

Psychology 130. Delay of Gratification

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A Brief Overview

This course will review the research on delay of gratification. We will cover what makes it in general so tough, what situations make it possible, who can do it and what the implications of this ability are. We will also examine the long-term stability of the ability to delay gratification, with a foray into the issue of the stability of individual differences in general. Procrastination, the flip-side of delay of gratification, will also be covered. We will draw from research in social, personality, and animal psychology, as well as economics.

Students are expected to do each day's reading prior to the class. Because students will be called on to discuss the topics, failure to do so should become painfully obvious (obvious to the teacher, painful to the student). The articles are all available in a reader from Soft Reserves. In addition to doing the reading and contributing in class, students will take a final exam (essay format). You will be evaluated based on this final exam and some combination of the quantity and quality of your contributions during class.

Readings

Class 2: Why Organisms Act Impulsively

Ainslie, G. (1975). Specious reward: A behavioral theory of impulsiveness and impulse control. *Psychological Bulletin*, 82, 463-496.

Class 3: Studying DoG in Rats and Humans

Mischel, W., Ebbesen, E.B., & Zeiss, A.R. (1972). Cognitive and attentional mechanisms in delay of gratification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 21, 204-218.

Ainslie, G (1974). Impulse control in pigeons. *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, 21, 485-489.

Abrams, D.B., & Wilson, G.T. (1983). Alcohol, sexual arousal, and self-control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, 188-198.

Class 4: The Attack on Personality

Shweder, R.A. (1975). How relevant is an individual difference theory of personality? *Journal of Personality*, 43, 455-484.

Mischel, W. (1968). *Personality and Assessment*. John Wiley & Sons: New York. Chapters 2, 3, & 4

Class 5: In Defense of Personality

Bem, D.J., & Allen, A. (1974). On predicting some of the people some of the time: The search for cross-situational consistencies in behavior. *Psychological Review*, 81, 506-520.

Epstein, S. (1979). The stability of behavior: I. On predicting most of the people much of the time. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1097-1126.

Class 6: A New Synthesis?

Mischel, W., & Peake, P. K. (1982). Beyond *deja vu* in the search for cross-situational consistency. *Psychological Review*, 89, 730-755.

Funder, D.C., & Harris, M.J. (1986). Experimental effects and person effects in delay of gratification. *American Psychologist*, 41, 476-477.

Kihlstrom, J.F. (1986). More on determinants of delay of gratification. *American Psychologist*, 41, 477-479.

Funder, D.C. (1986). Reply to Kihlstrom. *American Psychologist*, 41, 479.

Kenrick, D.T., & Funder, D.C. (1988). Profiting from controversy: Lessons from the person-situation debate. *American Psychologist*, 43, 23-43.

Class 7: Personality of the Delayer

Shoda, Y., Mischel, W., & Peake, P.K. (1990). Predicting adolescent cognitive and self-regulatory competencies from preschool delay of gratification: Identifying diagnostic conditions. *Developmental Psychology*, 26, 978-986.

Funder, D.C., Block, J.H., & Block, J. (1983). Delay of gratification: Some longitudinal personality correlates. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, 1198-1213.

Class 8: More on the Delayer

Mischel, W., & Mischel, W. (1983). Development of children's knowledge of self-control strategies. *Child Development*, 54, 603-619.

Bonato, D.P., & Boland, F.J. (1983). Delay of gratification in obese children. *Addictive Behaviors*, 8, 71-74

Milgram, N.A., Dangour, W., & Raviv, A. (1992). Situational and personal determinants of academic procrastination. *The Journal of General Psychology*, 119, 123-133.

Ray, J.J., & Najman, J.M. (1986). The generalizability of deferment of gratification. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 126, 117-119.

Class 9: Societal & Clinical Approaches

Elster, J. (1992). Intertemporal choice and political thought. In G. Loewenstein and J. Elster (Eds.), *Choice Over Time*. Russell Sage Foundation: New York.

Mischel, W. (1961). Father-absence and delay of gratification. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63, 116-124.

Green, L., Fry, A.F., & Myerson, J. (1994). Discounting of delayed rewards: A life-span comparison. *Psychological Science*, 5, 33-36.

Walls, R.T., & Smith, T.S. (1970). Development of preference for delayed reinforcement in disadvantaged children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 61, 118-123.

Class 10: Procrastination and anticipation

- Bertelson, HS, Smith, TD, Shoell, NG, & Miller, W. (1987). *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 2, 315-323.
- Loewenstein, G, & Prelec, D. (1991). Negative time preference. *American Economic Review*, 81, 347-352.
- Ainslie, G. (1992). *Picoeconomics: The Strategic Interaction of Successive Motivational States with the Person*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6.