Tenured Faculty Review (2023)
Paul H. White

As requested for my tenured faculty review, below I outline my professional activities over the past five years since my last review in 2018, along with my goals for the next five years. Each section has an overall statement, a description of recent past work, and my future plans in the areas of research, teaching, and service.

First, a general statement about my progress and my perspective since the last review. When putting together my materials five years ago, I felt an internal pressure and "obligation" (and some external) to lay out a timeline for my work that I was not sure would fit how I viewed myself and my contributions to the department, university, and field. Striving for the ideal is good, and I took the initial steps towards it. Yet even before we began alterations due to Covid-19, my schedule for research was delayed in 2019. I did supervise three Honors projects that year, plus the start of the fourth one. However, the lab research as my main goals did not begin in earnest until 2021 with a former graduate student and my new primary student. This has continued with the additional students that joined our program last Fall Semester.

In reflecting on the past five years, I have a better understanding of my goals and talents for the next five years. Leading a productive research lab, training graduate and undergraduate students, and helping them achieve job placements in the careers they want to pursue is still one of my goals. I am viewing this with a more realistic eye regarding my timeline for projects, incorporation of students into them, and the production of manuscripts and presentations.

However, it is not my only goal. I strongly believe that more can and should be done regarding diversifying our field, not just in terms of the people engaged in academia, but also in the questions asked and how information is disseminated to the larger community. To that end, I plan to continue working on issues related to equity, diversity, and inclusion regarding departmental, college, and campus communities. This includes working with committees and individuals that promote EDI issues, and to continue investigating ways to improve the climate for those here now, the best ways to educate others on EDI, and find avenues to increase our diversity for the future.

These endeavors will take place in my roles on the IRB, in which we are doing more outreach in the larger community to educate about research on campus, along with on campus workshops and changes to promote more equity in the projects that come through the IRB. They will take place in my classrooms and lab, in which my ultimate goal is to help students become better consumers of research, science, and general information, while also exposing them to diverse researchers and perspectives. Finally, they will take place in my role as a faculty member on different committees within and outside of the department. The next five years for me will have a clear eye on setting the stage for the next (younger) generations.

Research:

My overall research program investigates what I have labeled as the "three P's": Persuasion, Prejudice/Stereotypes, Performance (group effects). The basic question is to understand the

motivational processes that underlie behavior and how the incorporation of underrepresented groups and diversity issues may affect those processes and resultant outcomes in these behavioral domains. Part of the goal is to explore the overlapping effects of these three areas.

Since my last review, the priorities in the lab have shifted. While I am still interested in work on issues such as stereotype and social identity threat, group processes on performance motivation, and perceptions of prejudice for targets and for perpetrators, those are more "side" projects for the lab. Below, I outline some of the past work, the current research, and future research that are the core of the program.

Preemptive disclosure

A central core of my research program is the investigation and expansion of the work on stealing thunder (e.g., Williams, Bourgeois & Croyle,1993). This concept refers to revealing negative information about oneself before others do as a tactic to reduce the negative impact the information has on judgments in trial or political situations. Williams et al. (1993) demonstrated that one way stealing thunder works is by increasing the positive attributions made about the person who steals thunder, in particular, the person's credibility and honesty. Those positive attributions, in turn, diminish the negative feelings one should have based solely on the negative information. Therefore, stealing thunder appears to work as a peripheral cue (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Based on that assumption, I proposed that a possible limitation on its effectiveness would be situations that instigate processing of the presented information because scrutiny hinders reliance on peripheral cues. In a series of studies (Prince & White, 2002; White & Williams, 1998; White, Williams, & Joe, 2000; all conference presentations), we found support that factors instigating message processing (e.g., ethnicity of the source, individual need for cognition) hindered the positive effects of stealing thunder. When message processing likelihood was low, we replicated past stealing thunder findings. Not only that, but in our work & by others (e.g., Howard, Brewer, & Williams, 2006), there appeared to be a backlash, such that attempts to steal thunder created more negative outcomes when people were processing the message, which we found was due to psychological reactance (Prince & White, 2002).

Currently, we are rebooting & expanding this line of study in a couple of ways. In stealing thunder situations, one could argue that if the audience perceives that the person stealing thunder is engaging in hypocritical behavior, this may induce interpretations of the person being manipulative & attempting to not take responsibility for the past negative behavior. If so, we predicted a similar barrier as reactance, in that positive attributions are not created, thus reducing the effectiveness of stealing thunder. In our initial test using a political context (Call & White, 2022, unpublished data), stealing thunder did not replicate with or without hypocrisy. It seems the perceived political affiliation of the candidate may be driving the voting decision more than the other information about the candidate, which did not occur in past research.

Given the increase in hyper-partisanship (e.g., Pennycook et al., 2022; van Baar & FeldmanHall, 2021), this may have impacted how participants viewed hypothetical candidates that matched or mis-matched their own political ideologies (e.g., Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers, & Judd, 2015), which had not been explored in past research on stealing thunder. Follow up work is

underway to test the role of participants' political ideology on the outcome & effectiveness in this domain.

In addition, we plan to test if the domain itself may present limits to stealing thunder effectiveness. That is, when applied in a political setting, the audience may approach the information with a sense of identity & level of perceived knowledge that is not the same for a legal or business context, due in part political polarization. Thus, stealing thunder under these circumstances may be viewed more skeptically or with greater attention. We plan to investigate this in a series of studies with different domains.

Relatedly, Howard et al. (2006) demonstrated that increasing message processing did hinder stealing thunder in a legal context. While our lab showed that with a political context over 20 years ago, as mentioned, the views of politics have shifted since then. We plan to include a test of message processing limitations for stealing thunder as part of the investigation of domain context.

As part of this work, we plan to test the possible mechanisms for how stealing thunder works in a dual pathway to persuasion framework (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). As previously stated, an increase in the positive attributions of the person stealing thunder appears to work as a peripheral cue/heuristic that can be undermined by increasing message elaboration. Another possible mechanism is what I call spin control and it can take place in two ways. First, the person stealing thunder may frame the negative information in the best light by attempting to explain why it is there or to downplay its relevance. The second way is the audience may change the meaning of the information as an attempt to understand why the person revealed it (e.g., it must not be that bad because people do not confess negative things about themselves). I argue that spin control would work under processing situations and not peripheral situations because the "spin" would serve as a persuasive argument. For example, while stealing thunder was unsuccessful for a stigmatized group member in our previous research due to increased scrutiny of the message, if the person puts a cogent spin while stealing thunder, then stealing thunder may more effective than no spin and/or for a non-stigmatized member who attempts to spin the information (due to less processing of the information in the latter situation).

We are working to broaden the general concept of stealing thunder beyond the "negative" aspect. That is, "stealing thunder" may apply to any situation in which a person wants to preemptively use or disclose potential information for his or her own gain. While most research has focused on negative information, this could apply to positive, as well (e.g., announcing your friend's pregnancy before she can do so; telling your family of your surprise wedding before your brother talks about his promotion). These positive situations may accomplish the same general goal as negative ones: to boost yourself and gain an advantage over someone else.

We propose that preemptive disclosure can be an effective strategy to diminish the impact of the other party's information. The results of a pilot Honors student project (Laubacher & White, 2019) replicated the stealing thunder effect for negative information. In a first test of stealing spotlight (i.e., revelation of someone else's positive information by a third party before the person could do so), we found that disclosing the positive information (e.g., got a scholarship) preemptively, the audience viewed the emotional reaction to the information less positively

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compared to when it was not revealed by a third party first, plus they viewed the person stealing spotlight in a negative way. In our full experiment (Call & White, 2023), we found similar results on the attributions & impressions made about the person stealing spotlight (viewed negatively) but did not replicate the reaction to the information. Current research is underway to replicate these studies.

Finally, the goal is to develop a general framework for preemptively disclosure. As part of this work, we are conducting a meta-analysis on stealing thunder as currently operationalized (i.e., revelation of negative information first). This will guide our work outside of what has been outlined already.

Stigmatized effects in persuasive situations

Another line of research investigates how factors viewed as peripheral to message content affect attitude change and behavior, along with perceptions of the source of the communication. I have been particularly interested in the motivational mechanisms that may help to explain effects of "peripheral" factors such as ethnicity and stigmatization in the process of persuasion.

Due to the change in what is acceptable by society regarding intergroup relations over the past 50 years, a shift has resulted in more subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination that may not always be in the perpetrator's awareness (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). In the context of these subtle effects, and guided by the dual pathway models of persuasion (e.g., Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), I investigated if ethnicity of the person presenting the message (source) works as a "like/dislike" heuristic (e.g., more persuaded by likable than dislikable sources, Chaiken, 1980) or if the shift in prejudice would lead to ethnicity serving a different function, such as motivating people to process the information. I found that for White participants, exposure to certain ethnic sources (i.e., Black or Hispanic compared to White, Asian American, or American Indian) instigated message processing did not serve as a simple heuristic (White & Harkins, 1994). In my follow-up work, I found that this occurred for another non-ethnic stigmatized group (i.e., homosexuals) as the message source (Petty, Fleming, & White, 1999), and it occurred when messages were presented about these groups, as well (Fleming, Petty, & White, 2005).

I have argued that the motivation for processing is related to the shift in how people respond to stigmatized groups in contemporary times (White & Harkins, 1994). That is, majority group members' views in the United States toward some minority groups have changed from mostly negative feelings to attitudes that may now consist of positive regard (due to the strong pressure to endorse egalitarian values) and negative feelings (due to the cultural and historical atmosphere of discrimination) toward the groups (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Therefore, they may be very concerned about appearing non-egalitarian to themselves or others, without some justification. The concern may have led them to be motivated to process messages presented by these sources in order to be fair and give the source his or her due. In my work with Petty and Fleming, we found that people who score as "low" on explicit prejudice measures are the ones who engaged in message processing. We proposed that low prejudiced people might play a "watchdog" role, in that they want to try to control their own possible undesired negative reactions toward the group. In addition, given that people may know or think that other people

are prejudiced toward the group, they may be watching out for the potential negative bias those others may display in interactions with the group. Therefore, people's concerns over how they may appear to themselves and/or to others in interactions with members of stigmatized groups (wanting to meet either external, societal standards or their own internal standards) is the motivation to scrutinize the message content.

An irony of the watchdog hypothesis is that the more careful consideration given by observers because of concern about potential bias may also create a negative outcome for the stigmatized person relative to a non-stigmatized person. That is, processing the message reveals both good and bad arguments in the message. If the message consists of specious arguments, then people will reject the message. However, if one is not processing the message (which is more likely to be the case for non-stigmatized sources), then flawed arguments can "slide by" and the message will be accepted. Therefore, stigmatized sources in some respect may be held to a higher standard than non-stigmatized sources in situations where a communication would not normally receive the same level of perusal.

An implication of this work is that perceived audience characteristics may influence the concern over egalitarian treatment (by themselves or others), thus the motivation to elaborate. In addition to what we have found in the past with stigmatized sources, an intriguing possibility based on our theory is those who hold negative views toward the source's group may be motivated to watch out for a positive bias by others. That is, prejudiced people may pay close attention to messages by stigmatized groups if they believe others will give the source a "pass" or are predisposed to be in favor of the source. A study to explore this idea was planned but delayed over the past few years. However, with a new graduate student, we are revamping the study to test this concept having a member of the LGB community as the source of the communication & the presentation context being a potential hostile or friendly environment (e.g., speech at a private religious school).

A related project with Jasmine Norman & our graduate students (e.g., Neal et al., 2023) is exploring the use of pronouns in persuasive communications. Research has shown that nonbinary & gender nonconforming individuals can create "gender trouble" & others may respond negatively (e.g., Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). This suggest that having "they" pronouns may create a similar watchdog motivation for processing the information for some participants, while others may use the label as a reason to reject the source.

Teaching:

The saying, "Give a person a fish and she or he eats for the day; teach a person to fish and she or he eats for a lifetime" sums up my overall approach to teaching and supervising. My goal is to get students to step beyond memorizing items and into the use and application of the material. In addition, I attempt to give, or at least direct to, the resources to engage in such endeavors (what good is it to teach people to fish if they do not know or have access to a pole, line, hook, etc.). It is my belief that this goal may establish two crucial elements for students to grow in their development. First, the fulfillment of the goal allows students to evaluate theories and research related to the topic. Second, it provides the "tools" and skills that would allow students to go out and evaluate, explore, etc., these new ideas and beliefs concerning the material, which may encourage students to take these skills and apply them to other courses and aspects of life.

I strive toward this goal in all my teaching, no matter the size or format of the class (e.g., lecture, seminar) or the material (e.g., introduction to a topic, specialized issue within a field). To reach the goal, I first attempt to display enthusiasm for the course material through discussions of how the topic plays a role in my life. In addition, I attempt to show the students how their lives are affected by the topic. In doing so, it brings the subject matter alive for them. As some of my research has shown, by increasing the personal relevance of the topic for people, you can increase how much material people retain and elaborate. One way that I have found to accomplish this is to discuss classic theories and their contemporary counterparts, present pop culture and current issues as examples of the theories, and then challenge the students to think of future directions for these areas. This allows students to see where we have been and why, how we got where we are now, and to speculate where we should go in the field. In addition, I view it as very important to incorporate diversity issues in all of my courses. Therefore, course materials and discussions include topics and viewpoints dealing with underrepresented group perspectives, not as extra or "tacked on" information, but as material crucial for a full understanding of the course. It is my ultimate goal in teaching and training to help others develop and sharpen their ability to become better consumers of information, research, and science.

Since my last review, I have revamped the Psy 2010 course again for the online component (e.g., rewrote and updated lecture videos in Fall 2019, revised assignments). I added to the course "Spotlight" interviews with faculty, graduate students, other faculty here at the University of Utah and elsewhere, along with former undergraduate and graduate students, and other contacts who hold academic and non-academic positions. This is done to give current students possible connections and to demonstrate the wide variety of occupations and usage of psychological understanding and research for them as major, minors, or those just taking a few psychology courses. In the next year or so, it will be time to refresh the lecture material.

I continue to revise my Intergroup Relations course (cross-listed with Ethnic Studies) and the Honors version of the course for Psychology. I have incorporated having more guest speakers from the community (e.g., local politicians, journalists, activists, colleagues who work in areas of prejudice and stereotyping research). It is my goal to offer the Honors version more often (maybe on a 3-year cycle) as I have been asked by students about this possibility.

I have continued to teach my undergraduate Attitudes and Persuasion course every two years in the Fall Semester to coincide with the Presidential and "Midterm" election cycles but may shift to the "odd" years before the Presidential cycle (to capture the Primary season). For that course, again, I have brought in more guest speakers (e.g., journalists and media figures, the Lt. Governor in 2018 & 2022 to discuss election and voting). I revised the assignments for this class to challenge students on how they gather and process information (e.g., a paper on why or why not to vote).

Another teaching goal is to continue offering the graduate seminar on attitudes and persuasion as needed. Not only has the course been well received, it also has helped shape some research ideas for the students, and for me. In addition, I hope to continue a co-taught graduate seminar with Carol Sansone on motivation and diversity.

Finally, while I have always strived to be proactive in reaching out to students, it was just a fortunate oddmatch that I increased these efforts during the 2019-20 academic year as a result of some discussions with students the previous year, especially for the online course. I revamped my courses to incorporate remote options when needed for on-campus courses, shifted exams to be taken at home with a greater emphasis on use of the material, and having "check in" events with the students (e.g., sending email reminders about assignments, more active encouragement to contact me, sending a "welcome" note at the start of the semester). One thing that is now part of my teaching of all classes is a "Class in the Time of Zoom" note that acknowledges the issues we have faced over the past few years and will continue to do so. It encourages students to speak up about potential barriers or struggles during the semester, along with suggestions for getting support. Students have been pleased with and surprised by the outreach. The goal is to create a "brave" space environment in the class where students can feel motivated and supported in discussing topics, raising questions, and even having those awkward conversations with their classmates and me. As I tell them, we (including me) are here to learn from each other.

Graduate Student Training

In graduate training, I attempt to help facilitate the student's development as an independent and critical thinker. I try to provide structure and guidance, as in an apprenticeship model, to help in acquisition of the basic research and theoretical skills needed for professional growth. At the same time, I encourage students to develop and pursue the concepts and research directions that are interesting to them, even if outside my own interests. Under both systems, I try to have students think about and question the research topic at the conceptual "big picture" level.

My goals from my last review were to work more with undergraduate students, and to begin supervising graduate students as primary and secondary advisor. Since then, I mentored four Honors students (3 in 2019, 1 in 2020) and plan to mentor more over the next five years. I accepted my first primary graduate student since 2014 (Logan Call, 2020), a second one (Emma Franklin, 2022), began working with a secondary student officially (Daphne Castro Lingl, 2020; left in 2021), and have a new secondary/co-student (Brittany Clark, 2022, with Carol Sansone). The PPP Lab began having formal meetings again in 2020-2021 with graduate and undergraduate students. Jackie Chen & I began having joint lab meetings (SCIP-PPP-y) that year, as well. It is my hope to continue supervising students with new ones every two to three years.

Service:

Over the years, I have viewed service not as a "necessary evil", but as a crucial component to the vitality of any organization. In my role when hired as a "diversity scholar", service has been a major contribution that I felt needed to be done. While I have done a lot of service, I do turn down more offers and requests than I accept to do.

Since my last review, my administrative and committee roles for the department have been as member of the CSBS Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee (2021-Current), member of the Social Psychology Job Search (2022-2023). I continue as a member of the IRB (since 2008). For CSBS EDI, I co-chaired the design and implementation a college-wide climate survey (Fall

2021), with presentations to the Dean, and to the individual department/unit leaders (2022). We are in the process of continuing to analyze the results, create a website for the college, and write a "best practices" manuscript.

For the college and university, I am a Vice-Chair of the IRB (since 2016), along with a member of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy Council: Climate Working Group (2022-Current). I served as a Graduate School Internal Reviewer for Education, Culture, and Society (2022), and as a mentor and consultant for the African American Doctoral Student Initiative (AADSI) (ended 2022). In addition, I have been a panelist on different workshops (e.g., transition to online and remote teaching; use of crowdsourcing platforms and IRB considerations; submitting to Ford Foundation Fellowship).

I have given talks and interviews in the larger community on issues related to social psychology (e.g., KSL workshop on new bias; Psi Chi Movie Night; newspaper and podcast interviews on intergroup relations and on attitudes). Finally, I am a consulting editor for PSPB (2021-Current) and as a panel reviewer for the Ford Foundation Fellowship (Psychology) (2019-Current), serving as the panel's Co-Chair for 2023.

My goals for service are to continue my deliberate reduction of service roles that do not fit within my intellectual and research endeavors, or do not help to promote psychology and diversity issues in the broader community. I plan to continue my work with IRB as I see it as a connection with research. In addition, I will continue to work with various EDI groups on campus.

Now that AADSI has been halted, and Ford Foundation will discontinue in its current form after this year, my service in those capacities will end. It is my hope to be of service to assist our department and college in developing another training program similar to SROP-Psychology (e.g., year-long; ongoing mentorship) with the focus on underrepresented and underserved populations. I know of discussions to create such programs and feel that my talents could help in those endeavors as they not only diversify the field in terms of scholars, but also in terms of the scholarship that is produced.