Embodied Cognition and Metaphoric Structuring

Course Description

Embodiment currently is one of the hot perspectives in social psychology. Climb aboard the bandwagon.

The fact that you understand the adjective “hot” as referencing a topic of immediate interest and rapid change is metaphor. So is the notion of climbing on a bandwagon (i.e., crowd following or the only game in town). That the intentional action of “climbing” and forward movement of the bandwagon could influence how you construe the people left on the road below as well as research in the embodiment vein is embodiment.

Embodiment and metaphor are foreshadowed in work of James, Laird (facial feedback), Berkowitz (cognitive neoassociationism), Vallacher (action identification theory), Gibson (ecological psychology) and others. Work on embodiment is mainstream in both developmental and cognitive psychology as well as neuroscience (particularly in the area of mirror neurons); work on metaphor is mainstream in cognitive linguistics and psychotherapy. Our focus will be social psychology, touching only gently on the neighboring traditions.

Typical of recent importations, topics and theoretical perspectives are largely confounded (e.g., construal theory is applied to cognitive aspects; evolutionary theory to affective aspects). I have arranged the course topically, though it probably could be arranged by theoretical perspective.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

The evaluative components are critical reviews (20%), co-facilitation of seminar discussions (10%), seminar participation (10%), project presentation (10%), and review paper (50%). Details are appended.

General Policies

Academic honesty is expected. Don’t tempt fate.

Cell Phones and beepers should be turned off during class. If you anticipate an emergency, please set it to vibrate or some other silent signal.

Special Needs. Please bring any authorized accommodations from the ERC (http://erc.tulane.edu/) to my attention during the first week of the semester. Consistent with ERC policy, there are no retroactive accommodations. Unless approved by the ERC and cleared with the instructor, audio- or video-recording of lecture is prohibited.
**General Background**


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**Emotion, Evaluation, and Attitudes**


September 6 Emotion (Facial Feedback and Hard Interface)


September 13 Attitudes and Evaluation (Heuristics)


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*A scan of this background reading is on Blackboard.*
Prejudice and Power (Evolution, Labels, and Status)


September 20 Prejudice


September 27 Metaphors and Intergroup Conflict


October 4 Power and Domination


The Self (Social Motives, Mimicry, First-person Perspectives)


October 11 Belonging


October 18 Mimicry


November 1 Executive Function: Viewpoint and Will


thought Processes: (Divergent Thinking and Abstraction)


November 8 Directed and controlled thinking


November 15: Abstract Thought


Henderson, M. D., & Wakslak, C. J. (2010). Over the hills and far away: The link between physical distance and abstraction. *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 19, 390-394

November 29 Time


**Critical Reviews.** Critical reviews of research are an important aspect of scientific enterprise. Students who pursue careers in psychology and allied fields ultimately will be reviewing works-in-progress (e.g., manuscript submissions; conference proposals); practicing on published work is a good starting point insofar as published pieces are not perfect. In addition, critical reviews ideally facilitate appreciation for how empirical research is conducted, and encourage careful consideration of how theory informs methods of data collection and analysis. Student critiques also are intended to enhance discussion quality, by encouraging critical thinking about readings prior to class.

By Sunday noon, please submit an electronic copy of your review by adding to the thread on the Blackboard Discussion Board. **If you are co-facilitating the discussion that week, do not provide a critical review.**

Given that critical reviews contribute significantly to the organization of the discussion, **late reviews will not be accepted** whether or not you attend the class meeting. If you are late submitting a second critical review, recognize that my unwillingness to accept it is not the end of the world. The cumulative effect of being late could be costly, but one slip is not a catastrophic event. Here are some guidelines for your reviews:

1. **Be professional.** A review typically is viewed as an opportunity to provide feedback to the authors while simultaneously assuring that publishable research finds its best home. Reviewers usually are anonymous, and the fact that you are not actually providing the review to the authors may evoke a similar no-retaliation-is-possible mindset. Even so, please resist the temptation to be flippant, pedantic, or savage, or to wax poetic. Your job is to indicate what is laudable and what is problematic about the article in its current form, and why you have made that assessment.

2. **Focus on theory.** Draw upon your experience in social psychology and related fields to consider the theoretical rationale: Is the theory outlined well, does it contradict or support theoretical work that is not cited, is it old wine in new skins, is it a minor test of the theory or an important new contribution? Do the methods provide a compelling test of the theory? Are there artifacts and fatal flaws that slipped through the cracks, and how these features interfere with valid conclusions about the theory? Are the chosen analyses the best or most appropriate way to test the theory?

3. **Try to make and support at least 2 points.** A laundry list of questions or complaints is not a critical review. What specifically is praiseworthy or problematic about the article, and why? (e.g., how does it contradict a prevailing social psychological theory; how does the flaw lead to erroneous conclusions). Likewise, a mere summary of the article is not a critical review. You may include a 2 sentence summary to demonstrate that you understand the thrust of the argument, but that is not a critique. As an aside to the “length-conscious” students: a thorough review typically requires at least 1/2 page singlespaced commentary.
**Cofacilitation.** Leading an organized discussion is a fundamental skill for most careers pursued by educated individuals, including psychologists. Cofacilitators should review the critical reviews on the Discussion Board prior to the class meeting. I would suggest comments ahead of time, and expressively setting objectives. The role is **discussion** co-leader, not presenter. That is, your goal should be to facilitate an organized discussion, encouraging people to address one another’s points while keeping the conversation on track. As noted earlier, do not submit a critique on the week that you are assigned as co-facilitator.

**Class Participation.** Class meetings will focus primarily upon discussion of the empirical articles. Contributing meaningfully to a discussion is not commensurate with monopolizing it. Try to make a few good points during each discussion, and address your classmates as well as the instructor. Be advised that there is no way to “make up” participation from missed meetings.

**Presentation.** The last class meeting will be reserved for students to present their project to the group. We’ll see how many folks are enrolled, but I should guess each speaker will have about 15 minutes.

**Review Paper.** A review paper may be a critical summary of the literature (e.g., the work on embodied attitudes; the use of metaphor in sociopolitical conflicts), application of an approach or theory to a new area (e.g., applying construal theory to system justification issues), or any thoughtful and critical treatment within the domain of this course.

All papers will be graded upon three equally weighted criteria: appropriate use of material, critical thought, and organization/flow. Mastery of technical writing is assumed (but expect grades to suffer if the paper is a mess). Papers submitted after December 9 will be penalized 3 points for each day (SMTWRFS) that they are late. I am an old-fashioned tree murderer: I want a double-spaced hard copy on which to scribble. Attached are some additional guidelines to help...
1. Choose wisely when selecting a topic. This course addresses ideas of embodiment and metaphor in social psychology, so your paper should focus primarily on the literatures from empirical psychology, not other fields. The majority of the articles cited should be from mainstream, current, top-tier journals in psychology.

2. Be prepared to make an argument. Although your paper obviously will include summaries of existing work, it also critically should evaluate the existing literature. A good literature review makes an argument. If this idea strikes you as alien, examine some Personality and Social Psychology Review or Psychological Bulletin. Such papers often identity findings in the literature that may be confounded with paradigm, similarities among divergent findings that point toward previously-unposited relations, and gaps in the existing empirical and theoretical literature.

3. Work from an outline. Submission of outlines is typical for negotiated review pieces such as chapters, books, and invited contributions to special journal issues; you are welcome to discuss your outline with me, but doing so is not required. In developing your outline, consider the interrelations among your subtopics, and use those interrelations to plan explicit transitions among your reviewed literature. Even though subheadings will aid the reader, they cannot substitute for flow within the body of the text. Good organization and argument flow are critical features of good writing.

4. Observe my prohibitions: First, you may not solicit help from other people (e.g., classmates, professors, other students, fruit bats, significant others) in outlining or writing your paper, nor should you solicit critiques or "read-throughs" from these persons. Second, you are prohibited from submitting versions of papers from previous or current courses or independent studies, as well as from submitting variations on your honors or master's thesis. Growth as a social scientist includes breadth as well as depth. Finally, be sure that you understand what constitutes a breach of the honor code.

5. Restrict yourself to the 15 pages. The profession often will hold you to length limitations (e.g., chapters, tech reports, empirical pieces), so I believe learning to work within a length restriction is appropriate.

6. Finish your paper a few days early. Sit on it (metaphorically speaking). Re-read and revise as needed before submission.

**Have a take-home message, not an undigested scattering of facts**

“review articles, including meta-analyses, are critical evaluations of material that has already been published. By organizing, integrating and evaluating previously published material, the author of a review article considers the progress of current research toward clarifying a problem. In a sense, a review article is tutorial in that the author defines and clarifies the problem; summarizes previous investigations in order to inform the reader of the state of current research; identifies relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature; and suggests the next step or steps in solving the problem.”

**Begin writing AFTER developing a coherent conceptual structure of the topic**

“a coherent review emerges only from a coherent conceptual structuring of the topic itself. For most reviews, this requires a guiding theory, a set of competing models, or a point of view about the phenomenon under discussion.

**Good reviews organize by relation not chronology**

“An example of a review organized around competing models is provided by a article on the emergence of sex differences in depression during adolescence (Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994). The relevant literature consists primarily of studies examining specific variables correlated with depression, a hodgepodge of findings that less creative authors might have been tempted to organize chronologically or alphabetically. These authors, however, organized the studies in terms of whether they supported one of three developmental models: (a) The causes of depression are the same for the two sexes, but these causes become more prevalent in girls than in boys in early adolescence; (b) the causes of depression are different for the two sexes, and the causes of girls’ depression become more prevalent in early adolescence; or (c) girls are more likely than boys to carry risk factors for depression before early adolescence, but these lead to depression only in the face of challenges that increase in prevalence in early adolescence. With this guiding structure, the findings fell into a recognizable pattern supporting the last model.”

“An example of a review organized around a point of view is provided by any of several articles designed to convince readers to accept--or at least to seriously entertain--a novel or controversial conclusion. In these, tactics of persuasive communication structure the review. First, the commonly accepted conclusion is stated along with the putative reasons for its current acceptance. Next, the supporting and nonsupporting data for the author’s view are presented in order of descending probative weight, and counterarguments to that view are acknowledged and rebutted at the point where they would be likely to occur spontaneously to neutral or skeptical readers. Finally, the reasons for favoring the author’s conclusion are summarized. This organizational strategy was the basis for the article in which Charles Honorton and I sought to persuade readers to take seriously new experimental evidence for ESP (Bem & Honorton, 1994). Similar organization characterizes a article whose authors argued that left-handers die at earlier ages than do right-handers (Coren & Halpern, 1991), a subsequent rebuttal to that conclusion (Harris, 1993), and an article whose author argued that the cross-cultural evidence does not support the commonly held whose author argued that the cross-cultural evidence does not support the commonly held view that there is universal recognition of emotion from facial expression (Russell, 1994).”
The Cutting Room Floor (interesting papers that I ran across...but didn't include in required readings)


