**Using Social Psychology examples to teach the Methods unit**

**Experiment examples**

**#1)** A researcher wishes to test the effect of friendliness from restaurant wait staff on the tips they then receive. She is also interested in differences in perception of male vs. female wait staff. At several randomly selected restaurants, baseline data is gathered over the course of one month on the tips each member of the wait staff receives. Next, waiters and waitresses are asked to henceforth draw a conspicuous "smiley face" on every check they give to customers. This is to continue for one month. A careful record of the amounts of tips for each member of the wait staff is taken and then compared to the data gathered before the experiment was conducted.

In the "smiley face" condition, the researchers discover an **18% increase** in tips for waitresses, and a **3% decrease** for waiters.

**a. Identify the independent variable(s):**

**b. Identify the dependent variable(s):**

**c. Identify the control group, if any:**

**d. Identify one possible confounding variable:**

**#2)** In Edinburgh, Scotland, Richard Wiseman left 4 different “lost” wallets around – one with a photo of a contented elderly couple, one with a photo of a smiling young couple, one with a photo of a cuddly puppy, one with a photo of a happy baby. Wiseman got a

* 28% return rate on elderly couple photo
* 48% return rate on happy young couple photo
* 53% return rate on puppy photo
* 88% return rate on baby photo

**a. Identify the independent variable(s):**

**b. Identify the dependent variable(s):**

**c. Identify the control group, if any:**

**d. Identify one possible confounding variable:**

**#3)** In an experiment entitled "**Expectation and its Impact on Performance**", a group of 4th grade students who have done poorly in school through grade three are randomly split into three groups. One group is assigned to a teacher who is given complete and accurate information on each student and is warned of difficulties that might be anticipated; the second group is assigned to a teacher who is told that all her kids have shown unusual ability and motivation in previous years, and the third group is assigned to a teacher who is told nothing about the students. At the end of the year, the students' performances are compared using a standardized test measure.

**a. Identify the independent variable(s):**

**b. Identify the dependent variable(s):**

**c. Identify the control group, if any:**

**d. Identify one possible confounding variable:**

**#4)** A psychologist believes that simple contact between members of different racial groups ("mere exposure") is likely to reduce levels of prejudice and discrimination. To examine this, she asks the superintendent of a school district whose schools have significant racial and ethnic diversity to bus some of the elementary school students to one "single race" school and the others to a "pilot school" where all classes are racially mixed. She intends to use survey methodology at the end of the school year to evaluate differences in levels of prejudice between the two schools.

**a. Identify the independent variable(s):**

**b. Identify the dependent variable(s):**

**c. Identify the control group, if any:**

**d. Identify one possible confounding variable:**

**#5)** You wish to test your hypothesis that two antagonistic groups will like each

other more if a superordinate goal is introduced to both groups.

**a. Identify the independent variable(s):**

**b. Identify the dependent variable(s):**

**c. Identify the control group, if any:**

**d. Identify one possible confounding variable:**

**#6)** You wish to test your hypothesis that judges will give less severe penalties

to physically attractive defendants.

**a. Identify the independent variable(s):**

**b. Identify the dependent variable(s):**

**c. Identify the control group, if any:**

**d. Identify one possible confounding variable:**

**#7)** You wish to test your hypothesis that accomplished archers will hit a

higher percentage of targets when being observed by an audience, as

compared to when they compete in isolation.

**a. Identify the independent variable(s):**

**b. Identify the dependent variable(s):**

**c. Identify the control group, if any:**

**d. Identify one possible confounding variable:**

**Case Study Methodology**

You can use some vivid examples from social psychology to teach students all that they will need to know about the value and limitations of case study research. Below I list a few case studies that you could use to demonstrate a lot of highly important social psychology terms.

**1. The Kitty Genovese case study**

While the original details of this case have been debated and in some cases revised, this story grabs students’ attention and will allow you to explore the following material in Social Psychology:

\*The bystander effect and diffusion of responsibility

\*Pluralistic ignorance

\*Darley and Latane’s research into the bystander effect

\*Cognitive dissonance

**2. Big Dan’s Tavern (New Bedford, MA 1983)**

In 1983, a woman was badly beaten and gang raped by six men in a bar in New Bedford, MA. There is a good chance that you won’t find any reference to this story in most of your textbooks, but it can be useful to illustrate many of the following concepts in Social Psychology:

\*The bystander effect and diffusion of responsibility

\*Pluralistic ignorance

\*Blaming the victim

\*The just world phenomenon

\*The illusion of control

**3. Jonestown (Guyana 1978)**

\*Obedience to authority

\*Conformity and need for affiliation

\*The fundamental attribution error (FAE)

\*Cognitive dissonance

**APA Ethical Guidelines**

When you teach about ethical guidelines in research you could use the following examples from Social Psychology:

**1. Milgram’s research on obedience**

**2. Zimbardo’s Stanford prison study**

**3. Blue-Eyes, Brown Eyes Exercise**

(you could use this classroom example to teach about the roots of

prejudice and discrimination, in-group and out-group bias, scapegoating and

ethnocentrism)