



Cognitive Impacts of Wealth (Rob McEntarffer)

An assessment activity on the social psychological aspects of economic inequality and privilege in the United States. Students form into groups, watch a video, and define key social psychological terms. I have used this activity in AP and non-AP Psychology courses in the Social Psychology unit. It works as a good “capstone” activity because students need to define many of the important terms from the unit in their own words and how the terms apply in research studies described in the video.

1) Introduction:

- Mini-discussion: Why are prices marked as “something.99 cents?” (Framing)
- Discussion. What do we know about economic inequality in the U.S.? What has happened to inequality recently?
- What might these ideas have to do with each other? What impact, if any, does wealth have on our psychology? (talk about stereotypes?)

2) Assessment Activity: In a small group, look up these terms from the text (groups can divide and conquer) - make sure you can define them in your own words

- altruism
- outgroup bias
- ingroup bias
- scapegoat theory
- just-world phenomenon
- individualism
- collectivism
- framing effect
- cognitive dissonance
- fundamental attribution error
- confirmation bias

3) Watch the video, take notes on anything from the video that reminds you of the terms you looked up: “Money on the Mind” (PBS) at <http://www.pbs.org/video/money-on-the-mind-1378936308/> (also available on YouTube under the title, “Why Those Who Feel They Have Less Give More” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luqGrz-Y_Lc)

4) Discussion: look at your notes on the terms in step 2 – did you see examples of the terms in the video? How do these terms help explain the research presented in the video?

5) Possible short answer essay writing prompts:

- The term “Privilege” is included in the video, but not your textbook. Which term or terms from your textbook are most similar or related to the term Privilege? Explain your answer.
- Think about this quote from the video - “What the mind does to make sense of advantage and disadvantage...” – how does this quote relate to what you’ve learned about how the brain and cognition?
- What did you learn from the video about the relationships between altruism and happiness, longevity, etc. How should any of this research impact OUR behaviors?