

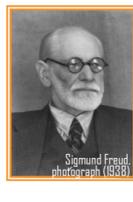
November, 2011



The Freudian Slip

CSB/SJU Psychology Department Newsletter

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University



Sigmund Freud
about 1908

Staff

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Go Ahead - Doodle!

by: Rachel Heying

Let's face it: at one point or another, most of us have caught ourselves doodling in the margins of our notebooks while listening to someone speak, whether during a class lecture or while on the phone with a parent. But is doodling really as pointless as we may think? Recent research tells us otherwise – doodling may actually help you concentrate and increase your ability to recall what has been said.

Jackie Andrade (2009) conducted an experiment to test the effects of doodling on attention to a primary task. Participants listened to a dull, rambling phone message that included names of people who could and could not attend a party, and participants were asked to write down only the names of the people who could attend. Half of the participants were told to doodle as they listened, and the other half made up the control group who were not told anything about doodling. Shortly after collecting the response sheets, the experimenters asked participants to verbally recall the names of the people who could attend the party as well as the places mentioned in the message. Those who had doodled while listening were able to remember 29% more than those in the control group, which is quite significant.

One reason that doodling may be helpful is because it reduces the likelihood of daydreaming. Daydreams are most likely to occur when we are bored, and they can be problematic. Daydreams can use many of the resources that we need to process the task at hand, ultimately lowering our performance. As doodling is a simple task requiring very little processing, it does not occupy our resources as daydreams do, but keeps us busy enough to avoid falling into a daydream. Thus, by reducing the likelihood of daydreaming, doodling can help us to concentrate better on the task.

Another advantage of doodling is that it may be a way to relieve stress and relax. Doodling offers enough of a distraction to calm nerves without requiring your full attention. This idea has been explored in areas outside of school as well. Breast cancer survivor Carol Edmonston established the Create While You Wait program for hospitals, which encourages both patients and their family members to doodle as they wait for test results. She offers an easy three-step technique for beginning doodlers, as shared in *Psychology Today*:

1. Begin with a simple outline; spend about 5-7 seconds drawing a closed shape

2. Fill in the shape with stripes, dots, or any other design

3. Don't worry about the end product; instead, focus on the process.

So, whether you choose to doodle for your mental health or to keep your concentration, it can be a very positive experience. However, be sure to take in this new information with a grain of salt. While doodling may help you to concentrate during a lecture, it is not a good alternative to taking notes. Find the balance that works best for you – and your grade. So go ahead, doodle!



Upcoming Events:
Career Expo
Wednesday, November 9th
Seminars 9:40-5:00
Career Fair 2:30-5:00
Networking Reception 6:00-8:00

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Why We Protest—The Psychology Behind the Occupy Movement
Conditioned Consumers



Why We Protest—The Psychology Behind the Occupy Movement

By: Erin Noel

With the Occupy Movement being covered by every news outlet, it is hard not to hear about the movement. With the threat of arrest and legal trouble, why do these protesters participate? Mark van Vugt, Ph.D., was led to wonder why people take part in these mass protests, and what psychology is behind the Occupy Movement. Van Vugt, in an article for Psychology Today, gives insight into four different myths of collective protests and crowd behavior.

Myth #1: The Crowd is Irrational

This myth is largely a misunderstanding. It is wrongly assumed that “once people become a part of an anonymous crowd, they cannot think logically

anymore and become hysterical” (le Bon). Van Vugt actually suggests that the crowd is smart and determined, and that “the famous ‘wisdom of the crowds’ effect shows that large groups are often better than experts in solving various problems, including predicting the outcome of elections and solving collective action problems” (van Vugt).

Myth #2: All Crowd Members are Alike

Although the people that make up the Occupy movement appear not to have too much in common, they in fact do. It is not the appearance of the protesters that necessarily needs to be similar; rather it is the ideology. “When there is a common enemy, such as Wall Street, a new crowd identity quickly forms and they start to

behave as a single entity” (van Vugt). Social psychologist Naomi Ellemers suggests that when individuals find themselves in a low status group and their attempts to move into a higher group fail, they begin to identify more strongly with the low status group and do all they can to overthrow the high status group.

Myth #3: The Crowd Has No Face

There are no clear leaders in the Occupy movement, which pose an advantage and disadvantage. Without any clear structure or hierarchy, it makes police control an extreme challenge. At the same time, it is difficult to make a political impact without a clear leader. But, due to the new

social media technologies, it has become much easier to mobilize and connect with these social movements, thus allowing the movements to gain momentum very quickly.

Myth #4: “The Long Hot Summer” Protests

Van Vugt concludes his list with the fact that, after much research by social psychologists Anderson and Bushman, there is a correlation between heat and crowd violence. Anderson and Bushman have concluded that the amount of violence across various US cities showed violence increases with temperature. The obvious explanation that nice weather encourages people to take to the streets; the timing of the Occupy Movement in the late summer is therefore no coincidence. Whether it can last through a cold and dark winter remains to be seen. (van Vugt)

Conditioned Consumers

by: Jill Lenzen

As Psychology majors and minors, many of us have heard of Ivan Pavlov and his salivating dogs. In this famous experiment, Pavlov conditioned his dogs to salivate to the sound of a bell by first pairing the bell with food. While this is certainly an interesting experiment, trying to find meaning of it in our own lives can be difficult, but it is more relevant than you may think.

As college students, we are just starting to take the first steps in becoming independent adults. One of these huge steps includes starting to pay for our own groceries, clothes and other miscellaneous items that we just can't live without. Since the majority of us are not closeted millionaires, a simple trip to the grocery store can be a painful experience when it comes to our purse or wallet. So when you are reaching for a certain brand of chips

at the grocery store ask yourself, “Why am I picking this brand versus a different one? Is it a personal preference or have I been unconsciously influenced by advertisement to prefer this brand?”

A huge part of advertising is using Pavlovian or classical conditioning to influence our decision to pick a certain product or brand. Paul Chance (2009) defines Pavlovian conditioning as “the procedure of pairing a neutral stimulus (typically referred to as the CS or conditional stimulus) with a unconditional stimulus (US)” (p. 394). Advertisers will take advantage of Pavlovian conditioning to make you associate positive emotions or feelings with a certain product. An example of a highly successful brand that uses Pavlovian conditioning is Coca-cola. This past summer, a Coke commercial depicted a large group of friends having fun in the water while drinking Diet Coke. This commercial used the unconditioned stimulus of

friends to elicit an unconditioned response of positive feeling. The commercial then paired the unconditioned stimulus with Diet Coke, which became the conditional stimulus. The advertiser is successful in using Pavlovian conditioning, you will feel positive emotions when you see a Diet Coke, and purchase their brand of soda over other brands.

Although it may be scary to think that we are being influenced by Pavlovian conditioning without our conscious knowledge, we can counteract this conditioning by being aware of the characteristics of the product we are buying instead of just the advertisements associated with them. Pavlovian conditioning can be a powerful thing, but keep in mind that we are ultimately in charge of our decisions, but we must beware of the effects of conditioning.

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