

October, 2010

Staff

Katy Bounds

-Fundamental Attribution Errorist

Megan Peterson

-Contributing writer with 20/10 hindsight

Eric Nead

-The Confederate

Upcoming Events:

October 12, 7:00p.m.
What Can I Do With A Psychology Major?
Location: Gorecki 204

Every Wednesday
Watch Criminal Minds with the Psych Club.
Location and time: TBD

TBD
Coffee with the Profs

Stay tuned for more details about events from the Psychology Club!

The Freudian Slip

CSB/SJU Psychology Department Newsletter



College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

Spot-light Effect: Meet Dr. Lisa Platt

by: Katy Bounds
—Fundamental Attribution Errorist

As some students may not know, the CSB/SJU Psychology Department has employed a new professor. For those students that have been lucky enough to meet Dr. Lisa Platt, they already know the type of person she is. Dr. Platt has brought to our community a wide variety of knowledge and an eagerness to teach students. During her first semester at CSB/SJU, she has already fallen in love with the enthusiasm of her students and their willingness to learn.

I had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Platt and get to know her as a professor, as well as an individual. Throughout the interview, Dr. Platt emphasized her love of interacting with and helping people. Since high school, Dr. Platt has always known that she wanted to pursue a career in psychology that would allow her to work directly with people.

Dr. Platt received her undergraduate degree from the University of Wyoming before moving to the University of Oregon to receive her M.Ed. (Masters of Education) in Marriage and Family Therapy. Dr. Platt then moved on to Pennsylvania to receive her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at Penn State University.

During her graduate years, Dr. Platt worked countless hours in clinics at hospitals and schools. More specifically, between receiving her M.Ed. and Ph.D., Dr. Platt worked as a therapist and a research assistant with homeless adults and children. Experience in these fields have allowed Dr. Platt to do exactly what she wanted: interrelate with people on several different levels and in different situations.

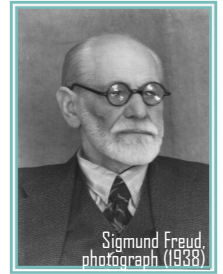
When asked about how her family and friends responded to her decision to study psychology, she began to laugh. Dr. Platt began to tell a story of how her friends would ask her if she was going to perform “therapy voodoo” on them. She then began to discuss the misconceptions that many people have about psychology. When confronted with these conceptions, Dr. Platt simply explains the true essence of psychology, and what the actual meaning of the field of psychology can offer people.

Considering her past work and her credentials, it is clear that Dr. Platt’s specialty lies in the area of counseling psychology. This semester, Dr. Platt is teaching Clinical and Counseling Psychology, as well as Research Methods. She is also interested in abnormal and multicultural psychology with a focus on gender and the GLBT (gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender) community. With

these several areas of study and in addition to teaching classes, Dr. Platt does a large amount of reading and research to stay current with these vast and ever changing fields. She attends conferences and stays in touch with past colleagues to continue her learning, so that she can then teach her students in her classroom. These conferences range from a variety of topics that focus on her specialty to other areas that expand her own knowledge.

Before the interview ended, Dr. Platt said five words that I think sum up exactly the type of professor and person she is: My door is always open. Dr. Platt hopes that her interest in and excitement for psychology will show through to her students and they too will continue to find interests in all areas of psychology. Dr. Platt wants her students to be able to apply what they have learned outside classroom so that they can continue to spread their knowledge amongst other people as well.

Dr. Platt is excited to be here and to work with students. Throughout the interview, it was evident to see Dr. Platt’s passion for teaching, and it came through in the environment that she created in her office. It was easy to tell that she had genuine enthusiasm for being a professor here at CSB/SJU.



Sigmund Freud, photograph (1938)

Psychology: A Personal Assistant for Your Social-Life

by: Megan Peterson

Contributing Writer

Many of psychology's discoveries are easily applied to real life situations. Studies investigating heuristics, conformity, and other social concepts help us understand how our own social interactions work. Imagine meeting a stranger in a mall who is advertising his or her product. You are shopping for a birthday gift for your mom and talking to this person was not a planned part of your day. You probably believe that it would be pretty easy to say no to this person and walk away. Yet, I'm sure you'd be surprised how much of an effect a small similarity to that person has on your tendency to say no.

Researchers have studied how small similarities shared with a stranger affects a person's tendency to comply with a request. Studies have shown that sharing a birthday, sharing a first name, or even sharing the same fingerprint pattern make it significantly more likely that a person will comply with a request made by a stranger who shares this

similarity (Burger et al., 2003). This shows that we often use heuristics, or rules that are not based on evidence or fact, when making decisions in our everyday life.

Salespeople know this and use it to their advantage. They dress similar to the people they will interact with in order to appear "more like them." We often assume that those like us, or those who share similarities with us, are more like us and therefore, more trustworthy and more likeable. However, this is often not true; we are using a heuristic when forming this opinion, and this false judgment affects the outcome of this real life situation.

Looking at another situation, imagine yourself studying with people from your math class. It's the beginning of the year and you don't really know the people in your class very well. All of you are working on a problem for the homework and everyone but you starts doing it a different way, a way you believe is wrong. Would you speak up? Many would be surprised how difficult it is for

people to do just that.

Solomon Asch (1955) illustrated how hard it is for people to speak up against a differing opinion among a group of strangers, especially when that differing opinion is unanimous. His study included a participant, along with 6 other people who were confederates (or people "in on" the experiment but appearing to be fellow participants) look at cards with three lines of different lengths. The group was then shown another line and asked which of the three lines was the same length as this new line. The lengths were different enough that the answer was very obvious.

However, when all 6 strangers in the group said one single wrong answer, the participant usually went along with that wrong answer, even though it was obviously wrong. This illustrates how hard it can be in real life to speak up against others you don't know, especially when the others are so sure they are right. However, this is a common feeling that

others share as well, so people shouldn't be afraid to speak up, especially when they are likely right and they know it!

Psychology has been able to illustrate why many social phenomenon occur. Its discoveries have immense potential to help us understand social interactions and how small things about those people interact with can affect the outcome. The discoveries psychology has made concerning social contexts can help us refrain from making these mistakes in real-life situations. Understanding what psychology has to offer can really help us not fall prey to some common social phenomenon.

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