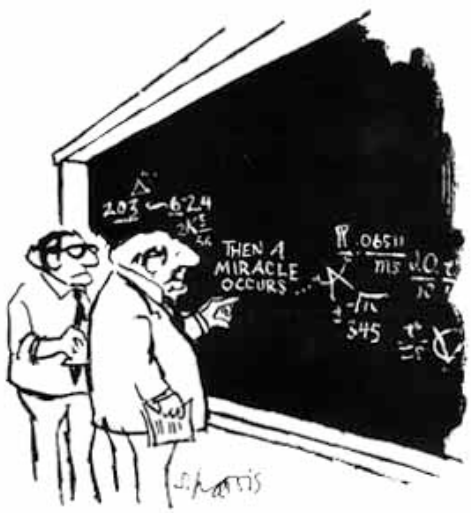
Then a Miracle Occurs:
Focusing on Behavior in Social Psychological Theory and Research



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Inaugural
Purdue Symposium on Psychological Sciences

Sponsored by the Social Psychology Area
of the
Department of Psychological Sciences
at
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN

With generous support from the late James V. Bradley, Ph.D.

Monday May 5 & Tuesday May 6, 2008

Then a Miracle Occurs: Focusing on Behavior in Social Psychological Theory and Research

Organized by
Christopher R. Agnew, Donal E. Carlston,
William G. Graziano, & Janice R. Kelly

On behalf of the Department of Psychological Sciences at Purdue University, we welcome you to the inaugural ***Purdue Symposium on Psychological Sciences***. This new recurring event showcases current and emerging topics within the psychological sciences and will form the basis for an edited volume following each symposium (with this year's volume to be published by Oxford University Press).

Faculty members from the social psychology program were asked to organize the first symposium and we are delighted to have the opportunity to do so. We selected a symposium theme that we feel warrants detailed attention by social psychologists: *behavior*. Although there has been great progress in social psychology elucidating the *internal* cognitive, affective and motivational underpinnings of behavior, there has been less work focused on *external* behavior itself. As you will see from the schedule of talks, this symposium gathers leading thinkers in social psychology to consider theoretical and empirical issues relevant to behavior, across the field and with respect to various subfields of social psychological inquiry. Each contributor will highlight theoretical and/or measurement issues about behavior, including how behavior is treated in current social psychological theory and research.

We have divided our coverage of behavior into four sections spread over our two-day symposium: (1) Behavior and Social Cognition, (2) Behavior and Individual Differences, (3) Behavior and Interpersonal Processes, and (4) Behavior in Group Processes. Despite the imposed sections, we hope and expect there to be significant overlap in issues examined across sections. As our guiding cartoon emphasizes (see program cover), there are a number of topics with respect to behavior that could benefit from focused attention. Although a miracle would be welcome in the coming days, we will settle for the opportunity this symposium affords to focus on behavior. We are indebted to our speakers for their valuable time and input.

Program

Stewart Center, Room 306

Monday May 5, 2008

7:45 – 8:45 am: Continental Breakfast *(for all registrants)*

8:45 – 9:00: Welcome and Logistics

Behavior and Social Cognition
(Moderated by Don Carlston, Purdue University)

9:00 – 9:40: Does Emotion Cause Behavior, Apart from Making People Do Stupid, Destructive Things?
Roy Baumeister, Florida State University

9:40 – 10:20: Habit: From Overt Behavior to Mental Events
Bas Verplanken, University of Bath

10:20 – 10:40: Coffee Break

10:40 – 11:20: Planning to Act
Peter Gollwitzer, New York University

11:20 – 12:00: Distinguishing Between Prediction and Influence: Multiple Processes Underlying Attitude-Behavior Consistency
Lee Fabrigar, Queen's University

12:00 – 12:30: Questions / Comments on Behavior and Social Cognition Talks

12:30 – 2:00: Lunch *(for all registrants; in Stewart Center, Room 302)*

Monday May 5, 2008
(continued)

Behavior and Individual Differences
(Moderated by Bill Graziano, Purdue University)

2:00 – 2:40: Developing an Ecological Framework for Establishing Connections among Dispositions, Behaviors, and Environments: From Affordances to Behavior Settings
Reuben Baron, University of Connecticut

2:40 – 3:20: Personality, Demographics, and Behavioral Acts
Lew Goldberg, Oregon Research Institute

3:20 – 3:40: Coffee Break

3:40 – 4:20: Like a Super Snooper: Assessing Behavior From the Places in Which We Dwell
Sam Gosling, University of Texas at Austin

4:20 – 5:00: Moderators of the Self-Report/Behavior Link: A History and Recent Developments
Del Paulhus, University of British Columbia

5:00 – 5:20: Questions / Comments on Behavior and Individual Differences Talks

Stewart Center, Room 306

Tuesday May 6, 2008

7:45 – 8:55 am: Continental Breakfast *(for all registrants)*

8:55 – 9:00: Logistics

Behavior and Close Relationships
(Moderated by Chris Agnew, Purdue University)

9:00 – 9:40: The Relationship Context of Human Behavior
Harry Reis, University of Rochester

9:40 – 10:20: The Atlas of Interpersonal Situations:
A Theory-Driven Approach to Behavioral Signatures
John Holmes, University of Waterloo

10:20 – 10:40: Coffee Break

10:40 – 11:20: Attachment Behavior across the Lifespan and
Its Relations with Other Behavioral Systems
Phil Shaver, University of California at Davis

11:20 – 12:00: The Brain and Close Relationship Behaviors
Art Aron, State University of New York at Stony Brook

12:00 – 12:30: Questions / Comments on Behavior and Interpersonal Processes Talks

12:30 – 2:00: Lunch *(for all registrants; in Stewart Center, Room 302)*

Tuesday May 6, 2008
(continued)

Behavior and Interpersonal Processes
(Moderated by Janice Kelly, Purdue University)

2:00 – 2:40: Grounding Social Psychology in Behavior in Daily Life: The Case of Intimate Dyads
Niall Bolger, Columbia University

2:40 – 3:20: Nonverbal Behavior in Social Psychological Research: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
Judy Hall, Northeastern University

3:20 – 3:40: Coffee Break

3:40 – 4:20: Communication, Cognitive Synchrony and Coordinated Action
Andrea Hollingshead, University of Southern California

4:20 – 5:00: Measuring the Behavior of Groups and Their Members
Dick Moreland, University of Pittsburgh

5:00 – 5:20: Questions / Comments on Behavior and Group Processes Talks

5:21 : Behaviors Oriented Toward Closure, Including Hugs & Tearful Displays

Abstracts

(in alphabetical order by speaker)

The Brain and Close Relationship Behaviors

Arthur Aron
State University of New York at Stony Brook

Behavior refers to objectively observable actions and patterns of actions (i.e., most anything other than self-reports of internal states). Given this definition, for those studying close relationships, behavior has had three key roles:

1. Operationalization: Behavior as objective, often nonobvious (implicit) (a) measures of key variables (e.g., coding couple communications, observing eye contact between partners, reported kissing frequency, how close two people sit, plus performance measures such as response time), (b) criterion variable for validating a self-report measure (e.g., time spent with partner as measure of closeness); and (c) way of manipulating key variables (e.g., kinds of activities couples are assigned, how a confederate acts).
2. Intervening variables: Notably, partner's response (or pattern of typical response) to self's actions as predictor of self's feelings or next action.
3. Ultimate variable of interest: For example, break-up/divorce, intercourse frequency, violence.

Social neuroscience methods such as fMRI relate in significant ways to the first two roles, minimally if at all to the last:

1. Operationalization: These methods can provide approaches to triangulate with behavioral methods and, most important, to apply to variables difficult to operationalize behaviorally, permitting objective/nonobvious (a) measurement of variables such as degree of passionate love, closeness, or stress; (b) validation of self-report measures (e.g., caudate activation with Passionate Love Scale); and (c) possible manipulation by brain stimulation (e.g., TMS).
2. Intervening variable: Behavior of the nervous system mediates between perception and experience and between experience and action. Understanding brain response (including patterns of relations among brain systems) to stimuli (such as a partner's actions) can in principle tell us about expected response and experience.
3. Ultimate variable of interest: Rarely are we interested in the brain for its own sake (except in the context of injury or illness).

Developing an Ecological Framework for Establishing Connections among Dispositions, Behaviors, and Environments: From Affordances to Behavior Settings

Reuben M. Baron
University of Connecticut

In the course of establishing connections among dispositions, behaviors, and environments from an ecological perspective I weave together two major themes: (1) the role of affordances in establishing a new basis for looking at the Personality x Situation interaction problem; and (2) the foundational nature of sociality in shaping links between dispositions and behavior. This type of analysis suggests a reexamination of the nature of traits and situations with a strong emphasis on reciprocity. My basic maxim is that the person is in the environment and the environment is in the person. The Personality x Situation interaction is then modeled in terms of a lock and key metaphor which echoes the mutuality of the econiche, viewed as a complex, dynamical system. This model treats personality as a key that is potentially able to unlock the affordances present in a behavior setting. Personality traits influence which settings people select and behavior settings recruit people with traits likely to enhance the growth and stability of that setting, whether a psychology department or the CIA in Washington, DC. Behavior in this framework falls out naturally from the fact that people act as members of different sized social units whose functional properties can be treated in affordance terms. Dyads offer affordances that support mother-child interactions, mating and novice-expert relations, whereas larger groups offer affordances supporting teamwork, distributed cognition, group coherence, and ingroup-outgroup conflict. Treating situations in terms of behavior settings makes role expectations salient as key regulators of both the occurrence and specificity of behavior. This analysis suggests that we shift our mantra from the Cartesian “I think, therefore I am” to the more socially oriented, “I act with others, therefore I am.”

Does Emotion Cause Behavior, Apart from Making People Do Stupid, Destructive Things?

Roy Baumeister
Florida State University

Fear causes people to run away and thereby saves lives: This example illustrates a popular and commonsensical but increasingly untenable view that the direct causation of behavior is the primary function of emotion. This talk criticizes and rejects the idea that emotion is for direct causation of behavior, on theoretical and empirical grounds. Instead, emotion influences behavior indirectly, as a feedback system. Emotion promotes retrospective cognitive processing of behavior and its outcomes, as well as evaluation of the behavior and its consequences. In this way, emotion can promote learning and alter inner programming guidelines for future behavior. As experience accumulates, people learn to anticipate what actions will bring what emotions, and so behaviors are chosen or avoided on the basis of anticipated emotional outcomes. These arguments apply mainly to full-blown conscious emotional states rather than to automatic and sometimes nonconscious affective responses. The latter may inform cognitive and behavioral choices as they are made. These automatic affective responses also encapsulate the learning from prior full-blown conscious emotions and may serve to remind the decision maker of the lessons from past experiences, as well as serving as useful guides as to what full-blown emotional outcomes may be anticipated with this or that course of action.

Grounding Social Psychology in Behavior in Daily Life: The Case of Intimate Dyads

Niall Bolger
Columbia University

[With Turu Stadler and Christine Paprocki, Columbia University]

Many of life's most important behaviors occur in the context of close relationships. We describe a program of research that uses structured diaries to obtain daily reports of behavior in dyadic relationships *in situ*. Diary reports from intimate dyads reveal that most days are characterized by multiple problems, with work overload at home and in the workplace being the most common complaints. Interpersonal conflicts and tensions, although rarer, are by far the most upsetting events. Furthermore, they are the only class of daily events that become more upsetting if they endure beyond a single day. Although conflict in intimate dyads is particularly upsetting, we also find surprising evidence that support behaviors from the partner can be detrimental when they are noticed or visible to the recipient. In contrast, when the support behavior goes unnoticed by the recipient, it can be beneficial. This finding, which has been replicated in experimental studies, is explained with reference to the importance of routine, unnoticed, taken-for-granted behaviors in close relationships.

Distinguishing Between Prediction and Influence: Multiple Processes Underlying Attitude-Behavior Consistency

Leandre R. Fabrigar
Queens University

[With Duane T. Wegener, Purdue University, & Tara K. MacDonald, Queens University]

Since the early days of social psychology, attitudes have been a central construct of interest because of their presumed impact on behavior (e.g., see Allport, 1935). This assumption has not gone unchallenged. Most notably, in the late 1960s and early 1970's, a number of researchers questioned the utility of attitudes for predicting and explaining behavior (e.g., Wicker, 1969). Since this challenge, a major theme of attitude research has been identifying properties of attitudes and contextual factors that moderate attitude-behavior consistency. These notable advances notwithstanding, comparatively little is known about the processes underlying the effects of many of these contextual factors and features of attitudes. The present talk begins with the observation that studies of attitude-behavior consistency have typically defined consistency in terms of the extent to which attitudes can predict behavior (usually operationalized as a correlation or regression coefficient between an attitude and a behavior). We then note that the extent to which an attitude *predicts* a behavior is not synonymous with the extent to which an attitude *influences* a behavior. Variations in predictive ability can result from many causes, some of which imply very little about variations in the actual influence of attitudes on behavior. We propose several distinct processes that may account for variations in the predictive strength of attitudes and discuss the extent to which these processes may explain the effects of documented moderators of attitude-behavior consistency.

Personality, Demographics, and Behavioral Acts

Lewis R. Goldberg
Oregon Research Institute

After taking the obligatory swipe at social psychologists' perverse and often baffling spasms of self-flagellation, the author focuses on today's lament concerning their alleged failure to study "behavior." Because behavior must be transduced through some medium in order for measurement to occur, we show how behavioral acts can be transduced through self-reports. Using an act-frequency approach to the development of aggregate clusters of behavioral acts, these action patterns can then be used as criteria to be predicted by current popular personality inventories (Grucza & Goldberg, 2007). In a novel approach to the development of new measures of individual differences, the author argues for the measurement of avocational interests by analysis of the time spent engaging in interest-related activities. To test this conjecture, the author has developed 33 avocational interest scales, each of which includes from 5 to 7 behavioral acts as items. The characteristics of these new measures, and their relations to demographic and personality attributes, are discussed.

The Power of Planning

Peter Gollwitzer
New York University

As highlighted by Kurt Lewin, goal attainment is not yet secured solely by forming strong commitments to highly desirable and feasible goals. There is always the subsequent issue of implementing a set goal, and one wonders what people can do to enhance their chances of being successful at this second phase of goal pursuit. A promising answer seems to be the following: People need to plan out in advance how they want to solve the problems of goal implementation. But what are these problems? There are at least four problems that stand out. These problems include getting started with goal striving, staying on track, calling a halt, and not overextending oneself. I will describe research showing that making if-then plans (i.e., form implementation intentions) on how to deal with these problems indeed facilitates solving the crucial problems of goal implementation. Thereafter, I will ask whether implementation intentions foster goal attainment even under conditions that are commonly viewed as not amenable to self-regulation attempts such as succeeding on an intelligence test or overcoming spider phobia; and I will report research showing that implementation intentions can even foster goal striving in those samples (e.g., children with ADHD) that are known to suffer from impaired action control. Finally, I will end with a discussion of what people can do wrong when trying to promote goal implementation by making if-then plans.

Like a Super Snooper:
Assessing Behavior From the Places in Which We Dwell

Samuel D. Gosling
University of Texas at Austin

As Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and forensic scientists have long recognized, many behaviors leave a physical trace in the environment. If the environment is one that captures traces of repeated behaviors by a single person then that environment might hold evidence to enduring characteristics of the occupant like personality traits, attitudes, and identity. This talk will describe three mechanisms by which individuals can have an impact on their surroundings (they want to affect how they think and feel; they want to broadcast information about themselves; and they inadvertently affect their spaces in the course of their everyday behaviors) and two processes by which observers can use traces to form impressions of the occupants (direct inferences; stereotypes). The talk will focus on broad range of contexts in which people leave traces of their behaviors: Physical environments (e.g., bedrooms, offices), aural environments (e.g., music collections), virtual environments (e.g., personal WebPages, Facebook profiles), and geographic location. The findings show that different contexts contain clues to different traits. They also show where observers make errors in their judgments by using the wrong clues and failing to use the right ones.

Nonverbal Behavior in Social Psychology Research: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Judith A. Hall
Northeastern University

Research on nonverbal behavior falls into two basic types. First is the study of specific behaviors or physical appearance, with the goals being both description and understanding antecedents, consequences, and correlates. Second is the study of nonverbal communication skills in expression (encoding) and judgment (decoding), with the goals being to describe skill levels, understand process variables, and relate skill to other person and situation variables. Always interdisciplinary and crossing nearly all subdisciplines within psychology, nonverbal behavior research has at times seemed to be loved by all yet owned by none. In recent years, however, nonverbal behavior has become more central to the mainstream in social psychology. In part, this is the result of the field's move from an emphasis on colder to warmer psychological processes. Some of the current topics that connect with nonverbal behavior are emotions, prejudice, power, embodied cognition, evolutionary psychology, culture, and the unconscious. The "good," therefore, is that nonverbal communication is a growing and important subject. Furthermore, it is unarguably about behavior, measured often in actual interaction and in naturalistic settings. The "bad" is that the research is not always very theoretical and that it is often slow and laborious to conduct. Finally, the "ugly" refers to the chronic ambiguity surrounding the interpretation of nonverbal cues. It is easier to measure nonverbal behavior than to know what it means.

Communication, Cognitive Synchrony and Coordinated Action

Andrea B. Hollingshead
University of Southern California

Interdependent individuals often divide responsibilities for shared tasks so that each person performs fewer tasks individually yet collectively all tasks get done. For example, life partners often divide responsibility for household tasks, and work groups often assign members to different subtasks on team projects. Communication is often beneficial, but can sometimes be detrimental to coordinated action. When individuals are in cognitive synchrony, i.e. they have implicit agreement about who will do what, communication is not necessary, and in some situations, can impede coordinated action with other negative consequences. In contrast, when individuals are not in cognitive synchrony, communication can facilitate coordinated action and have other beneficial effects. Building on a decade of research, I will present and provide empirical evidence for a conceptual model that depicts relations between communication, cognitive synchrony and coordinated action. I will also discuss precursors to cognitive synchrony, and possible errors in coordinated action.

The Atlas of Interpersonal Situations: A Theory-Driven Approach to Behavioral Signatures

John G. Holmes
University of Waterloo

[With Justin V. Cavallo, University of Waterloo]

Holmes (2002) has argued that effective prediction of behavior requires a systematic understanding of the affordances of external social situations, derived independently from people's construal of them. Predicting people's "If, then" behavioral signatures (Mischel & Shoda, 1997), their preferred ways of reacting to particular features of situations, would be furthered by top-down theories depicting the links between categories of situations and the particular behavioral expressions or options that they afford. In this vein, The Atlas of Interpersonal Situations (Kelley et al., 2003) presents a six-dimension taxonomic system for classifying situations of dyadic interdependence and describing the interpersonal goals and dispositions that are functionally-relevant to each of them. The usefulness of this approach is illustrated by focusing on one of those dimensions, the correspondence of interests between two people, in research on behavior in established close relationships. It is shown that conflict of interest situations, compared to control situations, are highly revealing and diagnostic of people's acute and chronic expectations about how they are valued by their interaction partner. Insecure individuals are especially sensitive to signs of rejection when conflict is high (a situational If, cognitive Then), and then react behaviorally to felt rejection by distancing themselves from partners (a cognitive, construal If, behavioral Then) (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006). Situations lower in potential conflict are not revealing of people's "true colors" in this way.

Measuring the Behavior of Groups and Their Members

Richard Moreland
University of Pittsburgh

As a topic area within social psychology, small groups has waxed and waned in popularity over the years. Regardless of its popularity, however, research in groups and their members has often featured behavioral observations. These observations have produced valuable data that have revealed many important phenomena. But all that seems to have changed recently -- fewer researchers now measure group behavior. I will begin my talk by offering some evidence regarding this trend, evidence involving actual rates (and types) of behavioral measurement appearing in all of the articles about small groups that have appeared in the major social psychological journals (JESP, JPSP, PSPB) over the years. I will then speculate about why behavioral measurement has become less common, focusing on such factors as the invasion of small groups research by (a) theories and methods associated with cognitive psychology, and (b) analyses of groups by Tajfel, Turner, and their colleagues that focus on social categorization of the self and others as the keys to understanding group behavior. Finally, I will discuss the possible implications (now and in the future) of neglecting the measurement of behavior while studying small groups.

Moderators of the Self-Report/Behavior Link: A History and Recent Developments

Delroy Paulhus
University of British Columbia

Self-report measures have been the mainstay of research on individual differences. Because individual differences in self-presentation tendencies may mask the validity of self-reports, a variety of strategies have been developed to determine who is reporting accurately and who is distorting the truth. I will review attempts to measure self-presentation as a moderator of the relation between self-reports and concrete behavior. Almost all such methods can be traced back to Harshorne and May (1928). Among the most popular approaches is the use of scales designed to tap socially desirable responding. These measures have yielded disappointing results, both as moderators and suppressors. The key difficulty is verification that respondents to a questionnaire are engaging in distortion. Finally, I will discuss several recent methods in detail. These include reaction time indicators, and my over-claiming research. The latter method integrates a self-report along with a criterion variable into a questionnaire format. Accordingly, it may provide the long sought-after method of verifying distortion.

The Relationship Context of Human Behavior

Harry T. Reis
University of Rochester

Although growing evidence attests to the fundamental importance of relationship context for understanding human behavior, social psychology has only begun to integrate relationship principles and processes into its basic theories and accumulated knowledge. This talk will do three things. First, I will argue that such integration is critical to the accuracy and usefulness of social psychological insights. Second, I will present a series of examples that demonstrate how basic social psychological phenomena are influenced by the relationship context in which that behavior is expressed. For example, evidence has begun to accumulate in traditional areas of social psychology inquiry, such as social cognition and social influence, that the output of basic social processes is moderated by the nature of the relationship between actors and the persons with whom they are interacting. Third, it is necessary for the field to emphasize theories that can account for the influence of relationship contexts, something that the field has expressly avoided in its desire to posit acontextual (i.e., broad and generally applicable) theories. Interdependence Theory is one such approach, and I will describe how it might be applied more broadly within social psychology. Taking relationship contexts more seriously may further the field's movement toward fuller, more systematic understanding of the impact of situations on behavior, a basic mission that, although identified by the field's founders and articulated in most textbooks, is only sporadically realized by existing research and theory.

Attachment Behavior across the Lifespan and Its Relations with Other Behavioral Systems

Phillip R. Shaver
University of California at Davis

[With Mario Mikulincer, the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) at Herzliya]

Attachment theory (Ainsworth; Bowlby) is one of the few conceptual frameworks in psychology that integrates evolutionary biology, psychodynamic theories of intrapsychic processes, lifespan cognitive and social developmental psychology, and the study of adolescents' and adults' relationships. One of its central constructs – "behavioral system" – is inherently behavioral, and because Bowlby and Ainsworth focused on parent-infant relationships, which are inherently behavioral (because infants don't talk much and can't fill out questionnaires), the theory had to focus on behavior as well as intrapsychic processes. It posits tight, reciprocal associations between mental and behavioral processes, and between the attachment behavioral system and other behavioral systems concerned with exploration, caregiving, and sex. One can imagine breaking into the B-M-B-M-B-M stream (where B indicates behavior and M indicates mental processes) at any point. One could focus on the fact that mental processes guide behavior or that behavioral processes create inputs to mental processes. Just as evolutionary biologists can view genes as influencing the body and behavior or view behavior as a mere "vehicle" (Dawkins) for genetic reproduction, social psychologists can view mental states as influencing behavior or view behavior as a mere vehicle for mental states. In our talk we will (1) explain the behavioral system construct; (2) show how it is used in research on infant and adult attachment; (3) present a model of the activation and functioning of the attachment behavioral system; and (4) assess its usefulness in explaining behavior, including variations in proximity- and support-seeking, effects of security-enhancing relationship partners and internal security on the functioning of multiple behavioral systems, and the ways in which attachment security and insecurity manifest themselves in close relationships and small groups.

Habit: From Overt Action to Mental Events

Bas Verplanken
University of Bath

We seldom consciously experience the presence of habits, as habits are woven into the fabric of everyday life. In spite of the fact that many behaviors social psychologists are interested in are repeated and habitual, habit has not received much research attention. I will first briefly focus on the question why habits are important to study. I then move on to criticise the traditional conceptualization and measurement of habit as mere "frequency of past behavior", and argue that automaticity is an important element of the habit concept. I present a meta-cognitive instrument, which consists of a number of facets, including the experience of repetition, lack of awareness and conscious intent, difficulty to control, and mental efficiency. This conceptual twist thus provides a better instrument to measure habit and opportunities to contribute to long-standing discussions, such as the "residual variance" problem in the attitude-behavior domain. However, it also opens new avenues by exploring the concept of *mental habit*. Mental habits are repetitive patterns of thinking, which follow principles very similar to behavioral habits. I will present an overview of recent work on habitual self-thinking (e.g., negative self-thinking in general, dissatisfied body image thinking, and worrying). These studies demonstrate that the habitual component of negative self-thinking accounts for variance in a range of explicit as well as some implicit self-evaluative outcome variables over and above the content of such thinking. This work not only shows the importance of mental habits, but also raises some questions about our ability to reflect on nonconscious processes.

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