

Psychology
Introduction to Social Psychology

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Development of a Jesuit Identification Measure and a Sense of Becoming
“Women and Men for Others”

Course:

A primary purpose of PSYC 261 is to introduce students to the basic concepts, theories, and research in the field of Social Psychology with the hope that the students will be able to apply the content to aid in their understanding of social interactions. While “Walking Ignatian” themes were incorporated into multiple chapters, (i.e., Behavior and Attitudes, Aggression, etc.), the activities associated with the Social Self-concept and Altruism chapters will be the focus of this report.

Objective 1:

Critically consider what it means to claim the social identities of “Xavier Student” and “a student at a Jesuit institution”. Additionally, modify pre-existing social identity measures to gain an understanding of the students’ understanding of the “Xavier Student” and “Jesuit Identity”.

Identification Activity:

Incorporated into a week of lectures, readings, and discussion of the social self, students were divided into dyads (in some cases groups of three students) and asked to generate an agreed upon schema for “Xavier Student”. A spokesperson representing each small group presented the created schema, after which the class as a whole discussed common emerging themes. The characteristics/attributes of the “Xavier Student” included service, Catholic, politically involved, partiers, higher socioeconomic status, open-mindedness, and well rounded were prominent.

The groups then used the same process to generate schemas for the “Jesuit Identity”. The characteristics/attributes of the “Jesuit Student” included service, spiritually, focus on continual education, respect for all, valuing and contributing to a sense of community, global responsibility, and holding high academic expectations.

The students concluded that although there were indeed commonalities across identities (i.e. service), it was possible that for these identities to develop independently of each other.

After completing the open-end portion of the activity, students were presented 55 items taken from a variety of social identity measures. Dyads were asked to indicate those items that they felt would be valid measures of a “Xavier Student” identity as well as items that would be indicators of the “Jesuit Identity”. Agreement between more than 75% of the dyads resulted in the item’s inclusion in the measure.

The students completed both the “XU Student” identity measure (see Table 1) and the “Jesuit identity” measure (see table 2). Providing empirical evidence for the students’ conclusions mentioned above, scores on the “XU Student” identity measure were positively correlated to the scores on the “Jesuit Identity” measure, $r(19) = 0.49, p < .05$. Thus, the more one identified as being a “Xavier Student”, the higher one scored on the “Jesuit Identity” measure.

Table 1: Student Created Measure of “XU Student” Identity

Agreement Items:

- I am proud to be a Xavier student.
- I am a Xavier student.
- As a whole, Xavier students are united.
- There is a feeling of unity among persons who are Xavier students.
- I am glad I am a Xavier student.
- Being a Xavier student is an important part of my self-identity.
- Overall, I am proud to be a Xavier student.

Personal Characteristics:

- Disciplined
- Moral
- Honest

Note: Cronbach’s alpha = 0.87

Table 2: Student Created Measure of “Jesuit Identity”

Agreement Items:

- Those whom endorse Jesuit values can always count on each other.
- Being someone whom endorses Jesuit values is important to the way I view myself.
- There is a feeling of unity among persons who endorse Jesuit values.
- Being a person whom endorses Jesuit values is an important part of my self-identity.
- Overall, I am proud to be a person whom endorses Jesuit values.

Personal Characteristics:

- Respects authority
- Disciplined
- Dedicated
- Conservative
- Moral
- Law Abiding
- Ethical
- Traditional
- Honest
- Lives by principles
- Likes to worship
- Prays often
- Goes to church
- Depends on God
- Spiritual
- Knows a lot about religion
- Shows respect for sacred things
- Active in the church
- Devoted to my religion
- Committed
- Strong beliefs
- Faithful
- Believes in higher power
- Devout
- Devoted
- Tries to know and please God

Note: Cronbach’s alpha = 0.93

Objective 2:

Complete an altruism assignment that includes hands-on volunteering and a reflection paper that compares/contrasts social psychological and Ignatian analysis of these altruistic activities.

Altruism Activity:

Over the course of the semester, students were required to spend at least one hour of their time volunteering. After completing the altruism activity, students composed an application paper analyzes their experiences from a social psychological perspective. The students were also encouraged to address how the Jesuit perspective of altruism compares/contrasts to social psychological perspective.

Students' volunteer experiences were diverse. Some students spent a week long alternative break preparing a summer camp for children with AIDS, while others spent a couple of hours working at a homeless shelter. Many students tutored young children, while others spent time socializing with the elderly. (For a list of volunteer activities/locations, please see table 3).

Table3: Volunteer Locations/Activities

Alternative Break	Saint Gertrude (babysitting)
Battered Women's Shelter	Saint Vincent de Paul
Danville Elementary	Senior Citizens, Inc
Drop Inn Center Freestore Foodbank	Sherwood Elementary Carnival
Mercy Works	S. Avondale Stopped with Roman
Our Daily Bread	Umbrella Family Child Care
Pregnancy Center	Winton Woods
Nativity Academy	R.C. Hindsdale School

Included below are excerpts from the students' application papers.

“The altruism assignment that I chose to do was an absolutely amazing, eye opening experience. I learned so much in such a short about of time. I am looking forward to continuing to educate people about these issues, along with getting involved in more social justice programs at Xavier.”

“I believe that if the end result is helping others, the motivations are not extremely important in short-term assisting. However, for a long-term commitment to altruism, a person is more likely to continue helping if they have a sincere concern for others and are not seeking their own internal or external rewards. A Jesuit-based education supports this genuine altruism, and people who volunteer should strive for this attitude when serving.”

“Through my experiences at St. Vincent De Paul I have learned that it takes courage and humility to ask for help and admit that you can’t do it all by yourself. I also learned the value of persistence. Even when times are tough, people keep going and search for ways to get back on their feet and provide for their family. Volunteering also provided perspective and made me realize that small everyday problems aren’t all that bad in the scheme of things and that I should count my blessings. Volunteering is one way I can live up to the Jesuit identity and truly be a woman for others.”

“...the Jesuit mission exemplifies the empathy- induced route of altruism. The honest concern for others and serving to better society and focusing on other people and their needs are the key differences between empathy-induced and egotistic-induced altruism. A Jesuit-based education supports this genuine altruism and people who volunteer should strive for this attitude when serving.”

“I can sincerely say that going to the Drop Inn Center was an eye-opening experience for me. I love where I am from, but going to the Drop Inn Center made me realize how naïve I am to the world’s problems.”

“While the two perspectives approach altruism differently, they would both agree that any action taken to better society, whether entirely altruistic or unselfish or not, would greatly help the world in which we live today.”

Many students indicated that a parallel exists between social psychology’s social responsibility norm and the Jesuit perspective that one develops, “A world view that is oriented to responsible action“. Additionally, students noted the discrepancy between the perspectives in that social psychology tends to emphasize the motivation for helping acts. Most students seemed to endorse the following student submitted quote, “the people you are helping don’t need your reasons, just your help.”

Despite being linguistically more demanding than a typical homework assignment, students enjoyed the Altruism Activity and expressed intent to continue helping others, something consistent with the students’ Jesuit and Xavier identities.