeeves identify is that "God is to us as we are to the preschooler, only more so" (p. 40). Myers and Jeeves encourage us to continue to struggle with the paradoxes of faith and to develop more mature beliefs. However, they also remind us that we can "relax" in the knowledge that our minds are unable to fully comprehend God and his ways.

Discussion

1. Give an example from your own childhood of misunderstanding something that you were taught about the Bible. Try to explain this misunderstanding by using Piaget's stages of cognitive development.
2. Give an example of God's thoughts that you do not understand today. How can you use Myers and Jeeves's quote that "God is to us as we are to the preschooler, only more so" (p. 40) to help you deal with your confusion?

Reference

Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). On living peaceably with the mysteries of faith. *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed., pp. 39–42). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Fowler's Stages of Faith

Submitted by Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe (Calvin College)

Lecture

This summary of Fowler's six stages of faith development serves as an introduction to his work and may pique your students' interest for further study. Alternatively, you could use this lecture to compare Piaget's stages of cognitive development with Fowler's first three stages.

According to Fowler (1981) faith is a human universal. In this model of faith development, Fowler defines faith as "a generic feature of the human struggle to find and maintain meaning . . . [that] may or may not find religious expression" (p. 91). Based on over 5000 cross-sectional interviews conducted by Fowler and his associates, six stages of faith were identified. According to Fowler, individuals progress through the stages sequentially, but not everyone will ultimately grow through all six stages. In fact, only a handful of exemplars progress to Stage 6. Contemporary efforts to establish the validity of Fowler have indicated that progression through the early stages is sequential and cross-cultural. After age 20, stage is better predicted by education and life circumstances than age. Contemporary critics of Fowler (e.g., Heinz Straub, 2001) argue that stages 3–6 are more "styles of faith" than stages of faith.

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith

Stage 1 typically emerges between the ages of two and seven, and corresponds to Piaget's pre-operational stage. Fowler describes this stage as a time when children *intuitively* understand the ultimate conditions of existence (good vs. evil, sex, and death) and *project* these concerns onto powerful religious images, fusing fantasy, fact, and feeling in a manner relatively impervious to reason. At this stage, children identify with characters and fragments of stories but can neither create or retell stories in a linear fashion, nor identify the main point of a story. For example, a child who fears lions under his own bed may say he wants to be brave like Daniel, but is unable to recount the circumstances that required Daniel to be brave. Because pre-operational children have difficulty understanding perspective taking and intentionality (not even achieving theory of mind until midway through this period), children in this stage tend to view God as an unpredictable, emotionally distant superhero who engages in supernatural inexplicable acts at whim with little regard to humans' actions or intent.

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith

Stage 2 typically emerges between the ages of seven and twelve and corresponds to Piaget's concrete operational thinking stage. Foundational to this stage is children's drive to understand through the application of reason and the use of narratives (or "*myths*"). Reasoning is concrete and *literal* (e.g., God makes it rain by turning on and off the "rain switch"). Stage 2 myths evidence children's growing perspective-taking abilities and a strong expectation of justice and reciprocity in the God-human relationship (e.g., Why did God flood that city? The people must have been doing something bad. Did you see them do something bad? No, but God knows things we don't.) Children (and adults) in this stage can both extract the main point of a narrative and also generate their own narratives to explain theological mysteries. When Erik Gunnoe, age 7, was asked why he drew God with pink hair, he replied: "It's pink because it's shooting out to the people. God shoots it out to the people and then it gets black because of all the sin and then God takes it back and eats it all. Then he makes it pink again and spits it back out so it can take more sin. God has to take the sin because otherwise it would just bog you down, you know."

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith

Stage 3 typically emerges during adolescence and represents the coming together of Piaget's formal operational thought and Kohlberg's *conventional* reasoning (wherein values are dictated by group consensus rather than individual conscience). As adolescents become more

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sophisticated thinkers, they can articulate metanarratives (e.g., understanding that the Bible is one story rather than a collection of many stories) and distinguish different systems of values. More comfortable with the judgment of respected authority figures than their own reasoning, the different value systems are embraced or rejected both *synthetically* (i.e., as a whole) and fervently (per adolescents' particular propensity to experience life more intensely than younger or older persons). Fowler states, "A person in Stage 3 is aware of having values and normative images. He or she articulates them, defends them and feels deep emotional investments in them, but typically has not made the value system, as a *system*, the object of reflection" (Fowler, 1981, p. 162).

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith

Two important changes co-occur at this stage of development. Adults (1) critically reflect on their system of values and meaning, recognizing that these systems are the products of cultural construction, and (2) relocate authority from external sources to the self/*individual*. This stage is sometimes characterized by an intellectual detachment or scorn for experiential knowledge. Fowler refers to this second change as "the emergence of an executive ego" (p. 179).

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith

Adults who achieve Stage 5 (usually in midlife) craft for themselves a system of meaning based on the *conjunction* (i.e., linking) of the Stage 4 capacity for objective analysis with a Stage 3 yearning for the transcendent. A religious person in Stage 5 recognizes that religious symbols are simply symbols and that attachment to symbols is socialized, but nonetheless it values the emotional experience elicited by the symbols of their particular religious tradition. Fowler refers to this stage as a "second-naiveté" or "willed-naiveté." Because persons in Stage 5 recognize their own faith tradition as a culturally constructed expression of a transcendent truth, they are simultaneously committed to their own faith tradition and open to learning how other faith traditions express truth.

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith

The rare adult (Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Theresa) faces the tensions of Stage 5 (my religion reflects truth, but other religions reflect truth as well) and embraces commitment to *universal* compassion and justice. Because this "post-organized religion" is often subversive to existing social structures, adults in Stage 6 are often martyred. Fowler describes the criteria for this stage as "inclusiveness of community, of radical commitment to justice and love and of selfless passion for a transformed world, a world made over not in *their* images, but in accordance with an intentionality both divine and transcendent" (p. 201).

Discussion

1. At which of Fowler's stages are you currently in your faith development? Provide evidence to support the stage which you identified.
2. According to Fowler, the six stages of faith development show a progression from a lesser to a more mature (or complex) faith. Do you agree with his assessment? For example, can you identify a person of faith whom you admire who might best be described by one of the lower stages of faith development? How do you explain this?
3. Identify a person living today who fits the criteria for Stage 6.

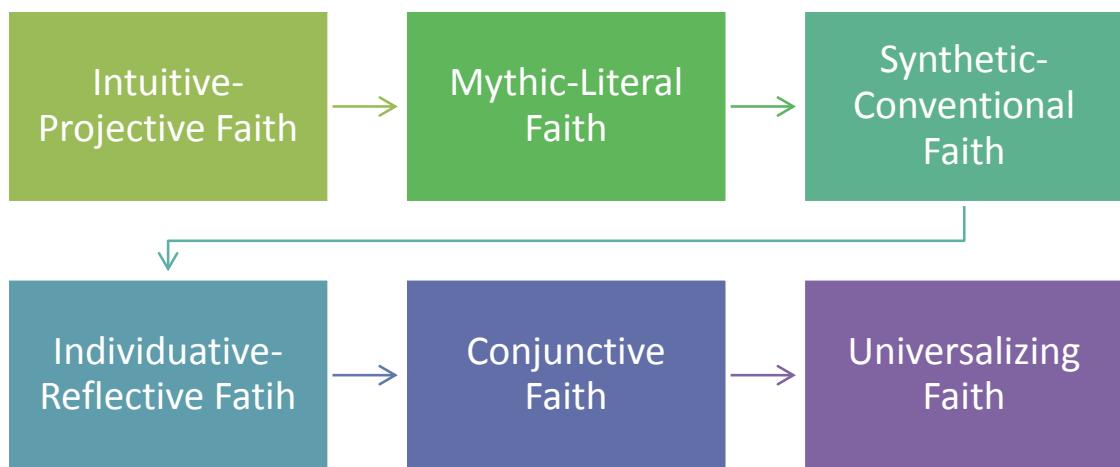
DEVELOPMENT

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Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Streib, H. (2001). Faith development theory revisited: The religious styles perspective. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 11(3), 143–158.

Fowler's Stages of Faith



Adolescence and Religion

Classroom Exercise

Take 3–5 minutes to write about what it means to be a Christian, starting with “I believe . . .” and including responses to these three questions.

1. What do you believe about God?
2. What sorts of behaviors and activities are central to your faith?
3. How should your faith affect your own character traits?

Lecture

James Fowler wrote about six stages of faith development through the life span. The third stage corresponds with adolescence. This stage, called Synthetic-Conventional Faith, is a time when adolescents reflect on their experiences and make meaning out of them. Fowler stated, “A person in Stage 3 is aware of having values and normative images. He or she articulates them, defends them and feels deep emotional investments in them, but typically has not made the value system, as a system, the object of reflection” (Fowler, 1981, p. 162). Instead of examining their “value system,” the person in Stage 3 relies on external authority and its construction of meaning.

This theoretical belief fits well with aspects of research conducted by Christian Smith in his National Study of Youth and Religion. Smith interviewed thousands of teens by phone and then conducted in-depth interviews with 267 teens, aged 13–17, in his study published in 2004. He found that most U.S. youth

- Happily accept their parents’ religion
- View religion as good (as giving moral and meaning) and not something to fight about
- Cannot articulate specific beliefs
- Practice Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD) and attractive elements of parents’ religious heritage. MTD includes the following concepts: God exists and created and watches over the world; God wants people to be good, fair, nice; the goal of life is happiness and self-esteem; God is mostly for times of need; and good people go to heaven
- Do not mention concepts such as sin, sacrifice, self-discipline, and doctrine

Video

Smith’s research was produced as a movie in 2007 called *Soul Searching: A Movie about Teenagers and God* from Revelation Studios. This movie can be purchased from Amazon.com.

The following movie segments may be useful to show in class:

- 34:36 to 42:17 (Scenes 24–27): Two scenes of teenagers having difficulty articulating their faith
- 42:17 to 45:11 (Scene 28): Smith explains Moral Therapeutic Deism
- 45:11 to 48:44 (Scene 29): Smith is skeptical of church future
- 48:44 to 57:29 (Scenes 30–34): In certain family and school settings, some youth are able to articulate their faith well (i.e., exceptions to Moral Therapeutic Deism)

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Discussion

1. Look back at your faith statement. How closely do you follow Fowler's third stage of faith development? How easy or difficult was it for you to articulate your faith?
2. After watching this segment of the DVD, what in the movie stood out to you? How were you similar to or different from the youth shown in the movie?
3. Why is it important for teenagers to articulate what they believe? How can teens be encouraged by their churches and families to understand and articulate their doctrinal beliefs?

References

- Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Smith, C. (2005). *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Religious Teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press.



Adolescent Brain Development and Moral Decision Making

Video (optional)

McGraw Hill Discovery Channel: the Adolescent Brain. You can find this clip on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-9sjvitKWA>

Lecture

Deborah Yurgelun-Todd, a Harvard neuropsychologist, conducted experiments using an fMRI in which both teens and adults were asked to identify the emotions displayed in photographs of faces. Young adolescents relied heavily on the amygdala, a structure within the limbic system associated with instinctive and emotional reactions. Adults relied more on the frontal lobe, a region associated with planning and judgment. While adults made few mistakes in assessing the photos, children under the age of 14 tended to make mistakes. Yurgelun-Todd has observed the brain-activity patterns of these children mature over time and has seen their judgment also mature. This study may explain why adolescents so frequently misread emotional signals.

Recent research on the developing brain suggests that “the very last part of the brain to be pruned and shaped to its adult dimensions is the prefrontal cortex, home of the so-called executive functions—planning, setting priorities, organizing thoughts, suppressing impulses, weighing the consequences of one’s actions” (Wallis, 2004, p. 61). Dr. Jay Giedd, an NIMH psychiatrist, estimates that this part of the brain is fully mature at about 25 years of age. Teens rely more on the amygdala to process emotional information, which may lead to greater impulsivity than adults whose emotional responses are tempered by the frontal cortex.

Discussion

1. Identify a time when you were a teenager and you made an impulsive decision that got you into trouble. Explain how you might have made this decision, given what you have learned about brain development.
2. Do you think you could have chosen differently at the time?
3. If you were able to go back in time and make a different decision, what would you do? How much of that different decision do you think is the result of brain development? What other factors affect the ways you have come to make decisions, besides brain development?
4. The Time Magazine article quotes Dr. Jay Giedd, an NIMH psychiatrist, as saying, “Making mistakes is part of how the brain ultimately grows” (p. 65). How do you think that might have occurred in your situation?

Reference

Wallis, C. (2004, May 10). What makes teens tick. *Time Magazine*, pp. 56–65.

Social Rejection and Friendship

Adapted from an exercise submitted by Julie Yonker (Calvin College)

Review the following Bible passages about friendship with your class:

1 Samuel 18:1, 3–4

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. . . . And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

Proverbs 12:26

The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 17:17a

A friend loves at all times.

Proverbs 18:24

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Luke 7:34

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”

John 15:12-15

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know their master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Journal Reflections

The journal reflections that occur during this activity are meant to serve as a “rolling reflection,” a written series of short, personal reflections that take place throughout the class time. Students may write all of their personal reflections on a single piece of paper, responding as they are prompted. Give the students about three minutes to write at each prompt. Be sure to tell them whether or not you will collect their responses.

1. What do these verses have to say about your current friendships?
2. What does it mean to both choose your friends wisely and, like Christ, be a friend of “tax collectors and sinners”?
3. What does it mean to have Jesus call you a friend (see John 15:12–15)?

Lecture

Friendship is especially important during the adolescent years, when peer influence begins to exceed parental influence. According to Gottman and Parker (1987), as referenced by Santrock (2007), friendship serves many functions, including companionship, stimulation, physical support, ego support, social comparison, and intimacy/affection.

DEVELOPMENT

Journal Reflections

4. What social groups did you belong to during adolescence? Explain why these groups were important to you.

Lecture

While friends may be important throughout the lifespan, having friends during adolescence is especially important (Santrock, 2007). During adolescence, the need for intimacy intensifies and the quality of friendship is strongly linked to feelings of well-being. Friends are also an important source of support and are active partners in building a sense of identity.

Journal Reflections

5. What contribution have your friends made to forming your personal identity?
6. How have your friends influenced your spiritual identity?

Video

Show film segment 25: "Social Rejection: The Need to Belong" (3:20 minutes). This clip from *Moving Images: Exploring Psychology Through Film* (2006) is available through Worth Publishers. The video is available free of charge to professors who use the Myers textbook, *Psychology*.

www.worthpublishers.com/mediaroom

Journal Reflections

7. Provide an example of a time when you experienced or witnessed social rejection. What responsibility do you have to those who experience social rejection?
8. Identify Christian groups that perpetrate social rejection. What can be done to change this?

References

- Gottman, J. M., & Parker, J. G. (1987). *Conversations of friends*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Santrock, J. W. (2007). *A topical approach to life-span development* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.



Erikson's Stages of Adulthood

Student Assignment

Read chapter nine in Myers and Jeeves (2003). In this chapter Ludwig focuses on the last four stages of Erik Erikson's psychosocial development, beginning at adolescence and moving through old age. Ludwig invites us to contemplate the various tasks that are present during each of these adult stages of development.

Write a two- to three-page typed paper addressing the following questions:

1. Use Erikson's stages of development to identify at which stage you are currently. What aspects of this stage fit you well? Are there aspects of your experience that do not seem well captured by this stage?
2. Respond to Ludwig's questions about identity: Who am I? What is important to me? Where am I headed in life? (p. 49).
3. How do you answer Walter Brueggemann's question, "Whose am I?" (p. 49).
4. Ludwig defines vocation as "finding a purpose for being in the world that is related to the purposes of God" (p. 49). What are you learning about your vocation?
5. Using Erikson's stages, imagine what the subsequent stages in your life might look like.

Reference

Ludwig, T. E. (2003). Finding your path on the journey of life. In D. G. Myers & M. A. Jeeves, *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed.) (pp. 48–51). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.



Love and Marriage: John Gottman

Lecture

For several decades, John Gottman has conducted extensive research on marriage and published the results in peer-reviewed literature. His methodology allows him to predict with more than 90% accuracy whether the marriages of newlywed couples will succeed or fail. Gottman (1994) reported that one of the most important indicators of marital success is a five-to-one ratio of positive to negative interactions. In healthy marriages positive interactions might include compliments, laughs, physical touch, and smiles, which outnumber negative interactions such as insults, sarcastic comments, and critical words.

Quality of friendship with one's spouse also proves to be a major factor in marital satisfaction. Happy couples find pleasure and comfort in each other's company and pay attention to the details of one another's lives.

In his book, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, Gottman (1994) describes four factors that contribute to unhappy marriages:

1. Criticism: attacking the partner's character or personality and blaming
2. Contempt: intentionally insulting or psychologically abusing the partner, often with insults, mockery, and body language
3. Defensiveness: defending against perceived attacks by denying responsibility, making excuses, etc.
4. Stonewalling: withdrawing or removing oneself from the conversation

Taking into account Gottman's research and biblical principles of marital interactions and love, read the following Bible passages commonly used in weddings.

Ephesians 5:21–25,28,32–33

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. . . . In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. . . . This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:

If they fall down,
they can help each other up.
But pity those who fall
and have no one to help them up!

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?

DEVELOPMENT

Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

1 Corinthians 13:4–7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Discussion

1. Identify parallels between Gottman's research and these Bible passages. Are there any differences?
2. Which of the four factors that contribute to unhealthy marriages are you most prone to in your friendships, dating, or marital relationships? What can you do to avoid or minimize this tendency?

References

Gottman, J., & Silver, N. (1994). Why marriages succeed or fail . . . and how you can make yours last. New York: Fireside.



Maturing and Aging

Video

The following video clip is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 18, "Maturing & Aging." At the top of that Web page, click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." Watch the video clip from 8:00 to 15:03 (7:03 min. total).

Show the first portion of the video, from 8:00 to 12:57 (after Pat Moore's reactions to her experience acting as an elderly woman).

Classroom Exercise

Adapted from an exercise submitted by Julie Yonker (Calvin College)

This exercise can be used as a way to build empathy towards the elderly.

Provide each student with a section of plastic wrap, two pieces of Scotch tape, and one cotton ball and then give them these instructions:

Tie the plastic wrap behind your head so that it covers your eyes only (not your nose or mouth), blurring your vision. Tape your index and middle fingers together on your writing hand, imitating stiff joints or arthritis. Split the cotton ball into two pieces, placing them in your ears so that your hearing is muffled.

Once the students are ready, have them pair up with a partner and try having a conversation for a few minutes about what they did the night before, taking notes on a piece of paper about what the other person is saying. After the time is up, the students may take off their tape and plastic wrap and remove the cotton balls.

Discussion

1. What was this experience like for you?
2. What feelings were elicited?
3. What part of the exercise did you find to be the most frustrating?

Video

Show the rest of the video segment, from 12:57 to 15:03.

Discussion

1. What myths about old age were challenged by the video?
2. What specific actions (or lack of actions) show the value society places on the elderly population? How does this compare to the value that God places on them? Consider the following Bible verse from Leviticus 19:32: "Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord."
3. What are some things that you can do both now and in the future to have a Christlike attitude toward the elderly?

Interview with an Older Adult

Adapted from an exercise submitted by Julie Yonker (Calvin College)

Student Assignment

Erik Erikson developed eight stages of psychosocial development throughout the lifespan, identifying at each stage a crisis to be addressed. The last two stages are “generativity vs. stagnation” and “integrity vs. despair.” For more information about these stages, refer to the textbook and your class notes.

Interview an older retired adult (65+) for about one hour. To help you find out about this person’s life, you may ask questions about family, friends, work, spiritual life, education, hobbies/leisure activities, places of residence, etc. Be sure to include the following questions:

1. What contributions have you made to the world through your work? Through your family?
2. What were your most difficult or formative experiences? How did you get through these?
3. Are you afraid of dying? Why or why not? If so, how do you cope with these fears?
4. What words of advice do you have to offer me?

Write a two-page, typed paper in which you

- provide a summary of the interview;
- examine and discuss the interviewee’s responses to these questions based on the last two stages of Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development;
- provide evidence for the crises (psychosocial tasks) which this older adult has successfully managed; and
- show whether (and, if so, how) the interviewee’s responses showed a spiritual or faith-based perspective.



Dementia and Faith

Lecture

Myers and Jeeves (2003) provide an example from Glenn Weaver's research about the faith journey of a woman with Alzheimer's disease:

After a life of regular attendance at church services, where she was well known as a gentle Christian with a deep concern for her fellow Christians, she began to develop telltale symptoms of increasing forgetfulness. . . . She found that she could no longer remember the names of those she wanted to pray for. . . . She was also deeply troubled about her relationship with God. . . . Eventually she lost all interest in her daily devotions and prayers. Weaver's point is simple: with neural changes there are psychological consequences, and these in turn affect spiritual awareness (p. 179).

Discussion

1. How did Alzheimer's disease affect this woman's faith?
2. How would you respond to the statement that this woman has "lost her faith"?
3. How do you think God will respond to this woman's faith journey?
4. What would be a good way for you to respond to this woman?

Reference

Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). Is Christianity beneficial or hazardous to your mental health? *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed., pp. 175–180). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.



Death and Grief

Student Assignment

Watch the Nooma video – Matthew (012). In this video, Rob Bell talks about the grief he experienced following the death of his friend Matthew in a car accident at the age of 27.

Go to <http://store.flannel.org/012.html> to purchase the DVD or to buy a “View Now” version. You may be able to find the video at your local library, as well.

Write a two-page, typed paper addressing the following questions:

1. Consider the following Bible passage:

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” (John 11:32–36)

What implications does the fact that “Jesus wept” have for how Christians are to grieve?

2. What do you think it means to properly grieve? (Taken from the booklet accompanying the video.)
3. Rob Bell talks about the Jewish custom of “sitting Shiva.” How might this custom help you to know how to grieve with someone who has experienced the death of a loved one?
4. Think about this passage from the Old Testament:

Though you have made me see troubles,
many and bitter,
you will restore my life again;
from the depths of the earth
you will again bring me up. (Psalm 71:20)

How do you think you might both fully experience the death of a loved one and maintain hope for restoration?



Death Rituals

Classroom Exercise

There are a range of reactions to death and grief across various religious and ethnic subcultures in the United States and cross-culturally. Some cultures grieve with loud shouts and cries, and some with special ceremonies.

List the different kinds of grieving rituals and responses to mourning found in these biblical stories:

Genesis 50:1–3

Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

Genesis 50:10–11

When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father. When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning." That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim.

Deuteronomy 34:8

The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.

2 Samuel 1:11–12

Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

Jeremiah 41:4–5

The day after Gedaliah's assassination, before anyone knew about it, eighty men who had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes and cut themselves came from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, bringing grain offerings and incense with them to the house of the LORD.

Daniel 10:2–3

At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

Luke 8:51–52

When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

1 Chronicles 7:21a–22

Ezer and Elead were killed by the native-born men of Gath, when they went down to seize their livestock. Their father Ephraim mourned for them many days, and his relatives came to comfort him.

DEVELOPMENT

Case Study

A 42-year-old mother of two children, 6 and 14 years old, died of breast cancer. She also leaves behind her husband and extended family. The family has faith in God and is assured that this woman was a believer in Jesus. Yet they remain grief stricken at their loss.

Student Assignment 1 (in class)

Write a sympathy note to the family that includes both religious and cultural messages you want to convey about grief and mourning.

Student Assignment 2 (in class)

The family has asked you to design the funeral. They are open to any sorts of customs, rituals, or ceremonies from any culture. How would you design the woman's funeral? Consider including

- songs,
- speeches at the funeral,
- grieving rituals at the funeral/cemetery,
- guidelines for husband at the funeral, and
- guidelines for children at the funeral.

Student Assignment 3 (take-home)

Investigate mourning rituals in other cultures around the world. How would your sympathy note or funeral change if it were conducted in

- an African country of your choice?
- an Asian country of your choice?
- a European country of your choice?
- a Central American or South American country of your choice?



Bible Readings

Psalm 139:13–16

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

This poetry illustrates the beauty and wonder of life at the beginning stages of human development.

Isaiah 46:3–4

"Listen to me, house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since your birth,
and have carried since you were born.

Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

God reminds us that he is always present and active in our lives from the time of our birth until we are old.

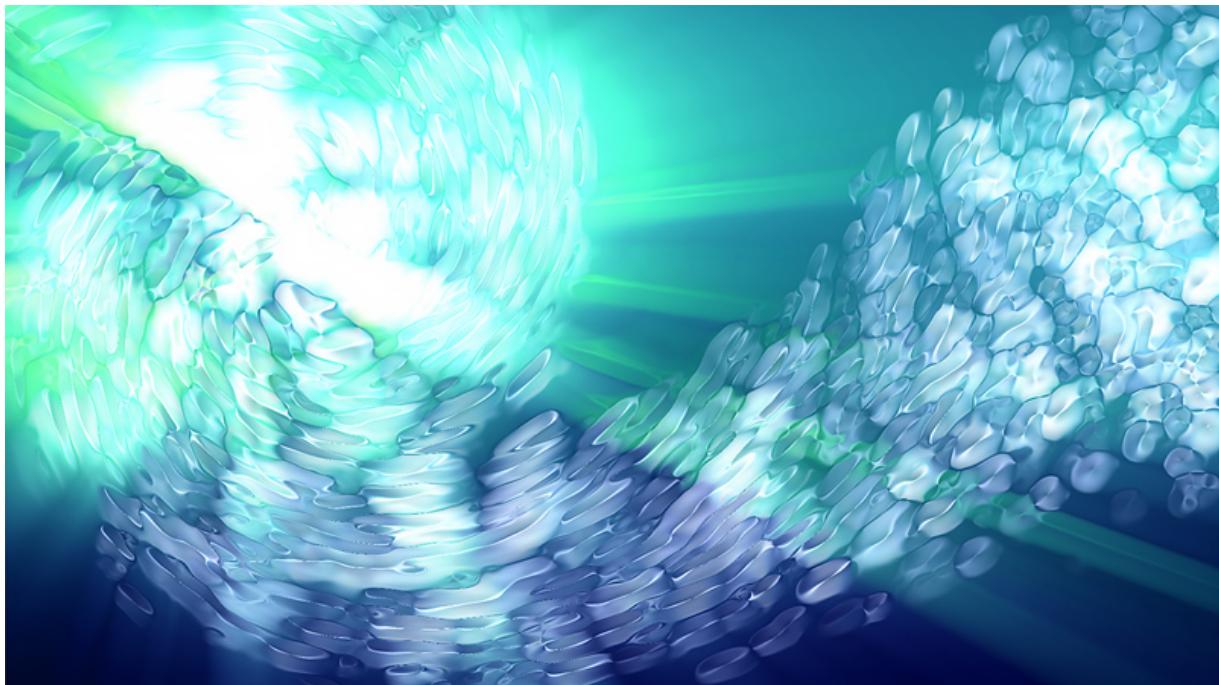
1 Timothy 4:12

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

Age does not determine our importance or our responsibility in the kingdom of God.



Psychopathology



Andrea Yates Trial

Student Assignment

Have students read the article “*Yates Trial Highlights Power of an Expert Witness*” before class:
http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-06-20-expert-witnesses_x.htm

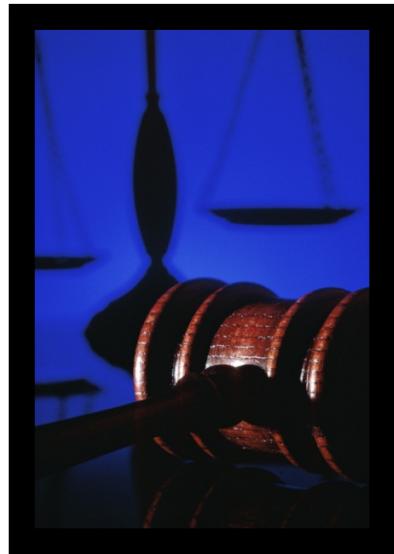
Lecture

Both Andrea Yates and Deanna Laney killed their children, were brought to trial in Texas, and pled not guilty by reason of insanity. According to Texas state law, a person can be judged insane only if he or she did not know right from wrong at the time of the crime.

Park Dietz, a psychiatrist who served as an expert witness, found both Yates and Laney to be “mentally ill, psychotic and delusional” at the time they committed their crimes. However, he argued that Yates was legally sane at the time she committed the crime because she was listening to the voice of the devil. Laney believed that she was acting under God’s direction, and so Dietz determined that she was legally insane.

Discussion

1. How responsible were Yates and Laney for their crimes?
2. How did Dietz use religion to defend his conclusions that Yates was sane and Laney was insane at the time of the crime?
3. Do you believe that Dietz used religion appropriately to come to these conclusions?
4. Do you agree with Dietz’ s conclusion that Yates was legally sane and Laney was legally insane? Why or why not?



Neuroscience and Psychopathy

Discussion or Paper Assignment

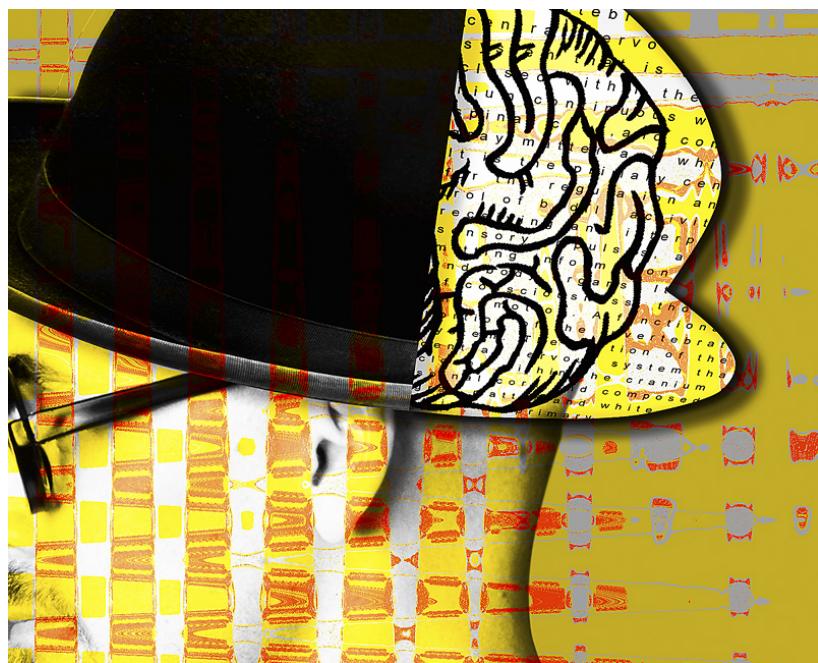
In 2007 the MacArthur Foundation Law and Neuroscience Project was formed to study the legal responsibility of people with brain damage for their criminal behavior, specifically people with psychopathy and/or drug addiction. See their website for more information and for links to recent articles on this issue: <http://www.lawandneuroscienceproject.org/>

Gazzaniga recently wrote an article describing the Law and Neuroscience Project. Have students read the article by Gazzaniga which addresses issues of psychopathy and criminal responsibility called: "The Law and Neuroscience," *Neuron*, 2008, 60, p. 412-415.

[http://www.cell.com/neuron/fulltext/S0896-6273\(08\)00895-7](http://www.cell.com/neuron/fulltext/S0896-6273(08)00895-7)

Research a specific case study about a criminal who exhibits psychopathic behavior (Ted Bundy, Kenneth Bianchi aka The Hillside Strangler, Matthew Poncelet—*Dead Man Walking*). Answer the following questions based on the article from *Neuron* and your case study.

1. What are the implications of neuroscience for our understanding of free will versus determinism in a person who conducts criminal behavior?
2. If you discovered that the criminal you read about had significant brain damage, how would your opinion change? To what degree would you consider the criminal to be morally responsible for the crimes?
3. Given the information in the article, what are your recommendations on how to try, convict, and rehabilitate this criminal?



The Stigma of Mental Illness

Video

The following video clip is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition website at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>

Click on video clip number 21 - "Psychopathology." At the top of that webpage click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." Show students the video clip of David Taggart, a man with schizophrenia (minutes 21:00-22:29).

Discussion

1. What is your gut-level response to David Taggart?
2. Would you feel comfortable around him? Why or why not?
3. If you met him on the subway, what would you do or say?

Lecture

The experience of responding to this video clip may give you an idea of how easy it is to stigmatize those with a mental illness. Because of the man's bizarre behavior, we might quickly perceive him as being strange and inferior. As a result, we might respond to him in hurtful ways. Literature from MayoClinic.com identifies four components of stigma:

1. Labeling someone with a condition
2. Stereotyping people who have that condition
3. Creating a division – a superior "us" group and a devalued "them" group, resulting in loss of status in the community
4. Discriminating against someone on the basis of their label

Discussion

1. Using the four components of stigma, describe how stigma could develop toward the man in the video.
2. How could you avoid stigmatizing someone like David Taggart? For example, how might you respond to him as a beloved child of God? How might you offer him self-respect and dignity?
3. What, as Christians, could we do to reduce the stigma of mental illness?
4. Some people automatically connect mental health disorders with danger and violence, which is often inflamed by media accounts of crime in which someone is referred to as "mentally ill." How should Christians react to this?

Lecture

Dingfelder (2009) in a summary article written for the APA Monitor, notes that earlier anti-stigma campaigns focused on the message that mental illness is a disease just like any other. However, it was found that people could understand this message but still be afraid of people who are mentally ill. In reality, the majority of people who have a mental illness are not violent. Dingfelder reports that a recently published study in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* (Vol. 66,

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No. 2) found that “mental illness alone does not increase the chances that a person will become violent” (p. 57). Recent anti-stigma campaigns have focused on eradicating negative images of those who are mentally ill as well as telling positive stories about their lives and achievements. It is believed that focusing on the competence of those who are mentally ill will make it less likely that they will be feared and discriminated against.

Optional Classroom Exercise

Have students create their own anti-stigma campaign about mental illness that uses the above data. Further encourage them to find a venue to present this campaign on campus.

References

- Dingfelder, S. F. (2009). Stigma: Alive and well. *Monitor on Psychology*, 40, pp. 56–60.
Mayo Clinic Staff (2009, May 29). Mental health: Overcoming the stigma of mental illness.
Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mental-health/MH00076>



Sin and Mental Illness

Discussion

1. How are sin and mental illness related?

Lecture:

Psychologists, even Christian ones, tend to shy away from the language of sin to explain mental illness. In part, this is because psychologists tend to rely on empirical evidence to understand mental illness and may minimize the value of overtly spiritual explanations. Furthermore, the concept of sin has been misused in the past to unnecessarily blame people for causing their own mental disorders. However, Dueck (2002) thinks that our avoidance of the language of sin leaves us with an incomplete explanation of mental illness. He recommends “that we learn both languages [of sin and of psychopathology], know each language’s limitations, expand the meanings of our vocabularies, and explore the gifts of each” (p. 21).

McMinn and Campbell (2007) offer a way to use both the language of sin and of psychopathology by using Augustine’s perspective of sin as both a *state* and an *act*. Sin as a state is apparent by the brokenness of the world. Sin as an act is apparent by the sinful choices that individuals and/or other people make.

Discussion

1. How might living in a broken world (i.e., societal, cultural, and biological failings) affect the development of mental illnesses?
2. Provide examples of how sinful personal choices and sinful actions of others may influence the onset of a mental illness.

Lecture

Plantinga (2006) clarifies that sin and disease are not the same thing. “True, sinful acts sometimes cause disease, as when promiscuous sex causes AIDS. But having AIDS isn’t by itself sinful, as we know from the millions of women and babies who contract it only because of a husband and father’s promiscuity” (p. 3). We can extend his discussion to include the diseases of mental illness. Sinful acts are sometimes involved in the onset of a mental illness, but not always and not necessarily. Plantinga concludes that, “We thus need saving grace for our sin and healing mercy for our diseases” (p. 3). Notice that both are compassionate responses.

Discussion

1. How does integrating the languages of sin and of psychopathology lead to a more thorough understanding of mental illness?
2. Respond to Plantinga’s quote: “We thus need saving grace for our sin and healing mercy for our diseases” (p. 3). Using the languages of sin and psychopathology, how might a Christian respond to those with mental illnesses?

References

- Dueck, A. (2002). Speaking the languages of sin and pathology. *Christian Counseling Today*, 10, 20-23.
- McMinn, M. R., & Campbell, C. D. (2007). *Integrative psychotherapy: Toward a comprehensive Christian approach*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Plantinga, N. (2006). Reflections on sin. *Forum*, 13, pp. 3-4. Full length article available at <http://www.calvinseminary.edu/pubs/forum/06fall.pdf>

Optional Activity

Respond to these scenarios using the languages of sin and psychopathology.

1. A minister is approached by a young church member following a worship service. The young man confides in the minister that he has recently entered a dark period of depression in his life and does not know how to get help. The minister agrees to meet with the young man during the following week, and after a couple of meetings, the minister says, "You know, I'm getting the impression that you haven't been working on your relationship with God lately. You say you haven't prayed in months, your dusty Bible is sitting on the shelf, and you've abandoned your Christian friends. Jesus can heal your sadness if you will only leave your sin behind and run to him."
2. A teenage girl begins hanging around with the rebellious crowd in her high school. At a wild weekend party, she decides to try alcohol for the first time, even though she is underage. She likes it, finishes the drink, and decides to have another. She has four drinks at the next party and increases to six at the next. After a matter of months, the girl is having several drinks and passing out at every party. Her Christian parents notice her change in behavior and become worried, especially since the girl's grandfather was an alcoholic. When the girl's mother confronts her about the excessive drinking, the girl says, "It wasn't my choice to become addicted to alcohol. You know as well as I do that Grandpa was an alcoholic, which means it's in my genes! I can't help it."

The Church's Response to Mental Illness

Lecture and Discussion

Have your students recall some recent prayer requests mentioned in their churches.

It is not uncommon to hear prayers offered in church for the healing of physical illnesses, but we rarely hear prayers for those struggling with mental illnesses. For example, in church we often pray for healthy pregnancies and babies, but we don't often pray for women experiencing postpartum depression. Even though churches do not tend to talk openly about mental illness, according to Myers & Jeeves (2003), "religious experience has the potential to be therapeutic" (p. 180). At its best, the church is an agent of acceptance, love, and healing.

1. Think about the church you belong to. Does your church address mental illness in its sermons, ministries, or counseling?
2. What could be done to increase the church's understanding of mental illness?
3. How might the church support members who have a mental illness?
4. Imagine that you have a mental illness. How would you want your church to respond to you?
5. Do you know anyone in your church who is suffering from a mental illness? How are they welcomed?

Yarhouse, Butman, and McRay (2005) offer the following suggestions for how the church might respond well to mental illness:

1. Be aware of the image of God that exists in all human beings, including those with a mental illness; treat all church members with respect.
2. Develop a sense of empathy for those with a mental illness.
3. Avoid having a patronizing attitude toward those with a mental illness by recognizing your own limitations and developing a sense of humility.
4. Assist those with a mental illness to find a sense of meaning and purpose.
5. Make our churches better spaces for people who suffer from mental illnesses through such programs as Stephen Ministries.
6. Advocate on behalf of those who receive inadequate treatment for their mental illness, as an issue of social justice.

References

- Myers, D.G. & Jeeves, M.A. (2003). Is Christianity beneficial or hazardous to your mental health (pp. 175–180). *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (rev.). San Francisco: HarperCollins.
- Yarhouse, M. A., Butman, R. E., & McRay, B. W. (2005). Problems of psychosis (pp. 249–280). *Modern psychopathologies: A comprehensive Christian appraisal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Pastors and Mental Illness

Classroom Exercise

Introduce the following scenario to your students:

A pastor once told me that he has always been confused about how to use both spiritual and psychological methods when providing pastoral counseling. In seminary, he took one or two psychologically-based classes, while the rest of his education taught him how to facilitate healing by spiritual means. Although this pastor can look at mental illness psychologically or Biblically, he was not taught how to integrate the two.

*Have students read the MSNBC article: "Many Christian Pastors Dismiss Mental Illness" at
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27200727/from/ET/>*

Discussion

1. What might be the consequences of pastors re-labeling mental illness as an exclusively spiritual problem?
2. Ideally, how should the church respond when a member asks for help with a mental illness?
3. Should the diagnosis of mental illness be reserved for psychologists and psychiatrists? Why or why not?
4. What place does spirituality have in the diagnosis of mental illness?



Reference

LiveScience Staff (2008, October 15). Many Christian pastors dismiss mental illness. Retrieved from
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27200727/from/ET/>

Social Injustice and Psychopathology

Video

The following video clip is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition website at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>

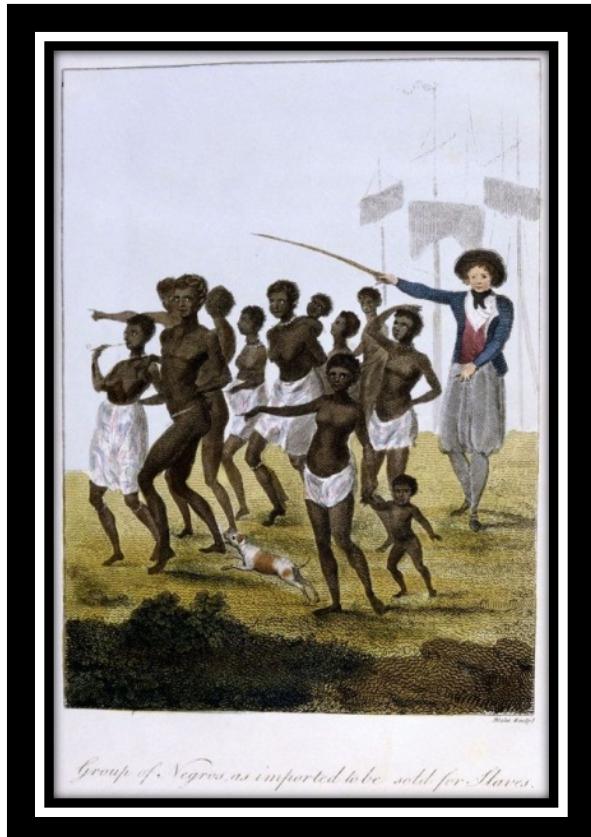
Click on video clip number 21, "Psychopathology." At the top of that webpage click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." Show students the following video clip (minutes 23:00 to 24:36).

This short segment discusses the actions of the American population on other cultures. For example, the slavery of Africans and the displacement of Native Americans began with people being forcibly removed from their homes and often separated from spouses and children. Sometimes people were exterminated and sometimes they were forcibly acculturated.

Discussion

As the video states, in certain Native communities unemployment rates and poverty are high, and hope is low. There is also rampant depression, anxiety, and substance use.

1. What would a special category of disorders that stem from cultural factors look like? Should there be such a category?
2. Discuss the influence of sin in situations where people groups are displaced or mistreated.



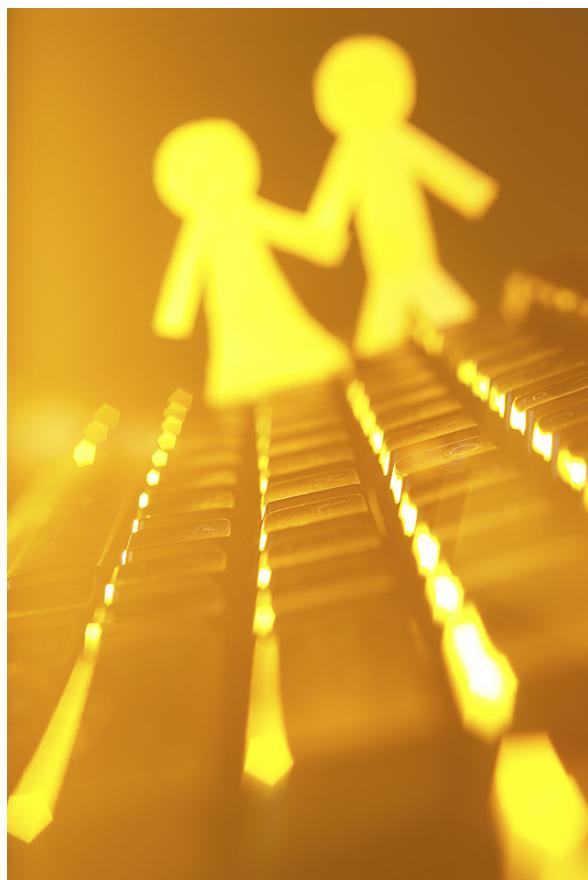
Mental Illness and Online Support

Student Assignment

Heart Support, www.heartsupport.com, is a website for young adults/college students who suffer from psychological disorders and other mental health issues. It is both culturally relevant and well constructed. Have students choose one video clip from the Get Help section of the website and answer these questions:

1. What might be an appropriate response from a Christian to this person and their story?
2. How much personal responsibility and choice is involved in the onset and maintenance of this problem?
3. Based on the video clip you watched, what began the healing process?
4. Each video clip includes the following quote: "You are on a journey toward wholeness and we believe that sharing your story with others is not only good for you but good for others to hear as well." In what ways was it "good" for you to hear this story?

Alternate Activity: You might also choose to show one of the clips in class and use these questions for class discussion.



A Poem about Anxiety

Classroom Exercise

As an introduction, read the following Bible verse to your students:

Philippians 4:6, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Have students read the poem “Whatif” by Shel Silverstein at

<http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.action?articleId=281474976790627> and respond to the following questions:

1. Write down several of the “what-ifs” that “crawl inside” your ear.
2. Are any of these “what-ifs” legitimate, helpful, or healthy? Are some of the “what-ifs” unhelpful?
3. How do these “what-ifs” affect your spiritual health? If you were to practice Philippians 4:6 how would your anxieties change? Would they disappear or would they remain but be different?
4. What can you do differently to manage the unhelpful “what-ifs”?

Reference

Silverstein, S. (1981). *Whatif. A light in the attic.* New York: Harper & Row.



Understanding Anxiety

Classroom Exercise

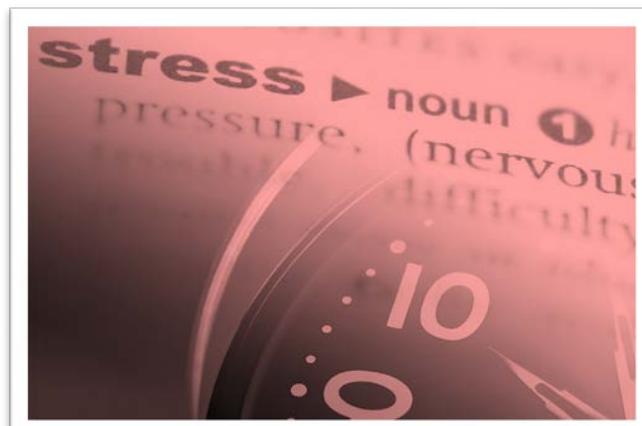
For this assignment students may either prepare ahead of time or they may complete the assignment in class. Divide the class into three groups. Each group must answer the following question:

How would you understand the etiology and treatment of anxiety using the following material(s)?

- Group #1: Bible only (*Give this group hints such as: use the concordance in the back of the Bible or an online concordance such as www.zondervanbiblesearch.com for words that are synonymous with anxiety, or look for stories or parables that teach a lesson about anxiety.*)
- Group #2: Psychology textbook only
- Group #3: Bible and psychology textbook

Discussion

1. How did your group understand anxiety using these materials?
2. What differences did you notice between the three groups?
3. What was this process like for you? What were the advantages or disadvantages of using the materials you were assigned?



American Culture: Anxiety and Depression

Student Assignment

The following two articles discuss the rising rates of depression and anxiety in the United States and attempt to find answers as to why this is occurring. Have students read one of the following articles before class and then answer the following questions.

"Depressingly Easy" written by Kelly Lambert discusses the impact of modern conveniences on the rising rates of depression in the U.S. The author suggests that hard physical work that is rewarding to the brain's pleasure centers is no longer widely present in modern society.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=depressingly-easy> (article summary)

Colin Beavin (AKA no-impact man) writes a blog with a vast following. Through looking at both research and anecdotes, he questions whether the number of hours Americans work (as compared to Europeans for example) is adding to the stress and anxiety of today's busy culture.

<http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2009/01/treating-anxiety-and-depression-could-save-the-planet.html>

Discussion

1. What do the Bible and your faith instruct you about rest and work?
2. What ideas do you have for making space in your life for both work (school work and/or job) and rest?
3. Identify some practical ways to reduce stress in your own life (use the optional student assignment below).



Student Assignment

Look at the following link and choose one stress management strategy to use for one week.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management/SR00038>

1. How did this stress management technique help you emotionally?
2. How did this technique help you spiritually (e.g. more time for prayer, less anxious/beings worried, more energy/more focus on God)?
3. How are stress management and spiritual health related?

A Poem about Depression

Classroom Exercise

Read the following poem: "Having it Out with Melancholy" by Jane Kenyon

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/having-it-out-with-melancholy/>

Read these two quotes from the poem and have your students respond to the following questions:

You taught me to exist without gratitude.
You ruined my manners toward God:
"We're here simply to wait for death;
the pleasures of earth are overrated" (p. 189).

1. In a paragraph or two, rewrite this stanza using your own words.

3 SUGGESTION FROM A FRIEND

You wouldn't be so depressed
if you really believed in God (p. 190).

2. Respond to this suggestion.
3. How might faith influence the onset and maintenance of depression?

Based on reading the entire poem, ask your students the following questions:

1. Identify the symptoms of depression that you find in the poem.
2. What does this poem teach you about depression?
3. How does the poem affect you emotionally?
4. How can a relationship with God be affected by the highs and the lows of depression?

Reference

Kenyon, J. (1996). Having it out with melancholy (pp 189-193). *Otherwise: New and selected poems*. St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press.

Faith and Depression: Case Example

Lecture



Krista Tippett is the host and producer of a radio show called "Speaking of Faith." This is a quote from her book of the same title.

I had all the classic physical symptoms of this epidemic malady of body, mind, and spirit. I stopped being able to sleep. I lost weight at an enormous rate. I was dulled and eventually paralyzed by fear and a sense of hopelessness. Ignatius Loyola, the sixteenth-century founder of the Jesuit order, spoke of "desolations" – a better word than depression, in my mind – that "lead one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love." For me, depression was not so much about being without faith or hope or love; it was, rather, not being able to remember knowing those things, not being able to imagine ever experiencing them again (pp. 215-216).

Discussion

1. What are the implications of Krista Tippett's depression for her faith?
2. What is God's relationship to Krista Tippett? How do you think God will respond to her?
3. Why do you think God allows some people to have depression?

Reference

Tippett, K. (2007). *Speaking of faith*. New York: Viking.

Schizophrenia: Developing Empathy

Video

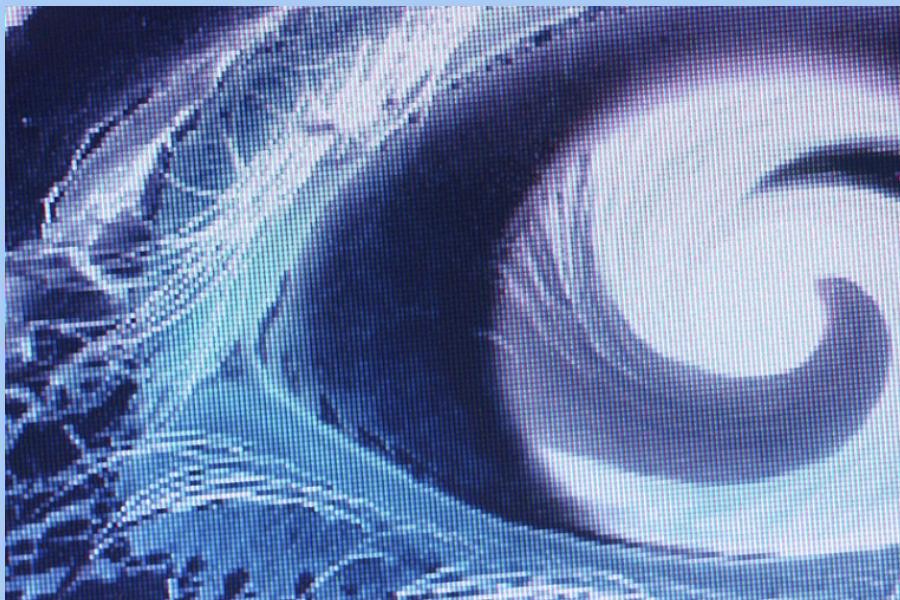
NPR aired a story called “The Sights and Sounds of Schizophrenia” describing a training program created by a pharmaceutical company that specializes in drug treatments for schizophrenia.

The following is a video segment made by Janssen Pharmaceutica that simulates an experience of hallucinations. Watch this video and try to imagine what it might be like to suffer from hallucinations.

<http://onemansblog.com/2007/06/13/what-its-really-like-to-be-schizophrenic/>

Discussion

1. What do you imagine it would be like to have episodes of hallucinations similar to what you saw on the video?
2. How might this interfere with your day-to-day functioning?
3. If you were the pharmacist, how would you respond to this man? What would you say or do?



PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

Schizophrenia: Past and Current Understandings

Video

The following video clip is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 21, "Psychopathology." At the top of that Web page, click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." Show students the video clip on schizophrenia (minutes 13:24-19:48).

Lecture

In the past, the bizarre behaviors that accompanied the delusions and hallucinations of schizophrenia were associated with demon possession. As a result, an individual with schizophrenia was often perceived as having engaged in some sort of immoral behavior or having been receptive to evil forces. Contemporary psychologists assert that schizophrenia is largely the result of biological causes such as a genetic diathesis, brain abnormalities, imbalances between the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin, and prenatal viruses -- causes that seem to be beyond an individual's control.

Because there is such strong scientific evidence for biological causes, Yarhouse, Butman, and McRay (2005) argue that schizophrenia should not be confused with demon possession. Instead, the biological basis of schizophrenia suggests a limited capacity on the part of the sufferer for personal responsibility and choice. Thus, Yarhouse et al. conclude that the disease of schizophrenia may "ultimately be attributed to the effects of sin and the Fall" (p. 275). Because we live in a fallen world, we are confronted with a variety of diseases, such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and schizophrenia.

Yarhouse et. al (2005) remind us to hold on to the promise of hope. Current knowledge about medication and therapy has brought about tremendous changes in the lives of those with schizophrenia. They encourage us to view these advancements in the treatment of schizophrenia as "gifts from God, one more fruit of the hard work that has been done in the area of general revelation" (p. 276).

Reference

Yarhouse, M. A., Butman, R. E., & McRay, B. W. (2005). Problems of psychosis (pp. 249-280). *Modern psychopathologies: A comprehensive Christian appraisal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Bible Readings

Psalm 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.

Isaiah 43: 1b-3a, 5a

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior . . . Do not be afraid, for I am with you."

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

This is a selection of passages that speaks about how God responds to human suffering.

Therapy



Christian Critique of Models of Psychotherapy

Jones and Butman (1991) provide a critique of the common models of therapy typically discussed in an introductory psychology class. Show the video clip from Discovering Psychology and generate discussion based on the following questions.

Video

The following video clip is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 22, "Psychotherapy." At the top of that Web page, click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." To make the video show as full screen, left-click the video to select it. Then, right-click and select "Zoom > Full Screen." Cue up to the following segments of video.

Lecture and Discussion

Psychodynamic Therapy (9:38 online)

1. How would a Christian benefit from this type of therapy? What are the disadvantages for a Christian receiving this type of therapy?
2. How do you think this kind of therapist would respond to a client's Christian faith?

A Christian critique of psychodynamic therapies

- The relational model of contemporary psychodynamic psychotherapy parallels the importance placed on relationships and community in the Scriptures. However, psychodynamic therapy can be criticized for implying that change can come about only through a curative relationship with the therapist. This misses an understanding of health that includes a relationship with God, the community of believers, and trust in the Bible.
- The client might gain helpful insights into their relationships with other people and their relationship to God through their interactions with the therapist. For example, a client who sees the therapist as someone to be feared or a punishing parental figure might also view their relationship to God in a similar way.
- Freud thought that people were a function of their drives and that childhood experiences dictated adult behavior. Instead, a faith-based view includes free will and the idea that Christians can be open to the Holy Spirit to change ingrained patterns.
- In psychodynamic work, emphasis is placed on the inherent selfishness of humans. This parallels the concept of fallenness in Christian theology. The thrust of dynamic therapy is to notice these shortcomings and thereby lessen their impact. However, these are identified not as sin but instead as illness. Christianity labels these behaviors as sinful, helping the Christian to take ownership of wrongdoing, and acknowledges forgiveness and victory over sin.

Humanistic Therapy (21:33 online)

1. How would a Christian benefit from this type of therapy? What are the disadvantages for a Christian receiving this type of therapy?
2. How do you think this kind of therapist would respond to a client's Christian faith?

A Christian critique of humanistic therapy

- Humanistic therapy takes an approach of sincere respect for the person. This fits well with a Christian view of love and respect for human beings.

THERAPY

- Humanistic therapy asserts that humans go through a process of trying to better ourselves by following individual values; there is no importance placed on systems of religion or family values to guide us in this process. In fact, they are often seen as impediments in this process.
- Freedom is a central concept in humanistic therapy. Humans are free to make choices and to strive for betterment; however, Christians typically balance a belief of free will with limitations to our freedom such as sin and evil.
- The concept of unconditional positive regard is appealing and is similar to the Christian understanding of grace and love. However, while Christian love warmly embraces sinners, there continues to be an emphasis on accountability and discipline.

***Behavioral Therapy* (15:00 online) *and Cognitive Therapy* (18:00 online)**

1. How would a Christian benefit from this type of therapy? What are the disadvantages for a Christian receiving this type of therapy?
2. How do you think this kind of therapist would respond to a client's Christian faith?

A Christian critique of cognitive-behavioral therapies

- As Christians we have to be aware and cautious of the emphasis on determinism found within strict behaviorism. However, cognitive-behavioral therapies typically view a person as capable of change, enlist the client in changing thoughts and behaviors, and thereby recognize the client's capacity for choice and freedom.
- The interventions used in cognitive behavioral therapy are empirically studied for effectiveness. This kind of rigorous study seems to fit with a Christian ethic of stewardship for finding practices that work effectively and with empirical accountability.
- Cognitive-behavioral therapists place a dual emphasis on actions and thoughts that follow the themes of the New Testament that call for examining actions and thoughts as a way to grow in faith.

Reference

Jones, S. L., & Butman, R. E. (1991). *Modern psychotherapies: A comprehensive Christian appraisal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Psychotherapy and Christian Faith

Lecture

The following definitions are taken from Benner and Palmer (1986).

Therapy by a Christian does not differ in theory or techniques from that provided by a non-Christian except that these therapeutic techniques are provided by a Christian. The authors argue that this view does not rely enough on Scripture and does not pay attention to what the Bible tells us about personhood.

Biblical therapists believe that the Bible contains all that is needed for therapy including theories on personality, psychopathology, and treatment. Benner and Palmer argue that those who make this claim often don't agree on these theories and that they expect too much of Scripture. The authors describe the Bible's purpose more as a description of people's relationship with the Creator and less of a textbook on the inner dynamics of people. The authors also distinguish between special and general revelation, believing that God's truth can be found outside of the Bible.

Biblically informed psychotherapy recognizes biblical revelation and applies its truths directly to therapy. People are seen as being made in God's image, inherently social, and spiritual in that humans seek meaning and purpose. Humans are bound by sin but also free and responsible to make choices with the help of the Spirit. Psychotherapy can be helpful as one piece of a person's journey toward wholeness and redemption. Benner and Palmer talk about both immediate and ultimate goals. Immediate goals consist of attending to current problems and complaints, whereas ultimate goals consist of helping the client toward healthy relationships and interdependence with others as well as supporting the quest for a relationship with God.

Student Assignment

Read the Benner and Palmer (1986) article, which reviews three models of integrating psychotherapy and Christian faith. Then answer the following questions:

1. How would a therapist from each approach treat someone with depression?
2. If you were to attend therapy, what approach would you like your therapist to take? Why?

Reference

Benner, D. G., & Palmer, S. L. (1986). Psychotherapy and Christian faith. In S. L. Jones (Ed.), *Psychology and the Christian faith* (pp. 170–177). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Attitudes of Christians Seeking Psychological Help

Lecture

In an article entitled "With God as My Shrink," Paul (2005) argues that many religious people desire counseling that takes into consideration a faith perspective. He states (p. 64):

Americans are flocking to counseling that incorporates a spiritual or religious element. Over the past 10 years faith-based therapies—from pastoral counseling to ecumenical Christian counseling to fundamentalist Bible-based treatment—have surged in popularity. The American Association of Christian Counselors has grown from 15,000 members in 1999 to 50,000 today. Specialized services are also thriving: It is becoming increasingly easy to find Christian-based eating disorder treatment centers or Christian life coaches.

Discussion

1. Would you prefer to work with a counselor from a religious background similar to yours? Why or why not?
2. Some Christians say that prayer and asking for forgiveness for sins should be enough to cure any problem. Do you agree? When might it be appropriate to seek professional help?
3. When might it be appropriate for a Christian seek help from a pastor or chaplain, and when might a Christian seek help from a therapist?

Reference

Paul, P. (2005). With God as my shrink. *Psychology Today* 38(3), 63–68. Available online at <http://psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20050504-000001.html>

Ethics in Christian Counseling

Lecture

An ongoing discussion within the field of counseling is how to ethically handle religiosity. In their diversity statement, the APA affirmed religion as an essential factor to consider when evaluating and treating a person:

Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, . . . religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices (APA, 2002, p. 4).

This statement is pivotal because it gives religion a legitimate place in therapy. An ethical therapist is supposed to be sensitive to a client's religiosity, whether or not the therapist is religious. In a separate article, Tan (1994) cautions religious therapists to be wary of imposing their religious beliefs on clients, focusing too much on religious goals, misusing spiritual resources, and arguing over doctrinal issues.

Discussion

1. Can a Christian benefit from therapy delivered by a non-Christian counselor? Can a Christian benefit from therapy delivered by a religious/spiritual counselor from another religion? Why or why not?
2. How might a Christian counselor offer treatment to a non-Christian person? How might a Christian counselor offer treatment to someone from a different religion?
3. For which issues might a Christian want to seek out a Christian therapist? Why?

References

- American Psychological Association. (2002). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.pdf>
- Tan, S. (1994). Ethical considerations in religious psychotherapy: Potential pitfalls and unique resources. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 22(4), 389–394.

Personal Views of Human Nature

Exercise submitted by Heather Looy (King's University College)

Student Assignment

The way you relate to people and the way you assess or treat people are based on your ideas about human nature. Answer each question and give rationale for your answer. (Specify if you believe the truth lies somewhere in between.) Also indicate whether your beliefs are based on your faith, personal experience or observation, reading, or schooling.

1. Are we products of nature or of nurture?
2. Is human behavior determined, or are we free to make willful choices?
3. Are people basically good or bad?
4. Are we inherently social or inherently independent/individual?
5. Do we possess a physical body and non-physical soul/spirit, or are we fully physical and embodied people?



Views of Human Nature

Discussion

Our views and beliefs about people inform the ways in which we help them. What are your beliefs about human nature?

1. Do the origins of human behavior come from nature (genetics) or nurture (environmental influences)?
2. Do you believe that human behavior is determined by a person's genetics/environment, or are people free to make choices about behavior despite their background?
3. Do you believe people are basically good or basically evil?
4. How do your answers to these questions influence how you would help a person?

Lecture

Use the following answers during your discussion of human nature. The following thoughts are taken in part from Benner and Palmer (1986).

Do the origins of human behavior come from nature (genetics) or nurture (environmental influences)?

This opening question involves one of the great debates in psychology and can be applied to helping people in therapy. Although classic theorists such as Freud, Rogers, and Skinner developed comprehensive theories on personality development, they did not have access to more recent research on the brain and genetics that shows links between genes and behavior and between brain damage and behavior.

Do you believe that human behavior is determined by a person's genetics/environment, or are people free to make choices about behavior despite their background?

This question illuminates different theories of personality. Freud and Skinner fit in the determinist camp. Rogers fits more in the free-will camp, as long as a person is accepted and loved. People's genetics and environment are important determiners of behavior; however, Christians also believe in the intervention of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. Additionally, the concept of "limited freedom" sheds light on this debate. Christians are free to make choices and therefore are also responsible for choices; however, Christians can also be restrained by brain damage or diseases that affect thinking, rationality, and choice.

Do you believe people are basically good or basically evil?

Freud stresses the impact of our urges and drives on our behaviors. Although he does not label these as sin, his concepts fit with a Christian view of sin or evil. Skinner and Ellis also talk about a tendency toward irrationality and a tendency to be bound by faulty learning and habit, which can be linked to our innate sinfulness. This is in contrast to the humanists, who speak of people's goodness and movement toward betterment. Although humanism does not acknowledge a proclivity toward sinfulness, it does mesh well with a Christian understanding of striving for meaning and betterment with the help of the Holy Spirit. Though incomplete, humanism can also remind us that despite our fallen state, people remain valuable in God's sight.

Reference

Benner, D. G., & Palmer, S. L. (1986). Psychotherapy and Christian faith. In S. L. Jones (Ed.), *Psychology and the Christian faith* (pp. 167–170). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Values of the Therapist

Lecture

Historically, one of the goals of psychotherapy was to provide value-free therapy. However, more recently, therapists have questioned the ability to provide a truly value-free therapy. In fact, since values are inevitably part of people's lives, the therapeutic community has encouraged therapists to be more aware of their personal values.

Allen Bergin (1980) states:

- Values are a part of therapy.
- The values of the mental health profession seem to clash with many religious values.
- Psychologists tend to have values that are different from many of their clients.
- It would be more ethical for therapists to openly state their values so that clients are aware of these values.
- The effects of values should be further tested and evaluated.

In summary, values are an integral part of therapy. Most therapists now agree that instead of trying to provide a value-free therapy, they should be aware of their own and their clients' values and openly discuss them. Then clients are free to make choices that are consistent with their own values.

Video

The following video clip, *Albert Ellis providing therapy to a young woman*, is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 22, "Psychotherapy." At the top of that Web page, click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." To make the video show as full screen, left-click the video to select it. Then, right-click and select "Zoom > Full Screen." Using the scroll control at the bottom, cue the video to 19:42. The clip runs through 21:28.

Discussion

1. What values were expressed by the therapist and the client, and how were they affirmed (i.e., voice, body language, etc.)?
2. Were the values of the therapist and the client congruent?
3. How might the values of a therapist influence a client?
4. Should the values of a client influence a therapist? If so, how and why?

Reference

Bergin, A. E. (1980). Psychotherapy and religious values. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 48(1), 95–105.

American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC)

Lecture

The American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) is a network of professionals, religious leaders, lay counselors, and students from every state (and 50 countries), who are committed to using biblical and psychological truths to help people. The AACC strives to (1) help Christians mature and (2) educate, equip, and assist clinicians, pastors, and lay helpers in their work.

Student Assignment

This activity will introduce you to the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC). Visit the AACC Web site and complete the following questions.

<http://aacc.net/>

1. Summarize the mission statement of the AACC.
2. What is the two-part vision of the AACC?
3. What three “legs” hold up the “seat of helping ministry in the church”?
4. In the top right corner, search any “hot topic” that interests you. From the list of results, choose one article. Provide the reference and briefly summarize.



Can Counseling Be Christian?

Student Assignment

Christian Counseling Today, a publication of the American Association of Christian Counselors, published a collection of three articles espousing different views on the integration of therapy and faith. The collection of articles is entitled “Can Counseling Be Christian? Three Perspectives.”

Read the following articles and answer the questions below.

- Ellis, A. (1997). Can rational counseling be Christian? *Christian Counseling Today*, 5(1), 13, 48–49.
 - Bulkley, E. (1997). Have we sold our birthright? *Christian Counseling Today*, 5(1), 14, 49–51.
 - Johnson, W. B., & Johnson, W. L. (1997). A wedding of faith and practice. *Christian Counseling Today*, 5(1), 15, 52–53.
1. Summarize each of the three approaches to integration.
 2. In your opinion, what are the benefits and limitations of each author’s view?
 3. Identify the approach you prefer and explain your preference.



An Anti-integration View of Therapy

Lecture

“Does God Need a Psychiatrist?” is a chapter written by John MacArthur about psychotherapy and Christianity. MacArthur criticizes evangelical Christians who fully embrace psychotherapy. Being skeptical of “Biblical counseling,” MacArthur argues that the wisdom revealed in the Bible is sufficient to help people with their deepest problems. MacArthur’s opinion is that contemporary therapists allow “humanistic” theory to dilute and at times replace the eternal truths found in Scripture. MacArthur claims that the most obvious problem with this “unlawful marriage” of psychology and Christianity is that followers of Christ rely on themselves and their therapists instead of on their Creator.

Student Assignment

Read the chapter on psychotherapy in your course textbook, along with chapter three of MacArthur’s book, and then answer the questions below.

Discussion

1. What is MacArthur’s view of psychotherapy? How does it differ from the view of psychotherapy presented in your textbook?
2. Should Christians be skeptical of psychotherapy in general? Why or why not?
3. How would you respond to MacArthur’s ideas?

Reference

MacArthur, J. (1991). Does God need a psychiatrist? *Our sufficiency in Christ* (pp. 53–72). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Religiously Tailored Psychotherapy Interventions

Lecture

Many people who seek help are interested in including a Christian or spiritual component as part of their therapy. Wade, Worthington, and Vogel (2007) studied 220 clients and 51 therapists who worked in seven different agencies. Six of these agencies were explicitly Christian in orientation. The other agency was not affiliated with any religion and was used as a reference group. Clients in all settings were open to discussing religion if it came up. In the Christian-oriented agencies almost all were open to discussion (98%), and in the secular counseling center 83% were open to discussing religion.

What is Christian therapy?

Christian therapies appear to share at least two characteristics.

1. It is labeled as explicitly Christian in orientation by the therapist or agency despite the fact that it may use many or only a few techniques that are explicitly tailored to Christians (e.g., reading Scripture, praying).
2. It attempts to pair clients and therapists who share a commitment to Christianity.

What are the unique strategies used by a Christian therapist?

1. Pray with or for a client.
2. Quote/refer to Scripture.
3. Discuss God's forgiveness.
4. Talk about religious faith.
5. Recommend religious or spiritual books, or participation in religious activity.

Pertinent findings:

1. Therapists who used these Christian-oriented interventions were perceived to be effective (and as effective as secular therapists).
2. Clients with strong religious commitments responded particularly well when therapists used interventions that were clearly religious.
3. Clients and their therapists in Christian agencies generally believed that religiously tailored interventions were appropriate in therapy, and were comfortable with their use.
4. Clients with high religious commitment, compared to those with low religious commitment, reported greater closeness with their therapists and greater improvement in their presenting concerns when receiving religious interventions.

Discussion

1. When is it appropriate to use religious/spiritual interventions in therapy?
2. When is it inappropriate to use religious/spiritual interventions in therapy?

Reference

Wade, N. G., Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Vogel, D. L. (2007). Effectiveness of religiously-tailored interventions in Christian therapy. *Psychotherapy Research*, 17(1), 91–105.

Spiritual Expertise of the Therapist

Lecture

Christian therapists frequently interact with non-Christian clients as well as Christian clients. Thus, they must be able to work with people from a variety of beliefs while at the same time being true to their own faith.

In the chapter entitled “Spiritual Themes in Psychotherapy,” Winston Gooden (2006) provides some helpful insights for Christians counselors.

- Clients often enter counseling with questions regarding the meaning of life and the foundations for decision making.
- Religious counselors do not shy away from religious issues and can provide spiritual tools as the client requests them.
- Religious counselors might not necessarily provide explicitly religious therapy, but they can help clients explore their spiritual questions.

Pargament (2002) captures the essence of these points in the following quote: “In response to life’s most critical problems, the sacred has something special to offer, a response to the problem of human insufficiency. In short, religious approaches to coping may offer unique solutions to problems in life that reveal the limits of human powers” (p. 242).

Discussion

Denise is a counselor who works in a public mental health clinic. She is also a Christian and feels that helping the hurting people who come to the clinic is her calling from God. Although she enjoys her work, she struggles at times with knowing how to integrate being a Christian and being a counselor. Consider some of her questions:

1. What boundaries should a Christian keep in mind when dealing with a non-Christian client?
2. How might a Christian counselor work differently with a Christian client than with a non-Christian client?
3. What spiritual interventions might a Christian counselor use when working with a Christian client?
4. How might a Christian counselor decide which spiritual interventions would be helpful?

References

- Gooden, W. E. (2006). Spiritual themes in psychotherapy. In A. Dueck (Ed.), *Integrating psychology and theology: Research and reflections* (pp. 113–133). Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press.
- Pargament, K. I. (2002). Is religion nothing but . . .? Explaining religion versus explaining religion away. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13, 239–244.

You Need Two Eyes

Lecture

In his 2006 commencement address at Calvin College, Nicholas Wolterstorff provided a framework for how Christians should engage their profession. Wolterstorff told a story about an obstetrician who showed nurses how to approach mothers of stillborn babies. The obstetrician said to the nurses, "You must go into the room with two eyes. With one eye you have to check the IV; with the other, you must cry. I tell them one eye is not enough. You need two eyes."

Wolterstorff explained that every Christian needs two eyes in their profession. One eye is the eye of competence, discernment, and knowledge. With this eye Christians use their skills to effectively complete their jobs. The other eye is the eye that weeps; it is the eye of compassion. With this eye Christians recognize the brokenness and pain in the world and yearn for wholeness.

Christian therapists should approach their profession with two eyes. Therapists use their training and education to effectively treat people with mental illnesses. Therapists also engage their hearts to empathize with their patients. Christian therapists need two eyes.

Student Assignment

Read Nicholas Wolterstorff's 2006 commencement address and respond to the following questions.

<http://www.calvin.edu/commencement/2006/wolterstorffaddress2006.pdf>

1. What problems might a therapist encounter if only the eye of competence is used?
2. What are the potential problems if only the eye of compassion is used?
3. How does using both the eye of competence and the eye of compassion allow Christian therapists to be faithful in their profession?
4. Is this a distinctively Christian model? How might a Christian's and non-Christian's use of two eyes differ? How might they be similar?



The Biomedical Approach to Therapy

Video

The following video clip is available on the *Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition* Web site at <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 22, “Psychotherapy.” At the top of that Web page, click on the small “VoD” box behind “View the program.” To make the video show as full screen, left-click the video to select it. Then, right-click and select “Zoom > Full Screen.” Using the scroll control at the bottom, cue the video to the following segments.

Discussion

Biomedical Approach (2:33–9:08)

1. Are medications a gift from God? Explain your reasoning. (Refer to the Psychotropic Medications activity, p. 147, for additional information.)
2. How might we become good stewards of psychotropic medications?
 - a. When are they to be used and for what benefit?
 - b. How might they be misused?
 - c. Do you think that biomedical treatments could help a person with a psychological disorder develop a better relationship with God? Explain.
3. Does the biomedical model focus too much on the biological aspects of a person? Why or why not? What other aspects of the person should be considered in treatment?



Psychotropic Medications

Video

Show film segment 23, "Depression: Mike Wallace's Journey" (3:14 minutes). This clip from *Moving Images: Exploring Psychology through Film* (2006) is available through Worth Publishers. The video is available free of charge to professors who use the Myers textbook, *Psychology*.

www.worthpublishers.com/mediaroom

Lecture

Mike Wallace discusses his recurring depression that is treated with antidepressant medication. After the third depressive episode, his doctor recommends that he stay on medication indefinitely. When asked by the interviewer if he plans to comply with this recommendation, Wallace replies, "I have no intention of tempting fate."

Lewis Smedes, a former professor at Fuller Seminary, writes about his experience of depression in the book *My God and I*. He notes his feelings of helplessness and alienation from God during that time. Smedes describes the alleviation of his depression in this way: "Then God came back. He broke through my terror and said: 'I will never let you fall. I will always hold you up.' . . . I felt as if I had been lifted from a black pit straight up into joy" (p. 133). Smedes adds the following: "I have not been neurotically depressed since that day, though I must, to be honest, tell you that God also comes to me each morning and offers me a 20-milligram capsule of Prozac. . . . I swallow every capsule with gratitude to God" (p. 133).

Discussion

1. What are Mike Wallace's and Lewis Smedes's attitudes toward antidepressant medication? In what ways are their attitudes similar and in what ways do they differ?
2. Some Christians are reluctant to use medication as a treatment for mental illnesses. Why do you think that might be?
3. How would you respond to a Christian who was reluctant to use medication to treat a mental illness?
4. What are your thoughts about when medications should be used and when they should not be used?

Reference

Smedes, L. B. (2003). *My God and I: A spiritual memoir*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

Bible Readings

Romans 12:12–13, 15

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. . . . Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

As Christians, we are called to be compassionate. We empathize with those who hurt and celebrate with them in times of joy. This is the attitude we want to develop as we learn about treatment for those who suffer with mental illnesses.

Romans 8:18–25

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

This passage acknowledges the brokenness of the world but gives hope for a future where things will be made right. Learning about the treatment of those with mental illnesses reminds us that all is not right in our world. Nevertheless, we are also reminded that everything that is now broken will one day be restored.

2 Corinthians 1:3–5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

This passage indicates that we are able to comfort and show compassion to those who hurt because of the comfort we have been given through Christ. Christians are called to be a blessing and comfort to those who are hurting or struggling.

Social Psychology



Descriptive vs. Prescriptive Data

Lecture

VanderStoep (2003), in his essay on psychological research and Christian belief, reminds us that “psychological data are descriptive and not prescriptive” (p. 102). For example, social psychological findings inform us about how human beings *tend* to think and behave in a variety of social settings, but not necessarily how Christians *should* think and behave. Results of a 1978 study on emergency-helping behavior suggest that having knowledge about how people misinterpret emergency situations actually results in increased helping behavior. As a result of this finding, the authors express the hope that “sensitizing persons to social forces in the environment gives [students] greater freedom to control their own behavior” (Beaman et al., 1978, p. 410).

Videos and Discussion

The following video clips are available available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site, <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 19, “The Power of the Situation.” At the top of that Web page, click on the small “VoD” box behind “View the program.” To make the video show as full screen, left-click the video to select it. Then, right-click and select “Zoom > Full Screen.” Ask your students to consider these questions, based on the videos:

1. How is it helpful for you to know that your tendency as a human being is to think or behave in this way? Does knowing about your human tendencies help you to make different choices?
2. As a Christian, how do you want to behave and think in these social situations?

Asch's experiment on conformity:

The Asch experiment runs from minute 7:05 to 8:03.

<http://www.learner.org/resources/series138.html>

Milgram's obedience experiment:

The Milgram experiment runs from minute 8:03 to 13:03.

<http://www.learner.org/resources/series138.html>

3. Respond to the following quote by Zimbardo: “More hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have been committed in the name of rebellion.”

Zimbardo's prison experiment (role-playing):

Zimbardo's prison experiment runs from minute 13:03 to 19:40.

<http://www.learner.org/resources/series138.html>

4. Respond to the following quote by Zimbardo: “We all have the capacity for evil and good waiting for the right or wrong situation to bring it out.”

References

- Beaman, A. L., Barnes, P. J., Klentz, B., & McQuirk, B. (1978). Increasing helping rates through information dissemination: Teaching pays. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 4, 406–411.
- VanderStoep, S. W. (2003). Psychological research methods and Christian belief. In S. W. VanderStoep (Ed.), *Science and the soul* (pp. 97–110). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Why Should Christians Study Social Psychology?

Adapted from a lecture by Martin Bolt (Calvin College)

Lecture

Reasons why Christians should study social psychology:

- **Applying research findings to Christian behavior:** Social psychological findings benefit the Christian community by providing methods that can be used to transform Christian values into behavior. For example, the Christian value of helping one's neighbor can be promoted through research on altruism. Social psychological research also addresses ways to resist conformity and methods for reducing prejudice that can be taught to the Christian community.
- **Applying general principles of social psychology to the Christian community:** Christians can benefit from an understanding of basic social psychological principles, such as the finding that not only do attitudes affect actions, but actions also affect attitudes. The church can apply this principle to better understand how an obedient life of prayer, Bible study, and submission to God's commandments leads to stronger faith. In times of doubt, instead of waiting until one feels like praying, the principle that actions affect attitudes would suggest that praying could lead one to a sense of assurance. A second general principle of social psychology from which the church could benefit is how members of a group influence one another. For example, there is a potential for groupthink in the church because the church strives for harmony and agreement. Once this potential is recognized, members can work to avoid the problems of groupthink.
- **Studying our relationships with each other provides important insights into our relationship with God:** How we perceive and relate to each other parallels how we perceive and relate to God. God describes himself using terms of human relationships, such as father, friend, and even lover. By understanding human relationships, we can gain a better understanding of how God relates to us, albeit in a more perfect way.

Social Psychology and Christian Living

Student Assignment

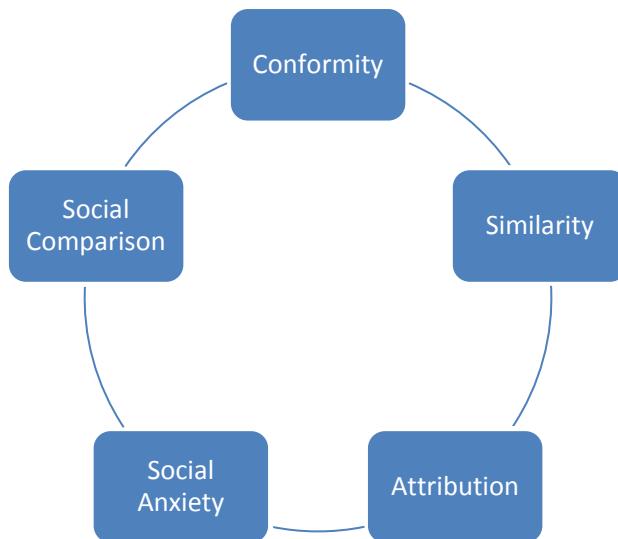
Kauffmann (1996) addresses five social psychological concepts: conformity, similarity, attribution, social anxiety, and social comparison. He provides a biblical and social psychological quotation for each and then discusses the empirical findings and biblical teachings. He follows up the discussion of each concept with possible questions for future research.

Read Kauffmann's article and answer the following questions about one of the social psychological concepts that he discusses:

1. Do the social psychological data and the biblical teachings agree or disagree? If there is disagreement, how might the two be reconciled?
2. What do the biblical teachings have to offer us in terms of better understanding the social psychological data?
3. Answer Kauffmann's question: "What is the role of social psychological research in stimulating, confronting, and/or changing religious practice?" (p. 55).

Reference

Kauffmann, D. (1996). Belief and behavior: Social psychology and Christian living. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 15, 46–57.



Actions and Attitudes

Lecture

In response to the following questions, discuss actions that lead to changes in attitudes.

Does the psychological finding that actions lead to changes in attitudes hold true for Christian faith? Can actions change or strengthen our beliefs? Myers and Jeeves (2003) state:

- “Christian thinking has usually emphasized faith as the source of action. . . . The experience of being ‘called’ demonstrates how faith can precede action in the lives of the faithful. . . . Paul is touched by the Almighty on the Damascus Road” (p. 195) and turns his life around to follow God through his ministry.
- Social psychology has also taught us that attitudes follow behavior. “Throughout the Old and New Testaments we are told that full knowledge of God comes through actively doing the Word. Faith is nurtured by obedience” (p. 195).
- “In worship too, people should be engaged as active participants, not as mere spectators of religious theater. Research indicates that passively received spoken words have surprisingly little impact on listeners. Changes in attitude resulting from spoken persuasion are less likely to endure and influence subsequent behavior than attitude changes emerging from active experience. What’s needed is to have listeners rehearse and act on what they hear. When the people sing responses, write their own confessions, contribute prayers, read Scripture responsively, take notes on the sermon, utter exclamations, bring their offerings forward, pass the peace, make the sign of the cross, or sit, stand, and kneel, they are making worship their own” (p. 197).

Discussion

Give an example of a personal experience in which your action led to a change in your attitude.

Reference

Myers, D. G., & Jeeves, M. A. (2003). *Psychology through the eyes of faith* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Encountering the Fundamental Attribution Error

Lecture

Read 2 Samuel 6:12–23. Ask the class for their reactions to Michal and to David.

Social psychologists are interested in the ways in which people think about one another. In 1958 Fritz Heider proposed the attribution theory. Heider noted that people usually attribute others' behavior either to their internal dispositions or to their external situations. A teacher, for example, may wonder whether a child's hostility reflects an aggressive personality (which is a dispositional attribution) or a reaction to stress and abuse (which is a situational attribution). However, the fundamental attribution error suggests that we don't make these attributions haphazardly. Indeed, we are much more prone to overestimate the influence of disposition in others and to underestimate situational influences. These findings hold true primarily in North American cultures and have not been found to be true in most Asian countries.

In order to look more closely at the fundamental attribution error, consider the biblical story of Michal and David. North Americans might judge Michal by labeling her as spiteful and venomous, and maybe even evil. However, if we look more closely at her situation, we might understand her reaction to David more keenly.

A short history of Michal:

- In 1 Samuel 18:20, we find out that Michal, Saul's youngest daughter, falls in love with David. Saul is pleased with this, but not because he is sentimental and happy that his daughter is in love. He is pleased because he sees this as an opportunity to handicap David, of whom he is already very jealous. So he agrees to give his daughter in marriage to David in exchange for 100 Philistine foreskins, a dangerous offer. In fact, it was Saul's plan that David would be killed on this quest—a plan that failed.
- Later, Saul tries to kill David, but Michal saves him. She warns David that Saul is plotting against him, and then she executes his rescue and ingeniously devises a plan to confuse Saul by substituting an idol for David in his bed.
- Time elapses, and David hides from Saul; he marries several other women. Meanwhile, Saul gives David's wife, Michal, to another man—Paltiel. Although it is not stated, this seems to be a spiteful move on the part of Saul against David.
- More time elapses, and David's camp and Saul's camp are at war. A decisive point in this war happens when the head of the military, Abner, is offended by Saul's camp; he transfers his allegiance to David. David accepts this partnership with the caveat that when Abner joins David, he must bring Michal with him. There is no mention of whether or not Michal wants to be joined with David, or what she thinks or feels about leaving Paltiel. But we do know that her new husband walks behind her as she is brought back to David, weeping along the way until Abner orders him to go back home.

Now we can look at Michal's response to David and understand her story and her situation, and maybe even her spite and anger against David. That possibly had little to do with how he was dressed or how he danced and much more to do with the anger she felt at being ordered away from her new husband and being used as a pawn in David and Saul's ongoing competition. Michal also went from being David's first wife to being one of many of David's wives and concubines.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Knowing a person's full story can change the way we view people. ***Again, North Americans' tendency to make the fundamental attribution error causes them to be more prone to quick judgments about people's personality, not taking their full situation into account.***

Discussion

1. Can you think of any other examples from your own life where you have made the fundamental attribution error? How about from the Bible?
2. Why do you think North Americans are more prone to make this error? Why might other cultures (e.g., Eastern cultures) be far less inclined to make this error?
3. How might we correct the fundamental attribution error in our ordinary interactions with others?



Benefits of Conformity

Adapted from a chapter by Bolt and Myers (1984)

Survey

Have students complete the attached Conformity Inventory to aid in the following discussion.

Lecture

Notice how all of you just conformed by following my instructions to complete the Conformity Inventory. We all conform, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad. Christians are familiar with the words of Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world." These prove to be difficult instructions for many Christians as they attempt to live within secular society and still maintain a distinctly Christian lifestyle. While it is helpful for Christians to be aware of the dangers of conformity, it is also helpful to consider the ways in which conformity can benefit Christians in their daily living. For example, consider the following:

- During WWII, many Jews were protected by individuals who conformed to their religious communities' stance against the Final Solution.
- The Christian community conforms to an ordered environment where healthy social interactions are more likely to occur. Sitting and listening during a sermon allows everyone to hear the message. Rules about entering and exiting make it possible for people to gather safely.
- The positive influence of the church can lead its members to conform in such areas as financial giving, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines.

Discussion

1. Give some examples of how Christians conform to secular society.
2. What makes it difficult for Christians to take a stand against society?
3. Discuss the conformity inventory. Explain the benefits of conformity in the examples that you checked.
4. How can Christian communities utilize the knowledge about conformity to bring about positive change in the church?

Reference

Bolt, M., & Myers, D. G. (1984). Conformity: A way out. In M. Bolt (Ed.), *The human connection: How people change people* (pp. 84–94). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Conformity Inventory

Place a check mark next to the scenarios where you believe that conformity is beneficial.

- _____ Tony takes a shower and brushes his teeth every morning because his mom told him that is what all the other kids his age do.
- _____ Maria recently started attending a new Bible study where all of the members are committed to reading the Bible every day; she now finds herself doing the same.
- _____ Mitch's friends are excited to go see a new movie. Mitch knows that the content of the movie is inconsistent with his Christian beliefs, but he doesn't want to be alone on a Friday night; he goes out with his friends.
- _____ Kari recently moved to a new neighborhood and noticed that all her neighbors put out recycling tubs every week with their trash. Although it costs more and Kari has never recycled before, she decides to give it a try.
- _____ Beth works at an upscale office and is expected to dress professionally. She feels that it will be of benefit to her in her job to keep up with the latest fashion trends in order to appear contemporary and professional.
- _____ Jerome and his co-workers have put in a long day. Before they may leave work, they are supposed to sweep and mop the floor. Jerome agrees to skip this final task so that his co-workers won't be mad at him and they can all go home.
- _____ Karen is typically a messy person but has been working hard to keep her things neat because her roommate likes a clean room.
- _____ Since coming to college, James has put more effort into his schoolwork because doing well academically is important to his friends.
- _____ Mary has found that living a Christian life is a lot easier in the context of her church community, which supports her and continually expects her to be working on her relationship with God.
- _____ Marcus's friends have decided to help at the Special Olympics this coming Saturday. They make it sound like a lot of fun, so Marcus decides to sign up too.
- _____ Juanita is concerned when she sees that a new highway is being planned. However, no one else seems to be concerned, so she concludes that the people in charge must be making the right decision.

Physical Attractiveness Stereotype

Adapted from a chapter in Bolt and Myers (1984)

Survey

Have students complete the *Ranking of Desired Characteristics* on the following page. Ask students to compare the two rankings. Look especially at how they ranked physical appearance in both lists of desired characteristics. Was there a difference? If so, why do they think this difference exists? Many of them will rank physical appearance as less important while other characteristics such as religious commitment and integrity will be more important. Yet, physical appearance plays a larger role in positive perceptions of others than most people care to admit.

Lecture

The physical attractiveness stereotype suggests that people have more positive perceptions of things that are beautiful. Thus, people tend to like and desire to be around those who have "beautiful" physical characteristics.

What does this mean for the Christian community? The Bible warns against using physical appearance to evaluate each other. When the prophet Samuel was sent to anoint a new king, he wanted to anoint one of the more attractive sons of Jesse. In response God said, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Discussion

1. What does the Bible have to say about the physical attractiveness stereotype?
2. What are some things that you can do to avoid the physical attractiveness stereotype, especially in a culture that puts so much emphasis on appearance?
3. How do you explain your responses to the survey in light of what you have learned about the physical attractiveness stereotype?

Reference

Bolt, M., & Myers, D. G. (1984). Like and loving. In M. Bolt & J. Brink (Eds.), *The human connection: How people change people* (pp. 121–132). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Survey: Ranking of Desired Characteristics

Rank-order the following items according to how important you think these characteristics are in *someone whom you would date* (1 = **most** important, 10 = **least** important).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="text"/> Integrity | <input type="text"/> Physical appearance |
| <input type="text"/> Honesty | <input type="text"/> Earning potential |
| <input type="text"/> Responsibility | <input type="text"/> Religious commitment |
| <input type="text"/> Neatness | <input type="text"/> Practicality |
| <input type="text"/> Intelligence | <input type="text"/> Sense of humor |

Now rank-order the same items according to how important you think these characteristics are to *someone who would choose to date you* (1 = **most** important, 10 = **least** important).

- | |
|---|
| <input type="text"/> Integrity |
| <input type="text"/> Honesty |
| <input type="text"/> Responsibility |
| <input type="text"/> Neatness |
| <input type="text"/> Intelligence |
| <input type="text"/> Physical appearance |
| <input type="text"/> Earning potential |
| <input type="text"/> Religious commitment |
| <input type="text"/> Practicality |
| <input type="text"/> Sense of humor |

Prejudice

Video

Show the following video clip of Jane Elliot's elementary classroom experiment about creating prejudice. The video is available on the Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition Web site, <http://www.learner.org/discoveringpsychology/index.html>.

Click on video clip 20, "Constructing Social Reality." At the top of that Web page, click on the small "VoD" box behind "View the program." Left-click the video to select it. Cue the clip to 5:19 using the scroll tool at the bottom. To make the video display as full screen, right-click and select "Zoom > Full Screen." The clip runs through 9:17.

Discussion

Read the following quote by Phillip Zimbardo and discuss the questions below.

"Jane Elliot and her students found out just how easy it is to alter objective reality and substitute an arbitrary conception of the world. No matter how superficial the differences between people may be, once those differences become indicators of superiority vs. inferiority, of acceptance vs. rejection, of worthiness vs. worthlessness, they become institutionalized. Rules are made, norms are created, and expectations are formed about how people of different status ought to behave."

1. Provide examples of institutional prejudice in the church.
2. Give examples of prejudice on your college campus.
3. What are some examples of superficial indicators that are used to differentiate people within the church and on your college campus? What are some common generalizations based on these arbitrary indicators?
4. What can you do to combat prejudice, particularly racism, in your church and on your college campus?



To aid students in their discussion of question four, play the following clip from National Public Radio (NPR) about finding ways to address racism in the United States. This report, by Juan Williams, is called "Crossing the Divide."

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7015147>

Understanding Implicit Prejudice

Lecture

According to Malcolm Gladwell (2005), attitudes about race operate on two levels, the conscious and the unconscious. Conscious attitudes are the stated values used to direct behavior, while unconscious attitudes are the more immediate, automatic associations that are derived from our experiences and environment. These unconscious attitudes and conscious values may be incompatible.

The Implicit Attitudes Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) measures unconscious attitudes about race. Gladwell provides a summary of how most people score on the IAT: “It turns out that more than 80 percent of all those who have ever taken the test end up having pro-white associations, meaning that it takes them measurably longer to complete answers when they are required to put good words into the ‘Black’ category than when they are required to link bad things with black people” (p. 84).

Since these unconscious attitudes are derived from experiences and environment, Gladwell suggests that they can be changed. For example, people scored better on the IAT when they first read about Martin Luther King, Colin Powell, or Nelson Mandela. Gladwell offers the following advice for those who would like to manage and control their unconscious attitudes about race: “Change your life so that you are exposed to minorities on a regular basis and become comfortable with them and familiar with the best of their culture, so that when you want to meet, hire, date, or talk with a member of a minority, you aren’t betrayed by your hesitation and discomfort” (p. 97).

Student Assignment

1. Identify your conscious attitudes (or stated values) about race.
 2. Take the Implicit Association Test for Race found at the following Web site:
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/>
 (Click on “Demonstration,” then “Take a Demo Test” at the top of the screen; then choose “Select a Test > Race IAT.”)
- Discuss your results. Were they what you expected? Did your unconscious attitudes toward race differ from your conscious attitudes?
3. Consider Gladwell’s quote: “Change your life so that you are exposed to minorities on a regular basis and become comfortable with them and familiar with the best of their culture, so that when you want to meet, hire, date, or talk with a member of a minority, you aren’t betrayed by your hesitation and discomfort” (p. 97). What suggestions do you have for changing your own unconscious attitudes toward race?
 4. Read the following: Acts 10:34–36; 2 Corinthians 5:16–21; Galatians 3:26–29; Ephesians 2:11–22. What do these Bible passages have to say about prejudice? What changes can you make in your life to be more consistent with these biblical teachings?

Reference

- Gladwell, M. (2005). *Blink: The power of thinking without thinking*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. L. K. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: The implicit association test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1464–1480.

Helping Behavior

Lecture

Visit the following Web site for a brief review of the 1973 Batson and Darley study on the good Samaritan:

http://members.core.com/~tony233/Human_Connection.htm#12

Batson and Darley explored helping behavior based on the biblical story of the good Samaritan. They wanted to know if there were situational factors that hindered the priest and the Levite but not the Samaritan from helping. The experimenters performed a study on the helping behavior of students at Princeton Seminary. These participants would have known the story of the good Samaritan, and many of them had probably been taught to help others in need. Batson and Darley studied the situational factors that affected their helping behavior.

The participants were given instructions in a certain building. Some were told that they were going to give a talk about vocation; others were told they were going to give a talk on the parable of the good Samaritan. After receiving instructions, each participant was instructed to walk to another building to give the talk. Some participants were told they were late and needed to hurry; others were told they had plenty of time. Along the way, each participant passed a confederate dressed in rags and slumped on the ground. This confederate coughed and moaned as the participants approached, carefully noting each participant's reaction.

Ask the students to predict how often participants stopped to help.

To their surprise, Batson and Darley found that the only factor that influenced whether one would stop and help was time. More specifically, those who were in a hurry only stopped to help 10% of the time. Those who were given plenty of time to arrive stopped to help 63% of the time. Furthermore, those who were going to give a talk on the parable of the good Samaritan were not more likely to help when they were in a hurry.

Questions

1. How might the results of this study help us understand the biblical story of the good Samaritan?
2. Can you think of any situations in which keeping a schedule might be more important than helping someone? How might we prioritize conflicting demands on our time?
3. Knowing this information, would you be more likely to model good-Samaritan behavior despite your schedule?

Reference

Darley, J. M., & Batson, C. D. (1973). From Jerusalem to Jericho: A study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 27, 100–108.

Group Influence and Faith

Student Assignment

Find the following terms in your textbook. Read about each kind of group influence and respond to the following statements.

- Social facilitation
- Social loafing
- Deindividuation
- Group polarization
- Groupthink
- Minority influence

1. Give a definition of this type of group influence in 1–3 sentences.
2. Provide an example of this phenomenon from your personal experience.
3. How does your faith, morality/conscience, or culture affect the way you would like to respond to each of these tendencies in yourself?



Bible Readings

Romans 12:1–2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

This passage addresses the human tendency to conform. God tells his people to avoid the natural tendency to conform to the misguided messages of the world. Instead, Christians should conform to God's will.

Philippians 4:8–9

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

This passage stresses the importance of having wholesome thoughts and wholesome actions. Actions and thoughts go hand in hand. Thoughts influence actions and actions influence thoughts.

Luke 10:29–37

But he [an expert in the law] wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Christians are called to help their neighbors. However, it is important to keep in mind possible barriers to helping. This passage shows two people, the Pharisee and the Levite, who fail to notice and help the wounded man. Is it possible that the Pharisee and the Levite were just so busy that they failed to notice and identify the wounded man as needing help? How do things such as fear and busyness prevent Christians from helping those around them?

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Physical appearance affects how people perceive each other. Christians are taught not to make judgments based on appearance; yet, we continue to do so. This passage illustrates the human way of perceiving others, but shows that God uses different criteria to evaluate people.