How Can Social Psychology Galvanize Teaching and Learning?

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Psychology instructors are lucky people. Social psychologists are particularly lucky. Psychology in general is fun to teach, but social psychology truly takes it up many notches. Social psychology is the study of how we are influenced by other people and the situations we find ourselves in. Is there a more relevant area to help study how teachers and the learning environment can influence learning? Some introductory instructors often move the social psychology section to early in the semester to grab their students’ attention. Others look forward to the social psychology segment at semester’s end to provide a booster shot of adrenaline to tired students. Social psychology is captivating, exciting, often counter-intuitive, and vastly underutilized in the very context where it is first exposed to students—the classroom. Whereas researchers have successfully used social psychology to tackle many contemporary problems (e.g., Abu Ghraib, Zimbardo, 2007; implicit prejudice, Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), social psychology’s potential contributions to teaching and learning have not been sufficiently mined. There is a sizable literature in the general area of scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) but little of this literature explicitly capitalizes on social psychological theories or is firmly grounded in theory at all (Hutchings, 2007). There are also many books that provide teaching tips (e.g., Davis, 2009) or offer advice on how to face challenges of teaching (e.g., Palmer, 2007), but these books only implicitly (if at all) draw on the richness of social psychology as it pertains to the classroom. This volume should begin the process to rectify these wrongs. In this chapter we set the stage for the launching of a new area, the social psychology of teaching and learning. First, we provide a brief history of the general area of SoTL. Then we review the scope of the field of social psychology. Finally, we review existing social psychological forays into SoTL and directly link key areas of social psychology to teaching and learning.
We hope the latter provides a valuable heuristic to optimize teaching and learning as well as to guide future research in this arena.

**What is SoTL?**

Over the past few years there has been much said about what to call research done on one’s teaching. The most commonly used phrase is the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, more often referred to by its acronym SoTL (though the pronunciation of said acronym varies as one moves across the globe). We define SoTL as *intentional, systematic reflections on teaching and learning resulting in peer-reviewed products made public.*

In addition to SoTL, one also may hear terms such as *Scholarly Teaching* and *Pedagogical Research*. A scholarly teacher is someone who intentionally and systematically reflects on and modifies her teaching to enhance student learning (evaluating whether enhancement took place). A scholarly teacher who shares the evidence collected in a peer-reviewed public format, presentation, or publication, is doing what is traditionally referred to as SoTL. If the person does not share their findings it is still scholarly teaching. Pedagogical research (PR) (Gurung & Schwartz, 2009) is a more general term that captures the essence of scholarly work conducted to enhance teaching and advance learning. PR encompasses SoTL and scholarly teaching, and does not imply the results are published or presented (a key part of being labeled SoTL) but by the same token implies a rigorous methodological investigation that goes beyond scholarly teaching. For more on definitional quibbles, the interested reader is urged to peruse Irons and Buskist (2008), Pan (2009), or Smith (2008).

In this chapter we opt for the more general term, pedagogical research, in our discussion as it has less of the negative connotations often associated with the term SoTL (e.g., “SoTL is not real research”). The bottom line is that when one is investigating one’s own teaching and one’s own students’ learning, universities and disciplinary departments tend to see the work as falling under the realm of teaching but are beginning to recognize the work as scholarship (or research versus teaching). Some have argued that pedagogical research of this sort should be seen as part as one’s professional responsibility as a teacher (Bernstein & Bass, 2005). Whereas this is not the venue to debate this particular issue further, we hope that the use of the term pedagogical research will make this form of scholarship more likely to be taken as seriously as research on other topics. In addition, we support its consideration as another indicator of excellent teaching. Research is only one part of what we do as educators in academic settings. We all teach. We all step into classrooms (or virtual realities if teaching online) and help quasi-captive audiences of our students to learn a little something of what we know and what we have jurisdiction over. Those who teach hence carry a great responsibility. It is upon
them we rely to convey the basics about our various disciplines. How do we know if the students are learning? Beyond the simple rubric of exam grades and appreciative nods of understanding lies the challenge we all face as teachers. The challenge is to establish that our teaching is working and our students are learning. Pedagogical research (PR) helps face this challenge. There are other reasons to do PR as well. PR increases our understanding of how and why people learn, gathers evidence of productive teaching and learning, and develops more effective ways to help learners learn better (it is also fun and helps solve vexing mysteries such as “Why did that class go so badly?”).

A Brief History of a Movement

Although the term SoTL is a somewhat relative newcomer to the scene, people have been thinking about how to improve teaching and learning for centuries. As Kuh (2004) notes, this “new” line of research, is really a new spin on what researchers in certain fields of study have focused on for decades. It is time for a short excursion into the history of pedagogical research.

In a history of the field of educational psychology, Berliner (2006) traces the modern trend of thinking about individual differences, development, the nature of the material being taught, problem solving, and assessment, to the ancient Jewish rite of the Passover. The leader of the Passover service told the story of the Passover each year but differently to each of his sons according to the sons’ own specific aptitudes. This reflects the modern day trend to focus on individual students’ learning styles. Plato and Aristotle are said to discuss such topics as the role of the teacher, the relations between teacher and student, and the means and methods of teaching (Wason, 1960). Writers down the centuries from the Roman Quintilian (1st century), Juan Luis Vives (15th century), Comenius, Herbart (18th century), to the philosopher Joseph Schwab (1973) have also addressed education (Berliner, 2006). Education psychologists have identified a “father of research on teaching,” Joseph Mayer Rice (1912) who conducted empirical classroom-based research and a “grandfather,” William James (1842–1910) who was asked to present Cambridge educators with lectures on the new psychology (Talks to Teachers on Psychology, 1899). Other psychologists have tackled education. G. Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association was professor of psychology and pedagogy at Johns Hopkins University. John Dewey, like Hall, was a former classroom teacher who respected the complexity of teaching and also contributed greatly to the methodological study of education (Dewey, 1910).

SoTL catapulted into the national higher education consciousness in 1990. It is not that this type of work did not exist before then, but Boyer’s (1990) Scholarship reconsidered catalyzed extensive examination of the work done on teaching and
learning and flexed the political muscle of organizations such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The results are staggering. Today enough universities and colleges pay attention to SoTL that books document how the scholarship of teaching and pedagogical research is fostered nationwide (O’Meara & Rice, 2005) and numerous international conferences convene yearly to advance the field.

It has been 20 years since Scholarship reconsidered was published and today SoTL is a well-known phrase driving multiple national and international organizations such as the International Alliance for Teaching Scholars (IATS) and the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL). Labels are empowering entities and having a phrase such as SoTL with its conferences and journals has helped further this form of research. Akin to the political force, visibility, and ownership that the politically correct terms such as Asian American and African American gave members of the related ethnic groups, SoTL has provided faculty interested in pedagogical research with a unifying banner to organize around. With the publicizing of the phrase SoTL in response to Boyer and subsequent work of his Carnegie colleagues (e.g., Shulman and Hutchings) among others, this type of research has only been recently recognized in most disciplines as a legitimate area of scholarship, worthy of recognition equal to that of more traditional lines of research and inquiry.

Champions of PR-Working Across Disciplines

There are many champions of SoTL. Since 1905, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has carried out a wide range of activities and research that has helped to support and advance the work of teachers at all levels. In 1997, the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) was established when Lee Shulman became president of the Carnegie Foundation. The Lilly Foundation has long been a supporter of teaching enhancement and has been funding faculty scholars nationwide since the 1970s. It also supports an international as well as four national conferences around America. More recently, academic institutions have taken on the mantel of leader by starting up specialized journals. A recent example is the International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (IJSOTL), a peer-reviewed electronic journal published twice a year by the Center for Excellence in Teaching at Georgia Southern University whose first issue hit the electronic airwaves in January 2007.

Others who have greatly contributed to pedagogical research are not linked to foundations such as the Carnegie and Lilly foundations. Maryellen Weimer for example, one time associate director of the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, and editor of the Teaching Professor newsletter on college teaching, has greatly helped guide and foster pedagogical research
(see Menges, Weimer, & Associates, 1996; Weimer, 2006). Going beyond the previously discussed traditional sources, it is important also to include a look at how SoTL is done outside America. For example Hounsell and Entwistle spearhead the British Enhancing Teaching and Learning (ETL) Project which seeks to develop subject-specific conceptual frameworks to guide institutional and faculty or departmental development of teaching–learning environments. This group has developed a number of useful tools for pedagogical research and has also mapped out key variables that influence learning (see Entwistle, 2009 for a review).

**Champions of PR-Discipline-Specific Activity**

The disciplines whose names exemplify the topic of interest, Education and Educational Psychology, provide wonderful starting points for a look at how to examine teaching and learning. In addition, many other disciplines and a work of a wide array of scholars (e.g., Calder in history, Hake and Hestenes in physics, McKinney in sociology, Nelson in biology) have conducted research on teaching and learning. PR in various disciplines has been taking place for more time that many may imagine and is more widespread than one may have imagined. In a recent review of the history and diversity of pedagogical research, Weimer (2006) notes that almost all the major disciplines have pedagogical journals. In perhaps one of the most comprehensive listing of publication outlets for pedagogical research, Weimer’s work clearly shows that if one is interested in learning more about how to optimize teaching and learning, there are many places to look (e.g., *Journal of College Science Teaching; Active Learning in Higher Education*).

As a testament to the (mostly unknown) longevity of pedagogical research, the earliest journal articles on teaching and learning were published back in 1924 with the first edition of the *Journal of Chemical Education*, a publication still in press today. Many of the journals that began a long time ago started as newsletters (e.g., *Teaching of Psychology*) and conversely, many pedagogical publications are not “published” on paper at all. There are a number of outlets that exist in the electronic World Wide Web only.

An example of the extent to which different disciplines are doing PR can also be seen in *Exploring signature pedagogies: Approaches to teaching disciplinary habits of mind* (Gurung, Chick, & Haynie, 2009). Authors in each chapter in this collection first provide a description of the unique content and characteristic pedagogies in their disciplines. What pedagogies are most often used in the classrooms of the field? They then review and evaluate the pedagogical research related to their discipline, paying special attention to how faculty collect evidence of effective teaching and learning and highlighting what future pedagogical research is
needed. What does the pedagogical literature of the discipline suggest are the optimal ways to teach material in that field—and verify that learning? Finally, authors assess how the common pedagogies within their disciplines reflect and engage students in the ways of knowing, the habits of mind, and the values used by experts in the field.

**Current Controversies in doing PR and SoTL**

By now, many faculty have at least heard about SoTL. Many faculty are doing some form of pedagogical research, and it is time to move on to new frontiers. Using social psychological theory is one such frontier that we will expand on shortly, but it is prudent to be aware of two major issues raised about SoTL. First, is the issue of where it should be published to count as “SoTL” and how does it count for merit, tenure, and promotion. Many psychologists who conduct pedagogical research write up their work for the premier journal in the teaching of psychology (of the same name). This is commendable given that for many psychologists this may be the first place to look for discipline-specific information, and given the journal has an exceptional reputation with a rejection rate of approximately 85%. But some scholars argue that pedagogical research should be more generally applicable. Weimer (2008) “raises some concerns about positioning scholarship on teaching and learning within the disciplines” and argues that much is “lost when the preference is for pedagogical scholarship owned by the disciplines” (p. 1). Indeed there are many outlets (e.g., the *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*) that span disciplines and one could argue (as Weimer does) will do more of a service to the field. The question of where to publish directly links to how PR counts for merit and promotion. Some may argue that publishing in one’s own field (even in a pedagogical journal) will count more towards promotion than publishing in a general SoTL journal (perhaps we do not trust “peers” from other disciplines?). Whereas departments and campuses vary on their attitudes towards how SoTL is viewed towards merit and tenure, the good news is that national surveys show that more and more campuses do look favorably towards PR (Gurung, Kerns, Ansburg, Alexander & Johnson, 2008; Huber & Hutchings, 2005). Furthermore, a number of publications now provide models of ways tenure and promotion committees can, do, and should consider PR (Gurung & Schwartz, 2009; McKinney, 2007).

The second issue relates to the need for better theoretical work. Hutchings (2007) identifies this issue seeing “the role of theory in the scholarship of teaching and learning as the elephant in the room” (p. 1). Reflecting on the 2007 annual meeting of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) Hutchings notes how many presentations lacked a theoretical
base. She called for a greater grounding of pedagogical research in theory. Social psychological theories may provide just the answer.

The State of SoTL: A Disciplinary Example

Halpern et al. (1998) first attempted to broaden the construct of scholarship to include activities that investigate pedagogy and student learning for the field of psychology. Halpern et al. provided the field of psychology with a “paradigm for the twenty-first century” (p. 1292)—a five-part definition of scholarship that included (a) original research, (b) integration of knowledge, (c) application of knowledge, (d) the scholarship of pedagogy, and (e) the scholarship of teaching in psychology. What is the status of SoTL in psychology now over 10 years since this conceptualization? A task force of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (Division 2 of the American Psychological Association) conducted a survey to ascertain the degree to which psychology departments and the institutions of higher education that house them have enacted the scholarship of teaching (Gurung et al., 2008). Findings regarding departmental and institutional support for SoTL presented a mixed picture. The field of psychology seems to recognize SoTL better than higher education as a whole (i.e., when compared to the results seen in a survey of higher education by Huber and Hutchings, 2005). For example, 60% of the survey respondents reported having colleagues involved in SoTL, and 78% reported that departmental policies encourage SoTL. That said, doing pedagogical research is clearly not without obstacles for psychologists. Three quarters of survey respondents did not view SoTL as part of their normal scholarship activities, and 75% of the participants indicated they themselves fail to understand what constitutes SoTL. A recent spate of publications (e.g., Gurung et al., 2009; Gurung & Schwartz, 2009) including a special issue on SoTL in the journal Teaching of Psychology (Smith & Buskist, 2008) should help alleviate the issue over definitional confusion and we hope this volume provides the necessary catalyst to further pedagogical research.

A number of recent reviews and meta-analyses provide insight into the wide breadth and exact nature of pedagogical research being done in psychology. More importantly, they provide us with key items for our pedagogical research agendas. For example, Peden and Wilson (2009) observe that whereas national guidelines for learning outcomes in psychology suggest how to think like a psychologist, the guidelines do not articulate how to teach it. Peden and Wilson (2009) reviewed back issues of the Teaching of Psychology (2003 to 2007) and made many observations that can provide jumping off points for PR in teaching psychology. In a slightly different vein, Tomcho and Foels (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 197 studies published in the Teaching of Psychology from 1974 to 2006. They found that, on average, studies evidenced a medium effect size across types of learning
outcomes. Given the effectiveness of the published teaching activities, the authors suggested that researchers should address (a) the potential confounding role of teacher rapport, immediacy, and alliance in evaluating teaching effectiveness; (b) the ethics of teaching activity development; and (c) the appropriateness of using course grades to assess teaching activity effectiveness. In a content analysis of the same years of content, Tomcho and Foels (2008) identified 15 general teaching strategies in 681 teaching activity articles and coded strategies’ potential impact on student development of scientific inquiry skills. The authors found that authors of articles reviewed had consistently used learner-centered strategies and significantly increased their use of active evaluation strategies. In perhaps the grand-daddy of meta-analyses, Hattie (2009; see also Hattie this volume) analyzed over 800 meta-analyses of studies relating to achievement (a meta-meta-analysis as it were) and lists 131 factors that influence learning. Most recently, Bernstein et al. (2009) and Chew et al. (2010) provide comprehensive pictures of what is known about the processes surrounding teaching and learning and provide general models that can guide future pedagogical research.

Sub-Disciplinary Contributions to PR: Cognitive Psychology

Within the field of psychology, cognitive psychology is the next major contributor to studies of teaching and learning (after or perhaps in parallel to the area of educational psychology). Cognitive scientists, who have perhaps the most to offer through well-researched principles of learning and memory, have only recently begun to get involved in classroom research (Metcalfe, Kornell, & Son, 2007). For example, the theoretical characteristics of metacognition have dominated research since the 1960s; however, only recent research has produced research with a focus on educational application. According to Hacker, Dunlosky, and Graesser (1998, p.17) “many researchers [are] convinced of the educational relevance that metacognitive theory has for teachers and students, [and] are shifting their attention from the theoretical to the practical, from the laboratory to the classroom.” A number of lab studies have explicitly demonstrated the benefits of monitoring of one’s thinking (e.g., Dunlosky & Nelson, 1997; Koriat & Bjork, 2005) and cognitive research on metacognition is now beginning to move into real world settings and the classroom. Metacognitive theory can help teachers create classroom environments that foster flexible and creative, strategic learning (Borkowski & Muthukrishna, 1992). This culmination of research suggests students will benefit from teachers who indeed utilize the instruction of meta-cognitive processes to facilitate learning (see Dunlosky & Lipko, 2007; Hacker et al., 1998; Metcalfe & Greene, 2007 for reviews).

Akin to metacognition, there are many cognitive concepts that can apply to teaching and learning. Some include, temporal spacing (Cepeda, Pashler, Vul,
Wixted, & Rohrer, 2006), using self-generation rather than reading (Slamecka & Graf, 1978), multimodal and contextual variability, spaced practice (Bahrick & Hall, 2005; Pashler, Zarow, & Triplette, 2003), corrective feedback (Butterfield & Metcalfe, 2001), repeated testing (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006), and introducing “desirable difficulties” (Bjork, 1994) such as spacing rather than massing study sessions; interleaving rather than blocking practice on separate topics; varying how to-be-learned material is presented; reducing feedback; and using tests as learning events. Many cognitive concepts have explicit pragmatic implications. For example, because research has shown that retrieval produces robust mnemonic benefits that exceed those of additional study (Kang, McDermott, & Roediger, 2007), testing (i.e., requiring retrieval) may be an especially effective method for improving learning (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008; McDaniel, Anderson, Derbish, & Morrisette, 2007; McDaniel, Roediger, & McDermott, 2007), and have recommended that instructors introduce more quizzing into their courses (Pashler et al., 2007). Work such as this has led to the development and testing of specific strategies for students (e.g., the 3R, read-recite-review strategy, McDaniel, Howard, & Einstein, 2009).

As is evident, cognitive psychologists have made explicit attempts to ensure the work from the cognitive laboratory is considered in the classroom. Perhaps one of the best examples of this collection of cognitive theory can be seen in a special issue of the *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* series dedicated to “Applying the science of learning to university teaching and beyond” (Halpern & Hakel, 2002). Whereas research from the tradition of cognitive psychology identifies core principles that constrain how people learn, the recommendations for teaching that have emerged from this tradition do not always work (Daniel & Poole, 2009). What works in the lab does not always directly succeed in the classroom (Gurung, 2009). Although researchers have started taking cognitive science into the classroom (e.g., McDaniel & Einstein, 2005; Roediger & Karpicke, 2006), the link between making the theory and practice suggested by research applicable to teachers and learners is not complete. Many of the recommendations from controlled lab studies are yet to be translated into practices for the classroom. Furthermore, as much as the areas of educational and cognitive psychology seem to have the corner on SoTL, researchers in these areas primarily treat the classrooms of others as their laboratory (educational psychology) or primarily work in the lab (cognitive psychology). The pedagogical research we advocate puts one’s own classroom, teaching, and learning, under the microscope (see also Smith, 2008).

It is also time for social psychology to follow in the footsteps of educational and cognitive psychology. Although social psychology does not at first seem to be as relevant to learning as the areas of education and cognition (relevant almost by definition), it is an area that is perfectly primed to contribute to our understanding of pedagogy. To be fair, this book is not the first time an area of psychology has been
applied to teaching and learning or the parallels between an area’s focus of study have been mapped onto teaching and learning. Some clinical psychologists have noted the parallel between the client–therapist and the student–teacher. Prieto & Meyers (1999) introduced the concept of the Scientist-Practitioner-Educator in the psychology teaching assistant (TA) training literature to extend a model of counseling (the Boulder model) to teaching, view teaching as professional practice, and identify the need for theory-driven, evidence-based teaching of psychology (Prieto & Meyers, 2009; see also Snyder, 2005). At the APA National Conference on Undergraduate Education in Psychology, Bernstein et al. (2009) offered an expanded view suggesting that the discipline of psychology needs to recognize teaching as a form of professional practice, requiring sufficient preparation to perform competently and ethically, and with training beginning at the graduate level. Similar to the basic call for scholarly teaching, Prieto and Meyers (2009) advanced the notion that training in psychology should adopt the scientist-educator model (similar to the Boulder Model of scientist-practitioner for clinical practice) that involves theory-based teaching, continuous reflection on teaching practices, application of evidence-based instructional strategies, and multifaceted evaluation of teaching and learning outcomes. Using the language of clinical psychology the authors go on to suggest that the essential preparation elements for a scientist-educator qualified to teach at all levels and in all kinds of positions and settings should include a deep knowledge of core psychology, course work in teaching and learning, supervised practicum experience in teaching, and learning how to reflect on and evaluate teaching in a scholarly, theory-driven manner. In direct line with the suggestions of the current volume, Prieto and Meyers (2009) advocate the use of social psychological theory to help explain the effects of TA training (e.g., social cognitive approaches such as self-efficacy). We take this work many steps further to push for the explicit use of social psychological theory and theorizing in pedagogical research. To catalyze this process, we next provide a brief description of the sub-discipline of social psychology and highlight specific ways theories, concepts, and methodologies from it can enhance PR.

What is Social Psychology?

Social psychology is the study of how we are influenced by other people. Gordon Allport summarized social psychology as “what we think, feel, say, or do is often affected by what other people are thinking, feeling, saying, or doing” (1985, p. 3). This definition may at first sound like peer pressure, and while social psychology does study conformity, it is much more than that. From persuasion to romantic relationships, social psychologists investigate a myriad of ways that we are impacted by our social environment. Consider the following scenario which makes social psychology’s relevance for teaching clearer: Jenny is sitting in a
crowded classroom. She raises her hand and answers a difficult question posed by her professor. How did the professor’s expectations of Jenny affect her desire to raise her hand? How difficult did Jenny believe the question was? How did the other students influence the likelihood that Jenny would answer the question correctly? All of these questions are of interest to the social psychologist.

Social psychology focuses on how the situations we are in influence our behaviors. People often take for granted the situational forces influencing their behavior and see themselves as independent individuals accurately perceiving their social world. Passersby decide not to help someone on the side of a busy road because they think someone else will. In the classroom, teachers believe that they are treating students fairly, but are often unaware of the role that their prejudices, expectations, and past experiences may have in shaping their students’ behaviors. Students may think that they formed their friendships based on their interests or hobbies, but fail to appreciate the role of proximity (i.e., living next door to each other) in their relationships.

A Brief History of Social Psychology

Social psychology is an area of study housed primarily within psychology but with ties to sociology as well. Psychology can be differentiated from sociology in its emphasis on the individual. Even when group behavior is studied, the focus is on the individual in that group. Sociologists study macro-level variables, such as social class, in accounting for our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Social psychology can also be differentiated from other branches of psychology, such as clinical, cognitive, and personality psychology. Clinical psychology focuses on abnormal behavior and psychological disorders whereas the majority of social psychology focuses on normal behavior. Cognitive psychology studies mental processes such as memory, attention, and language. While social psychology is also interested in thought processes, it analyzes these within the context of social interactions. For example, how do people remember information about a person that they just met? Personality psychology is concerned with individual differences such as extroversion and conscientiousness and predicts that people’s behavior is relatively consistent from situation to situation. Social psychologists would expect more flexibility in people’s behaviors depending on the situation that they were in at the time.

Often credited as the first social psychology experiment, Triplett (1897) investigated the role of other people in improving performance. Children wound up a fishing reel either alone or with other children present. The children were impacted by their social environment and wound up the fishing reel faster when others were there, showing the first evidence of social facilitation. The first textbooks followed in the early 1900s to further establish social psychology as an area of study.
The field did not really take off until World War II. World War II inspired such research questions as how to convince families to eat less desirable cuts of meat (attitude change), how soldiers’ morale depended on the other soldiers in their unit (social comparison), and how an atrocity such as the Holocaust could have been carried out (obedience). The war provided the catalyst that social psychology needed to encourage research in a variety of areas beyond its early beginnings in group processes.

Today social psychology has grown in scope to study several areas of our everyday lives, including aggression, romantic relationships, helping behavior, prejudice, attraction, impression formation, and many more. Today’s researchers ask questions like what factors predict marital satisfaction or how do our emotions shape our impressions of others? Because of its broad applicability, social psychology is often utilized in other domains such as education, law, and health. It contributes to interdisciplinary questions such as how to manage classroom groups, how eyewitness memory can be biased, and how social support buffers one from stress.

Social psychology focuses its lens at three different levels of analysis. Individual processes are at work when considering phenomena such as impression formation, attitudes, and persuasion. Interpersonal processes are at the foreground for romantic relationships, friendships, and helping behaviors. Finally group processes are considered when studying conformity, group decision making, and jury behavior. These levels of analysis demonstrate the breadth of social psychology as well as the different forms of influence that social processes can take. All these levels of analysis, individual, interpersonal, and group, can be used to study teaching and learning. The instructor and student each have intrapersonal factors that influence their teaching and learning. The teacher and student interactions yield emergent properties that contribute to learning (as will be discussed further below). The classroom environment involves group processes (e.g., group work and group presentations) that influence learning.

**Methods of Social Psychology**

The methodological strengths of social psychology provide great tools to stimulate classroom discussion but also lend themselves very well to doing pedagogical research. For example, on the first day of class, both of us present students with several nuggets of common sense wisdom and ask them which are true and false according to the research. This activity usually generates a lot of discussion and interest in the field because many of our common sense preconceptions are wrong. In fact, many of these preconceptions even contradict each other such as birds of a feather flock together vs. opposites attract. Social psychologists use the scientific method to determine under what conditions these various ideas are at work. When
is it that people will be attracted to similar others? When is it that opposites will be a good match? At first glance, social psychology can seem like common sense: It seems so obvious that people will slack off on group projects. Subjecting such seeming commonsense to scientific examination often yields intriguing results. More importantly, it can yield answers and have significant implications for how we design and teach our classes. Social psychologists are also well-suited to inspire the scholarship of teaching and learning because their typical research participants are college students.

Social psychologists use the scientific method to separate fact from fiction. While many of the topics in social psychology have real world implications, what sets it apart from philosophy, common sense, or speculation is the scientific method. Hypotheses must be formed before data are collected. Ideas must be tested with robust research methods. Experimenters randomly assign participants to different experimental groups. Random assignment ensures that participants have an equal chance of receiving an experimental condition and that it is the experimental treatment that is causing the effects observed. Participants do not know the specific hypotheses that are under study and may even be deceived about the study’s true purpose to ensure truthful responding. Results must be replicated in order to establish their reliability. These rigorous procedures ensure the empirical basis of social psychology.

There are many different types of research that are carried out to test social psychological ideas. Many of these types of research are directly relevant to research on teaching and learning. Research can be done on an individual, a couple, or even a group. Research can be conducted in a controlled laboratory setting or a natural setting (i.e., field setting). Ideas may spring from observing the real world, past research, or from a larger theory. Some social psychologists focus their attention on basic research questions that focus on theory-building. Basic research increases knowledge about social behavior purely for knowledge’s sake, such as how mood influences judgment. Others focus on applied questions to increase our understanding of and find solutions to real world problems, such as how to eliminate stereotypes and prejudice.

Social psychological methods are laudable for their focus on rigor and innovation. As evidence for this, we will describe a few of the many social psychological studies that use interesting methodology and may inspire innovative research designs for classroom pedagogical research. For each, we will summarize the methodology used and provide some fodder for thoughts on pedagogical design.

In a classic demonstration of cognitive dissonance, Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) had college participants complete boring tasks for an hour. After they finished these tasks, they were asked if they could introduce the experiment to the next participant because the usual research assistant was gone. Participants were told that they needed to tell the participant the experiment was fun and enjoyable
because the next participant was in the positive expectation experimental condition. Participants were either paid nothing, $1 or $20 for telling this lie to the next participant. Afterward, participants were asked how much they enjoyed the experiment themselves. Showing evidence of cognitive dissonance, the researchers found that participants enjoyed the experiment more when they were paid $1 to say the experiment was enjoyable than nothing or $20. Because the $1 participants did not have external justification for why they had lied (clearly it was not the money), they changed their attitudes to like the study more to eliminate their feelings of cognitive dissonance. Can we change our students’ attitudes toward learning in the same way? If we got students to acknowledge that others’ text-messaging and web surfing in class is distracting, would it make them less likely to do this themselves?

In another ingenious methodological turn, Cohen and his colleagues (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996) investigated the culture of honor of White Southern men. Students who had grown up in the North or South were asked to fill out a survey and bring it down a long and narrow hallway where there was a confederate filing papers in a cabinet. The hallway was too narrow for the file drawer to be open and for the participant to pass by so the confederate had to close the drawer and move to allow the participant to walk by. The participant had to walk by the confederate again after dropping off his survey so the confederate slammed the file drawer shut, bumped into the participant’s shoulder and called him an “asshole.” Observers were unobtrusively in the hallway and monitored the participants’ emotional reactions to the incident. Southern participants were angrier about the bump than Northern participants. These results reinforced the idea of the culture of honor whereby White Southern men use aggression when their or their family’s honor has been threatened. How do students’ different cultural attitudes towards learning influence their study habits, classroom behaviors, and attendance? Can we design our classes to encompass different cultural attitudes? How do these findings and methodologies influence group dynamics when students from different cultural backgrounds (whether race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status) are working together?

Social psychologists have also turned to indirect measures, such as reaction time to study phenomena where people may not provide truthful responses. In stereotyping and prejudice studies, participants are asked to classify whether words are pleasant or unpleasant by hitting the appropriate key on the computer in the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald et al., 1998). These decisions are included in the same trials as identifying whether a person in a photo is White or Black. The latter decisions can be paired with the same keys as the former decisions. By combining the keystrokes, researchers can measure how participants associate White and Good vs. Black and Bad compared to the alternative pairing White and Bad vs. Black and Good. A faster reaction time represents participants’ stronger implicit attitudes toward the topic. Therefore, if participants are quicker to associate White and Good and Black and Bad, they are showing an implicit
preference toward White people over Black people. This methodology is especially useful if participants are unwilling or unable to report their true racial feelings. How are students’ implicit attitudes towards the sex and ethnicity of their instructors influencing their learning? Do students’ implicit attitudes about some topics (e.g., evolution) influence their likelihood to pay attention to these topics? What are other implicit processes that could be mapping onto learning?

Finally, in a recent methodological advance, social psychologists have turned to biological markers to provide evidence for social phenomena. Self-control can often deplete one’s inner energy reserves, hindering performance on subsequent acts of self-control. For example, dieters follow their diet conscientiously in the morning, but tend to slip in the afternoon and evening hours after a day full of self-regulation. Acts of self-regulation have also been found to be marked by depletion in glucose levels, which can reduce future glucose levels and thereby impair future performance. Gailliot and his colleagues (2007) found that having participants drink lemonade (including glucose) allowed them to counteract the effects of exerting self-control and not show a performance decrement in a subsequent act of self-regulation. This finding has implications for students and teachers in the classroom exerting many forms of self-control and what they eat to replenish themselves. If you teach an afternoon class, should students be provided with tips on how to eat before class? Can snacks before class influence how much attention students will pay and how they will participate in class?

Regardless of the research path, there are many practical questions in social psychology. Kurt Lewin, who is often credited as the father of social psychology, is quoted as saying, “No research without action, no action without research.” Even in its early days, social psychology was concerned with the reciprocal nature of research and the real world. Many social psychologists are also interested in studying social issues and problems. In fact, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues was founded by social psychologists, including Lewin, in 1936. Social psychology is rooted in the everyday world and this emphasis can and should be used to make a difference and provide fertile soil for the scholarship of teaching and learning. Its focus on applicable real world questions, its use in educational circles, and rigorous empirical methodology, make it an ideal launching pad for teachers and others interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning. There are many areas of study within social psychology, such as impression formation, aggression, and prejudice, that can inform the classroom experience for both the teacher and student as we shall turn to below.

The Social Psychology of Teaching and Learning

Our goal is to kickstart a new focus within social psychology and within the greater field of SoTL. The first call for using social psychology in pedagogical research has already been made—the 2009 Claremont Symposium that drives this volume.
There has been one significant voice raised before. A special issue of the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* edited by Snyder (2005) opened “a new turf for the interface of social and clinical psychology (p. 1)” in relation to teaching. Master teachers portrayed a variety of perspectives on college teaching and student learning. Three in particular, explicitly made the case for a greater use of social psychological work (Halpern & Desrochers, 2005; Hammer, 2005; Smith, 2005). We unabashedly stand on the shoulders of these authors to flesh out a call for the use of social psychological theories in pedagogical research.

Hammer (2005) provided perhaps the most explicit link between social psychological concepts and teaching. She provides a good starting point for the application of social psychological research in realms such as classroom management (e.g., group dynamics, decision-making, and social norms), explaining student behavior (e.g., attributional biases), and the delivery of information (e.g., persuasion). Her essay focused on research in the area of interpersonal relationship as it applies to student–teacher relationships, especially research on attributional styles, ego depletion, and relationship styles.

In the same issue, Halpern and Desrochers (2005) went so far as to call education “applied social psychology” (p. 51). They suggest evoking cognitive psychology research on student-centered learning to help apply social psychological principles. Specially, they discuss the problem of anonymity in classes, and countering it by increasing individual responsibility, accountability, and *social comparison*. In order to foster a commitment to learning, Halpern and Desrochers (2005) draw on equity and reciprocity theory and using contracts. Similar to Hammer (2005) they also invoke *attribution theory* and *self-handicapping* to help understand both faculty and student behavior.

Perhaps someone who has written the most about the link between social psychology and the classroom is Smith (2005; 2008; see final chapter this volume). In his piece in the 2005 special issue, he identifies a wide array of social psychological concepts (e.g., fundamental attribution error, social categorization, overjustification effect). He shows for example how a concept such as *self-handicapping* helps explain why students may not read assignments or study for exams, how the *self-serving bias* explains why students believe they have performed so much better than they really have, how *belief perseverance* explains why it is so hard to change the beliefs students bring to class. Of note is that many of the studies cited by Smith (2005) were lab based even though they addressed issues relating to the classroom.

**Agenda Setting**

There are a variety of obvious, and some not so obvious, ways social psychological theories and concepts are applicable to the classroom. Many faculty probably non-consciously utilize social psychological concepts they may have read about.
As a first step towards providing an agenda for the area of social psychological research on pedagogy, we provide a visual representation of the main factors underlying student learning (see Figure 1.1). Whereas there are many more fine-tuned details that could be added to this figure, and many different conceptualizations of the same interactions (see Buskist, Carlson, Christopher, Prieto, & Smith, 2008; Chew et al., 2010; Entwistle, 2009; Gurung & Schwartz, 2009), this figure provides a basic lay of the land. Do not let the apparent complexity phase you. First off, it illustrates an important fact we have to come to terms with: Learning IS complex! There is probably no silver bullet or single factor that will make our students learn better. Pedagogical research like any other research can try to limit the factors studied, but especially when you are studying learning in a classroom, as it is happening, we have to acknowledge all the different factors that are possibly playing a part. The main players involved are the teacher, the student, and the interaction between the two. The figure provides some of the factors influencing each of these players.

Corresponding to the different factors influencing learning, we list key concepts and theories in social psychology (see Table 1.1). Many of the concepts we list can tie in to the main players in Figure 1.1 and correspond to major areas of teaching and learning. Sometimes the connection can be easily made. For other concepts, a little mental work will show how the social psychological term will influence

Figure 1.1 Possible avenues for the use of social psychological concepts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social psychology concept/contribution</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Rigor/Designs</td>
<td>Pedagogical Research</td>
<td>Becoming a critical thinker</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Cognition:</strong> using the methods of cognitive psychology (memory, reaction time, information processing, etc.) to answer questions about our social world (Kunda, 1999)</td>
<td>Teaching abilities</td>
<td>Dealing with exam results</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attributions:</strong> how we explain our own and others’ behaviors (Ichheiser, 1943)</td>
<td>Desire for change, growth</td>
<td>Studying motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learned Helplessness:</strong> a sense of resignation after repeated failed attempts and believing the event is likely to reoccur (Seligman &amp; Maier, 1967)</td>
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<td>Lack of student participation</td>
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<td><strong>Confirmation Bias:</strong> the desire to support one’s own views despite contradicting information (Wason, 1960)</td>
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<td><strong>Counterfactual Thinking:</strong> tendency to imagine alternative scenarios for an event and evaluate the event in relation to these alternatives (Kahneman, 1995)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Comparison:</strong> comparing one’s own outcomes with others and evaluating oneself accordingly (Festinger, 1954)</td>
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<td><strong>Spotlight Effect:</strong> the belief that others are paying more attention to our actions and appearance than they actually are (Gilovich, Medvec, &amp; Savitsky, 2000)</td>
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<td><strong>False Consensus Effect:</strong> overestimating how many other people share your views (Ross, Greene, &amp; House, 1977)</td>
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<td><strong>Impression Formation:</strong> the process by which one integrates different information about other people to form an overall judgment about them (Hamilton &amp; Sherman, 1996)</td>
<td>First Impressions</td>
<td>Pygmalion Effect</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fundamental Attribution Error:</strong> explaining other people’s actions in terms of their personality and other internal factors instead of external situational factors (Ross, 1977)</td>
<td>Rapport</td>
<td>Immediacy</td>
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</table>
**Self-Serving Bias**: seeing oneself in an overly positive way, specifically taking credit for one’s own successes, but blaming the situation for one’s failures (Larson, 1977)

**Prejudice**: negative feelings toward a group of people based on their group membership (Glick & Fiske, 2001)

**Stereotype Threat**: worry about being evaluated according to a negative stereotype, which impairs performance (Steele, 1997)

**Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**: expectations that we have for other people lead us to treat those other people in a way that will actually allow our expectations to be confirmed (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968)

**Self-Esteem**: a person’s evaluation of themselves and of their worth (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007)

**Self-Concept**: how one defines who they are (Snodgrass & Thompson, 1997)

**Self-Handicapping**: acting in a way that will provide an excuse for failure and thereby protect our self-esteem (Arkin & Oleson, 1998)

**Ego Depletion**: showing a decrement in self-regulation performance after initial self-regulation (Baumeister, Muraven, & Tice, 2000)

**Attitudes**: negative or positive evaluations toward various topics (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993)

**Motivation**: the drive towards completion of a task or goal in which the source can be ourselves or outside factors (Harackiewicz and Elliot, 1993)

**Persuasion**: attempting to change someone’s attitude (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)

**Cognitive Dissonance**: an unpleasant feeling that results from acting in a way that is not consistent with one’s own attitudes, beliefs or behaviors (Festinger, 1957)

**Attraction**: who we like or love based on factors such as similarity or proximity (Huston & Levinger, 1978)

**Mere Exposure Effect**: the more that people see something or someone, the more they will like it (Zajonc, 1968)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jigsaw classroom</th>
<th>Academic performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching concentration/fatigue</td>
<td>Entitlement</td>
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<td>Studying/fatigue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Malleability of intelligence</td>
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<td>Workload</td>
<td>Depth of learning</td>
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<td>Cheating</td>
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<td>Studying motivation</td>
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<td>First impressions of teacher and . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liking of group members, class material</td>
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(continued)
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<tr>
<th>Social psychology concept/contribution</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Processes:</strong> the phenomena that account for how two or more interdependent people (a group) are different than an individual (McGrath, Arrow, &amp; Berdahl, 2000)</td>
<td>Classroom behavior</td>
<td>Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conformity:</strong> when someone changes his or her normal behavior due to the influence of other people (Kiesler &amp; Kiesler, 1969)</td>
<td>Leadership style</td>
<td>Group presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obedience:</strong> performing an action when given a direct order from someone, especially an authority figure (Milgram, 1963)</td>
<td>Teaching performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deindividuation:</strong> when in a group, the tendency to lose one’s sense of self making it easier to act in ways that one would normally not act (Festinger, Pepitone, &amp; Newcomb, 1952)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Loafing:</strong> the tendency for people to not work as hard in a group as they would if they were doing a task on their own (Karau &amp; Williams, 1993)</td>
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<td><strong>Social Facilitation:</strong> the tendency to perform better on familiar and/or easy tasks when in the presence of others (Bond &amp; Titus, 1983)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Inhibition:</strong> the tendency to perform worse on unfamiliar and/or difficult tasks when in the presence of others (Zajonc, Heigartner, &amp; Herman, 1969)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Helping Behavior:</strong> engaging in prosocial actions to benefit others (Penner, Dovidio, Pillavin, &amp; Schroeder, 2005)</td>
<td>Service learning</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aggression:</strong> engaging in intentional actions to produce harm (Anderson &amp; Bushman, 2002)</td>
<td>Incivility</td>
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</table>
teaching and learning. The challenge and exciting part of the road ahead is that many of the connections are understudied. That is where you the reader come in. Instead of spelling out every element of connection we would like to focus on some major elements of connection.

**Instructor–Student Interfaces**

Beyond the methodological contributions of social psychology, both in terms of rigor, design complexity, and inventiveness, there are many aspects of the teaching–learning relationship that can be better understood using social psychology. As seen in Figure 1.1, the factors that contribute to learning can largely be broken down into three main categories: the instructor, the student, and factors arising from the interaction of the two. There are other elements such as the textbook and course design that can be treated in their own right, but are also under the jurisdiction of the instructor. Although social psychology may have once proclaimed a focus exclusively on the situation leaving personal characteristics to the purview of personality psychology, today social psychology succeeds best when taking the interactional approach. Behavior and learning are clearly a function of both the person and the situation. The classroom is perhaps one of the most powerful situations going and social psychology’s focus on the situation is helpful. That said, the most recent reviews suggest that both characteristics of the instructor and the student contribute the lion’s share of the variance in predicting learning (Hattie, 2009). A closer look at many components of teaching and learning (Figure 1.1) in light of the different concepts in social psychology (Table 1.1) provide some exciting avenues for research.

Passionate, knowledgeable, organized instructors are well evaluated by their students and the students of such instructors say they learn more (Bain, 2004). Research suggests that there are “ideal” instructor characteristics (Epting, Zinn, Buskist, & Buskist, 2004; Schaeffer, Epting, Zinn, & Buskist, 2003). Epting et al. (2004), for example, found that students’ ideal professor was accessible, personable, flexible, and explicit about course policies. There are many social psychological factors that can help predict how an instructor will perform and how her students will learn, and how she will be evaluated. Right out of the gates, the research on thin slices of behavior suggest that what instructors do in class in the first 5 seconds or so can determine how they are rated at the end of the semester (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Babad, Avni-Babad, & Rosenthal, 2004). Add to this the recent finding that this first impression may even be influenced by an electronic communication sent out before class begins (Wilson, Stadler, Schwartz, & Goff, 2009) really presses for a close look at how first impressions of a class and an instructor can be modified. What does your syllabus say about you? How does your dress that first day set the tone?

The very first day of class is ripe with social psychological phenomenon that can influence learning and provides a good illustration of why social psychology
is important. Paying attention to impression formation in general and the volumes of research on the processes therein can help those first days in the classroom tremendously. There are also many more phenomena that pertain to the first day and that can also influence the rest of the semester. For example, Gurung and Vespa (2007) had 861 undergraduate students complete an online questionnaire rating their instructors. Students were equally spread across class year and were from different majors. The authors used multiple regression analyses and found that likeable, good-looking, well-dressed, and approachable teachers had students who said they learned more, had higher grades, and liked the class better. Results revealed several significant predictors of participants’ class performance and self-reported learning, including student (e.g., GPA), course (e.g., difficulty), and instructor (e.g., likeability) variables. By far the strongest single predictor of self-reported learning, and a significant predictor of self-reported grades, however, was the likeability of the professor. Likeability, in turn, was predicted by instructor attractiveness, approachability, and formality of dress, along with student attendance, participation, and self-reported class difficulty. Attractiveness accounted for the largest proportion of unique variance. Social psychology research consistently finds that people equate beauty with goodness and believe attractive individuals possess numerous positive qualities, but few negative attributes (Weeden & Sabini, 2005). Clearly this finding maps onto classroom life as well.

Social psychology can also help solve major recurrent problems in easy ways. Many instructors are pestered with requests for their lecture notes. Others are peeved by students using their laptop computers in class for non-academic purposes. Too many students are using their phones to send and receive text messages. Some students show more extreme cases of classroom incivilities (Boice, 2000). Just saying no, does not always work. Justifying why you are making a request does. In a classic study, Langer (1975) had experimenters try to cut into a line of people waiting to use a copy machine. When the experimenters said, “Excuse me, I have five pages, may I use the copy machine?” only 60% of the people in line agreed. When the experimenter added a justification, “…because I have to make some copies” even that statement of obvious fact resulted in 93% compliance. When we ask students not to do something, (e.g., “please do not use any laptops”), adding a simple justification, “Fried (2008) shows that students who use laptops in class do not learn as well/score as highly as those who do not use computers” drives compliance up to 100%. Most importantly, the justification also drives complaining down to zero. That is social psychology in action. And that’s not all. As you can see from Figure 1.1, there are many avenues for intervention, where social psychology can be put to use and its effects on learning assessed.

The major concepts of social psychology all pertain to an instructor’s performance: Self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-fulfilling prophecy,
social comparison, confirmation bias, to name but a few can all influence how an instructor performs. One of the most influential books on teaching, Parker Palmer’s *The courage to teach* (2007) describes how it is critical for a teacher to know themselves well and teach to their strengths. Palmer suggests that techniques, even though they can be learned, are not the hallmarks of a good teacher to the extent that character is. Whereas Palmer is an inspiration to many, his book and many of its ilk do not provide tangible footholds for rigorous study and exploration, for developing a theory of good teaching and learning. The good news is that many of the social psychological terms listed in the preceding sentences underlie what Palmer and many others (e.g., Bain, 2004; Brookfield, 2009) allude to in reference to what makes skillful teachers. Unfortunately, very little pedagogical research has explicitly used these social psychological concepts to drive design and hypothesizing. We hope this book and this chapter changes this status.

Many of the same social psychological concepts (e.g., self-handicapping) also influence student behavior. Students often chuckle and nod their heads in disbelief when hearing that participants in Milgram’s (1963) obedience study continued just because the experimenter said “the experiment must continue.” They often fail to notice the extent to which they do things just because the professor asks them to as well. Of course many instructors would like students to do more of what they are told (e.g., read the book) and perhaps there are answers in how to do this in studies of obedience. In like vein, we can use research on phenomena such as the false consensus effect and social norming to decrease inappropriate behaviors. Do students text message in class because they think it is normative to do so? Do students overestimate how many other students text in class and so feel more comfortable doing it? Do students falsely believe that everyone else in class thinks texting is appropriate? These questions are all explained by research in social psychology. Changing social norms has been used to reduce smoking behavior in general (Ahern, Galea, Hubbarde, & Syme, 2009) and in college communities (Gurung, 2010) perhaps it can be used to change classroom behavior including how students study. The false consensus effect, the tendency to attribute own views to others, can also be a powerful explanatory force. In a recent study, Wojcieszak and Price (2009) assessed the association between individual views on several issues such as the death penalty, gun regulation and teaching morality in public schools. They found that there was a correlation between personal and perceived opinion and that those who strongly favored the three policies estimated public support to be higher than do those who are unfavorable or moderate. Studies such as this one provide a good model for how to study our students’ attitudes and design ways to change their behaviors. But again, apart from a few studies such as the one described above, little to no pedagogical research explicitly utilizes social psychological theories and concepts to understand student learning.
In Conclusion

There are a variety of teaching and learning problems that instructors notice on an ongoing basis. There is a correspondingly large volume of social psychological research and theorizing that can be directly applied to better understanding and solving pedagogical problems. Doing pedagogical research and practicing the scholarship of teaching and learning capitalizing on social psychology can greatly advance our understandings of classroom processes. We have identified a few of the many areas above. The list goes on. We know students often feel disconnected in large classrooms. Research on accountability and reducing social loafing can be invoked to remedy the situation and increase engagement. Many students do not work well in groups. Research on group dynamics provide helpful guidelines on how to set up group work. When one takes a close look at what social psychology has studied and the results of years of research from labs a whole new world of applications for the classroom open up. Whereas it is beyond the scope of this chapter to describe and then extensively detail how each social psychological concept can relate to teaching and learning, we hope that the brief glossary in Table 1.1 combined with Figure 1.1 provides the reader with enough to whet their interest for more. We hope they are driven to pick up a social psychology textbook or use an online database to learn more about a concept we have sketched out, and to then map that onto a teaching challenge they have faced or an innovative idea they have had to increase student learning. If we capitalize on the wealth of social psychological research and apply it to the classroom, our teaching and our students’ learning will undoubtedly be the richer.

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