Ideas for topics, examples, and so forth, related to social psychology:
Jessica L. Collett, jlcollett@nd.edu
*on slides

BASICS
1. Defining social psychology: The systematic study of the nature and causes of human behavior.
   - Three important aspects of the definition:
     1. Systematic (rigorous, scientific methods)
     2. nature and causes (not just describing what people do, but also why they do it)
     3. human behavior (interested in humans, groups, and so forth)
2. Social psychologists are interested in affect (feelings, emotions), cognition (knowledge, thoughts, judgment), and behavior (action, doing).
3. The quadrant of action – body, mind, other, and culture – drive everything we do (Fine, 1995).*

SYMBOLIC INTERACTION & SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION THEORY
1. Symbolic Interaction: Society (from cultures to institutions to selves) is produced and reproduced through our interactions with others, by means of language and our interpretation of that language.
   - We act toward things on the basis of their meanings.
   - Meanings are not inherent, but are negotiated through interaction with others.
   - Meanings can be modified or change through interaction.
2. To teach these ideas, I often use the example of a bottle. Its meaning is not inherent, but changes based on how someone plans to, or does, use it. It can be a vessel for liquid, a weapon, a vase, a game piece (in Spin the Bottle), etc.
3. A Calvin and Hobbes strip on cooties/love works well, too, to demonstrate how the exact same physiological reactions can be interpreted differently (and the importance of others in shaping how we interpret them).
   - http://lovelustbutterflies.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/lovedefined.gif
4. To demonstrate how interactions (and language) shape our interpretations of the world, I recommend this video on color vision: http://www.boreme.com/posting.php?id=30670
   - Topics that can be used to illustrate the social construction of reality can range from which way should you hang your toilet paper (“Bathroom Politics: Introducing Students to Sociological Thinking from the Bottom Up,” Burns 2003) to the idea that school violence is a significant threat to students today (“The Role of Television News in the Construction of School Violence as a ‘Moral Panic’,” Killingbeck 2001)
     - If you choose school violence, there is a great product called “The Bullet Blocker” that is for sale. They have a website (http://www.bulletblocker.com/), but there are also YouTube videos of news stories on it that inspire discussion.
     - If you choose to talk about race, the PBS documentary “Race: The Power of an Illusion” is a good source. The website has activities as
SELF AND IDENTITY

1. Cooley’s (1902) Looking Glass Self*
2. George Herbert Mead’s stages in the development of the self – play and the game.
   - I like to talk about why young kids play tee-ball and older kids play baseball.
3. Socialization: The ways which individuals learn and recreate skills, knowledge, values, motives, and roles appropriate to their position or group in society.
   - Four components of socialization:
     1. Agent (who is doing the socialization – e.g., social institutions, individuals, groups)
     2. Process (how someone is socialized – e.g., observational learning, instrumental conditioning, internalization)
     3. Target (who is being socialized)
     4. Outcome (the goal of socialization – e.g., gender roles, linguistic and cognitive competence, moral development, work orientations, cultural orientation and values)
   - I love to use contemporary toys to teach socialization. I show commercials for Bratz and Ninjago and take students to those websites to have them explore the different (and gendered) things that young people learn from those toys. Boys games are more active, more cognitively demanding. Girls focus on beauty and cooperation, less on conflict or competition. There is a wonderful series of short films from Feminist Frequency on Legos that discuss this too (and other neat topics, as she’s at the heart of Gamergate). Here’s one: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oe65EGk89kA.
   - I also often have students play various board games to think about what messages they send to young children. I first thought of this from a Teaching Sociology article: “Games Children Play: An Exercise Illustrating Agents of Socialization,” Glasberg et al. 1998). My favorite is Chutes and Ladders, where boys and girls are punished/rewarded for vastly different, yet very gendered, things.

4. The Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn 1960), self-concept/self-schema, and types of identity*
   - An assignment that I sometimes give related to self and identity is to have students write on the prompt: What does your Facebook page (or Instagram account, Twitter feed, locker, or room/bulletin board/etc.) say about you and your self-concept? What are the role, personal, social, and group identities that you enact on Facebook? Why? How do you enact those identities? What influences whether or not you portray them there?
5. **Stereotype Threat**: When members of a negatively stereotyped group are placed in a situation where they fear that they might confirm those beliefs.
   - There are great videos on YouTube demonstrating how this works and what research has been done on it. One of my favorites, that demonstrates an interesting effect of race, is here (starting at about 1:03): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGEUVM6QuMg
   - Claude Steele’s (2011) book, *Whistling Vivaldi*, covers this topic and has some neat exercises for combating the negative effects of stereotype threat.

6. **Self-Esteem vs. Self-Efficacy**
   - **Self-Esteem**: The evaluative component of the self. The positive and negative evaluations that people have of themselves.
     - This is another example of measurement you can give students (Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem scale), asking them to consider whether they Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly disagree with the following statements (with italicized reverse-coded):
       1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on equal plane with others.
       2. *All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.*
       3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
       4. *I feel I do not have much to be proud of.*
       5. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
       6. *I wish I could have more respect for myself.*
       7. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
       8. *I certainly feel useless at time.*
       9. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
      10. At times I think I am no good at all.
   - **Self-Efficacy**: The sense that one is competent and effective, a causal factor in what happens to them.
     1. specific situations: self-efficacy
     2. broad: an internal locus-of-control
     - Rotter’s (1966) Locus of Control scale is a nice measurement too.
     - http://www.psych.uncc.edu/pagoolka/LocusofControl-intro.html
     - I often teach students about learned helplessness in this section, doing the class exercise illustrated here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFmF0mprTt0

7. **Labeling**
   - I come up with the labels that I use, but it could also be interesting to have the students create a list of the labels that they think matter. I originally learned about this exercise at understandingprejudice.org but it has also been done on the show, *The Office*. 
COGNITIVE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

1. **Schemas**: A mental structure we use to organize and simplify our knowledge of the world around us.
   - We have schemas about ourselves, other people, mechanical devices, food, and in fact almost everything.
     - self-schemas, group schemas, person schemas, role schemas, event schemas (or scripts)
   - A great way to teach about these is to find some of those “What’s wrong with this picture?” games from young kid’s magazines (Highlights, etc.). These are all about teaching children what is amiss. What’s expected and what’s not. Even if things are possible – a sock on a clawfoot tub, an apple-shaped doorknob – children learn what’s “right” and what “fits.” Even better if you can use something like this example from the Berenstain Bears example is that this is a series of books built around bears who talk and dress like humans and live in a treehouse!! Kids are taught to ignore that, or set it aside, yet to focus on these other things that are “wrong” with the picture.

2. **Attributions**: The process that an observer uses to infer the causes of another’s behavior.
   - There is a lot of neat work recently on cultural differences in attributions (Nisbett, as discussed here: [http://www.apa.org/monitor/feb06/connection.aspx](http://www.apa.org/monitor/feb06/connection.aspx)) that is interesting.
   - To discuss some of those cross-cultural differences, you can use cartoons: [http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2009/05/generational-differences-cartoons-and-cooperation.html](http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2009/05/generational-differences-cartoons-and-cooperation.html) (although this isn’t explicitly about attributions, it can illustrate how people acquire various cultural orientations, which is also interesting).
GROUP PROCESSES

Conformity, Obedience, and other Classics

1. A fantastic resource for showing three of the seminal experiments in social psychology and illustrating how they are related to everyday life is *The Human Behavior Experiments*. It’s currently available on iTunes for $7.96 (10/15/2014) from DocDay, but I bought it for $1.99 a while back, so the price might fluctuate. It discusses Milgram’s obedience experiments (and the insight that research offers to the 2004 case of strip search phone call scam at a McDonald’s in Mount Washington, Kentucky), Latané and Darley’s bystander effect experiments (and both the role that Kitty Genovese’s murder played in developing the original experiments and the insight they offer to a fairly recent fraternity hazing death), and Zimbardo’s prison experiments on the definition of the situation (and the insight that work offers in understanding Abu Ghraib).

2. I lecture about the three components of the definition of the situation (frame, identities, and personal behavior) and like to use the commercials that are about misinterpreting a situation to illustrate them (the Ameriquest, “Don’t Judge Too Quickly, We Won’t,” series on YouTube).

3. A wonderful movie, although not widely available, is “Candid Camera Classics for Social Psychology,” to teach obedience and conformity. I would bet that the newest Candid Camera, that just started, would have good material as well.

Helping and Prosocial Behavior

1. I use “What Would You Do” clips from ABC to teach about helping and bystander intervention. We tend to help those who we know and/or like, who are similar to us, and who we see as deserving. We also tend to help people who can’t help themselves and to help in ways that are consistent with gender stereotypes (women are nurturing, men are heroes). There are lots of great instances of this on the YouTube clips.

Intergroup Conflict and Group Experiences

1. I wrote a paper (with Sean Kelly, one of the organizers of this conference) on using the movie *Remember the Titans* to teach theories of conflict reduction. You can learn more about intergroup conflict here: [http://www3.nd.edu/~jcollet1/pubs/2008-2.pdf](http://www3.nd.edu/~jcollet1/pubs/2008-2.pdf) and more about how to use the movie to teach it here: [http://www3.nd.edu/~jcollet1/pubs/2010-38.pdf](http://www3.nd.edu/~jcollet1/pubs/2010-38.pdf).

2. The Implicit Associations Test is a nice activity to measure bias: [http://implicit.harvard.edu](http://implicit.harvard.edu).
   Students will have to be sure to participate in the ones that are not tied to current research projects as they need to be 18 to provide consent for those.

3. There is a PBS documentary called “People Like Us” with a nice segment on high school cliques and social class. Students might find that interesting. They also tend to like the segment from that (available on YouTube) called “Tammy’s Story.”

4. I like to teach students what we learn about the poor from the media and provide examples:
   - What we learn about the poor from the media:
     - The Poor Do Not Exist
     - The Poor are Faceless
- Coverage reduces poverty to a number or statistic.
  (AmericanPoverty.org is a nice example of what happens if we don’t do this)
- The Poor are Undeserving
  - Sensational stories about welfare cheats, drug addicts, and greedy panhandlers.
- The Poor are an Eyesore
  - Middle-class opposition to the poor (homeless shelters, etc.)
- The Poor Have Only Themselves to Blame
- The Poor are Down on Their Luck
  - Holiday season stories on families that are temporarily down on their luck (and often focus on the affluent people who help them even more).

5. Speaking of the media, the blog Sociological Images, one I recommend wholeheartedly for examples, has an interesting look at the framing of children's deviance based on race/class: [http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2013/07/17/framing-childrens-deviance/](http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2013/07/17/framing-childrens-deviance/)

6. When I teach about gender, I often show graphs of gender differences in education (particularly college major) and earnings and stereotypes. The Bem Sex Role inventory can prompt an interesting discussion, as can the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (available online, with a number of other activities that are great, at: [http://www.understandingprejudice.org/](http://www.understandingprejudice.org/)).

7. I also like to do an exercise where I have women try to walk, sit, and talk like men, and men try to do the same as women in front of the class. Something similar is detailed in the article, "Walk Like a Man, Talk Like a Woman" from Teaching Sociology (Berkowitz et al. 2010).

8. Two great documentaries for talking about gender are “Tough Guise” (there’s now a 2nd edition, but either works very well) and "Mickey Mouse Monopoly" (there is also stuff on race in that one). There are some clips from each on line.

9. Finally, I talk about generational differences in class. I love to use a chapter from Juliet Schor’s Born to Buy called “From Tony the Tiger to Slime Time Live” to teach students about how marketing and media has changed through the years and how it’s related to their generational experiences. I found Kid Cuisine commercials from the 1980’s, 1990’s, 2000’s, and today on YouTube and we watch the progression and talk about how they map onto historical trends of those decades and Schor’s ideas. It’s one of my most popular lectures.

Helpful Resources: