Scenario One: Scientist vs. Practitioner Decision Making Gap

D.C., a 30 year old woman, has recently accused her father of sexually abusing her as a child. She claims to have had no recollection of the abuse until she remembered it during a therapy session with a clinical psychologist last year. As a result of D.C.'s accusation her father, Michael, was arrested and is about to stand trial for this crime. Michael's defense attorney plans to call a social psychology expert who specializes in clinical versus actuarial decision making. The expert will testify that clinical opinions rendered by mental health practitioners are mere hypotheses based on little or no empirical evidence. The expert will further testify that research shows that repressed/recovered memories are unreliable and generally false memories. Therefore, the belief in the existence of repressed/recovered traumatic memories may be the result of belief perseverance, illusory correlation, hindsight bias and overconfidence, and self-confirming diagnoses.

The prosecution will call a psychology expert who specializes as a mental health practitioner. This expert will testify that victims of trauma may repress painful memories and are able to recover them accurately at a later date. This expert will further testify that clinical training and clinical intuition supersede scientific evidence in this context because s/he believes there are "alternate ways of knowing."

The judge cannot determine which expert's testimony is correct. The heart of the judge's concern is the extent to which clinical opinions may be unreliable. If the defense expert is correct that clinical intuition is pseudoscientific at best then the claims of recovered memories are suspicious. However, if the prosecution expert is correct, then the judge must allow jurors to hear the mental health practitioner's testimony on repressed/recovered memories.

The judge has appointed you, an applied social psychology expert, to review the scientific literature on the reliability and validity of clinical versus actuarial (statistical) judgments, on clinical repressed/recovered memory, as well research on belief perseverance, illusory correlation, hindsight bias, overconfidence, and self-confirming diagnoses to advise the Court in this regard. The Court needs you to provide a scholarly analysis of the scientific, peer-reviewed literature on these topics. You must also render a professional opinion regarding your conclusion

as to which expert's testimony is true and accurate. Your opinion should be based on the scientific, peer-reviewed research that you reviewed. The following peer-reviewed journal articles are a good place to start to familiarize yourself with the decision making controversy between mental health practitioners and social (experimental) psychologists.

Magnussen, S., & Melinder, A. (2012). What psychologists know and believe about memory: A survey of practitioners. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 26*(1), 54-60. doi:10.1002/acp.1795. Retrieved from the Academic Search Complete database through the ashford University Library.

Patihis, L., Ho, L. Y., Tingen, I. W., Lilienfeld, S. O., & Loftus, E. F. (2014). Are the "memory wars" over? A scientist-practitioner gap in beliefs about repressed memory. *Psychological Science, 25*, 519-530. doi: 10.1177/0956797613510718

Scenario Two: Police Interrogations and False Confessions

On August 1, 1988, Tanner Martin awoke to find both of his parents unconscious and bloody in the family home. Tanner, 17 years old at the time, called police who immediately suspected him of harming his parents. They took him to the police station, administered a polygraph examination, and interrogated him for 15 hours. After 15 hours of intense interrogation, the police told Tanner that he failed the polygraph. They also told him that his father had regained consciousness and reported that Tanner bludgeoned him and his wife. Tanner denied any recollection of committing such a heinous act. However, he stated that he has never known his father to tell a lie. Tanner believed he must be guilty of the crime and confessed that he bludgeoned his parents.

At trial, Tanner's attorney found out that the police lied to Tanner. Tanner actually passed the polygraph examination and both of Tanner's parents were deceased when police arrived at the scene of the crime. Therefore, Mr. Martin never made a statement of Tanner's guilt. The judge ruled that police are allowed to lie to suspects about such things. The jury heard Tanner's confession and rendered a unanimous verdict of guilty. The judge sentenced Tanner to 50 years to life in prison.

Tanner appealed his conviction immediately. However, it was not until DNA evidence found at the scene was finally tested and unequivocally cleared him that his conviction was vacated and he was released from prison in 2013. The DNA belonged to Mr. Martin's business partner who had embezzled $500,000 from their company and faked his own death five days after the Martins' murder.

This situation has been very embarrassing and citizens' trust in the police chief and mayor has plummeted as a result. They want to make sure something similar never happens again. The police chief now has a clear understanding that 25% of wrongful convictions in the United States are the direct result of false confession. Therefore, the police chief has reached out to you, an expert in the social psychology of police interrogation tactics and false confessions, to understand how it is that officers elicit false confessions and why people confess to crimes they did not commit.

The police chief has retained you, an applied social psychology expert, to provide a scholarly analysis of the scientific, peer-reviewed literature on the factors related to false confessions such as confirmation bias, obedience to authority, compliance, social influence, and (interrogative) suggestibility. You must also render a professional opinion regarding your conclusion as to where police erred and what they should avoid doing in the future. Your opinion should be based on the scientific, peer-reviewed social psychology research that you reviewed. The following peer-reviewed journal articles are a good place to start to familiarize yourself with the social psychology of false confessions.

Gudjonssen, G.H. & Pearse, J. (2011). Suspect interviews and false confessions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 20,* 33-37.

Kassin, S. M. (2012, April 30). Why Confessions Trump Innocence. *American Psychologist,* Advance online publication. doi: 10.1037/a0028212

Scenario Three: The Psychology of Disaster Preparedness

In September 2003 a Category Two hurricane made landfall in a town that was ill prepared for such a natural disaster. The hurricane claimed over 100 lives and caused approximately $1.4 billion in damages. This large American city had not experienced a natural disaster of this proportion for more than 100 years. Therefore, none of the current citizens had any personal knowledge of exactly what preparations might be in order to survive such an event. In the wake of the storm prosocial (helping) behaviors to aid hurricane victims were at an all-time high. Unfortunately, many lives were lost as a direct result of the lack of pre-disaster preparedness on the part of the citizens residing in the affected city.

Local and federal emergency management agencies have researched extensively what went wrong with their disaster response plans. Findings show that they were adequately prepared to respond to a disaster once it happened but that they were seriously lacking in preparing citizens to take seriously the possibility that disaster could strike at any time. In fact, in the days leading up to the approaching storm, many warnings were issued to the public to take precautions up to and including evacuation. However, public perception appeared to be that the media and local leaders were exaggerating the level of imminent danger. A recent national survey shows that even in light of this disaster and the widespread publicity it received, Americans are no more prepared for this type of catastrophe than they were in 2003 (FEMA, 2006).

These results are worrisome to federal and local authorities, and to disaster preparedness teams who attempt to warn the public of impending danger. The frustration lies in the fact that tactical plans for responding are well implemented, practiced, and executed successfully when disaster strikes. However, persuading the public to take seriously their personal responsibility has been a massive failure. Officials now realize that they need the advice of an applied social psychology expert to help them implement social marketing to raise public awareness of the need for disaster preparedness.

FEMA has retained you, an applied social psychology expert, to provide a scholarly analysis of the scientific, peer-reviewed literature on the factors related to attitude and behavior change such as risk perception, persuasion theories, persuasion techniques, motivation, and self-efficacy. You

must also render a professional opinion regarding your conclusion as to what FEMA officials can do to elicit greater public trust and participation in pre-disaster preparation particularly in towns where natural disasters are not likely to occur. Your opinion should be based on the scientific, peer-reviewed social psychology research that you reviewed. The following peer-reviewed journal articles are a good place to start to familiarize yourself with the social psychology of disaster preparedness.

Citizen Corps (2006). *Citizen corps personal behavior change model for disaster preparedness*. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. Retrieved from https://www.citizencorps.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/ready/citizen_prep_review_issue_4.pdf

Gantt, P., & Gantt, R. (2012). Disaster psychology: Dispelling the myths of panic. *Professional Safety*, 42-49.

Scenario Four: Attraction and Relationships

After being in a long-term relationship Alisha is suddenly single again. In fact, it seems to Alisha that her professional and social circle is becoming more and more populated with people who are in a similar situation. Alisha often hears from her friends and acquaintances how difficult dating can be and she has experienced this as well. The friends commiserate often over the difficulty of dating and how hard it is to meet someone they are attracted to that will lead to a long term relationship. Alisha and her friends have used various methods of dating such as matchmaking websites and speed dating but none of these have resulted in lasting, meaningful relationships. Alisha thinks that part of the problem may be a lack of understanding of the social psychology of attraction.

Alisha, an entrepreneur, has decided to start her own matchmaking business. However, Alisha wants her business to be different from other matchmaking companies. She wants to focus on highlighting the factors that are likely to lead to meaningful intimate relationships rather than simple physical attraction. Alisha is also considering whether meeting someone online is the best approach for discovering lasting love. She acknowledges that it is a popular approach but would also like to consider whether speed dating is a more effective approach in terms of finding a mate. Alisha recognizes that she is a talented businesswoman but does not know much about the social psychology of dating, attraction, and relationships.

Before launching her new matchmaking business Alisha needs to do some research on the science behind love and attraction. She wants to know what factors lead us to like and love others, such as whether opposites really do attract, and what factors contribute to enabling close relationships as opposed to superficial attraction. Additionally, she needs to know whether the best approach is an online dating service or a speed dating service.

Alisha has retained you, an applied social psychology expert, to provide a scholarly analysis of the scientific, peer-reviewed literature on the factors related to attraction and intimacy such as theories of interpersonal attraction, similarity versus complementarity, Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, factors that enable intimacy, and the success of internet/online dating versus speed dating. You must also render an opinion as to whether Alisha's business should be an online matchmaking service or focus on speed dating, as well as what factors of attraction are

likely to lead to close, lasting relationships. Your opinion should be based on the scientific, peer-reviewed social psychology research that you reviewed. The following peer-reviewed journal articles are a good place to start to familiarize yourself with the social psychology of interpersonal attraction in the internet age.

Finkel, E.J., Eastwick, P.W., Karney, B.R., Reis, H.T., & Sprecher, S. (2012). Online dating: A critical analysis from the perspective of psychological science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 13,* 3-66.

Riela, S., Rodriguez, G., Aron, A., Xu, X., Acevedo, B.P. (2010). Experiences of falling in love: Investigating culture, ethnicity, gender, and speed. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 27,* 473-493

Scenario Five: Social Psychology of Bullying

Keisha Austin was born and raised in a predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood in the Midwest. Keisha, a 19-year-old biracial woman, was named by her mother who wanted Keisha to feel a connection to her African American culture. Keisha's mother felt that the name would help Keisha be perceived as a strong black woman. However, after years of being mocked by other kids because she had a stereotypically "black" name, Keisha has legally changed her name to Kylie. The kids at school would crack jokes about whether Keisha's name was actually LaKeisha and whether her aspirations were to star in a rap music video. Keisha grew tired of being the target of stereotypes that led to bullying and she changed her name to one that she felt sounded more "white."

This story made national news and was featured in the Huffington Post on November 5, 2013. Educators and parents across the country have read the story with great concern. Educators have witnessed many situations in which students become the target of bullying. Their experiences lead them to believe the bullying consists of more than physical aggression but also includes verbal aggression as evidenced by Keisha's story. There is also the issue of aggression perpetrated online via "cyberbullying." The educators address immediately any physical aggression they witness on school property. However, they have found that identifying and addressing acts of verbal aggression to be more challenging. Now that they are aware of Keisha's story, they are more interested in identifying and implementing proactive means of preventing bullying.

The superintendent of schools in your town has been elected on a platform in which s/he promises to implement bullying prevention programs in the schools. At a press conference, the superintendent commented that the schools have many policies and practices in place for how to deal with bullies after an incident has taken place, but believes the schools will be best served by focusing on prevention. The superintendent recognizes that in order to design prevention programs, s/he needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the factors that lead to prejudice, stereotypes, ostracism, and bullying.

The superintendent has retained you, an applied social psychology expert, to provide a scholarly analysis of the scientific, peer-reviewed literature on the factors related to bullying such as

prejudice and stereotyping, social influence, conformity, ostracism, and aggression. You must also render a professional opinion regarding your conclusion as to what the schools can do to change the culture of bullying. Your opinion should be based on the scientific, peer-reviewed social psychology research that you reviewed. The following peer-reviewed journal articles are a good place to start to familiarize yourself with the social psychology of bullying.

Cassidy, W., Faucher, C., & Jackson, M. (2013). Cyberbullying among youth: A comprehensive review of current international research and its implications and application to policy and practice. *School Psychology International, 34,* 575-612.

Georgiou, S.N., & Fanti, K.A. (2010). A transactional model of bullying and victimization. *Social Psychology of Education, 13,* 295-311.