

## **Open Your Class with This Tomorrow**

### ***Mindware: Tools for Smart Thinking***

#### **Activity 1: How Exploitable is Your Brain? Brain Errors**

Directions:

1. Complete the 12 demonstrations located on the website  
<http://www.brainerrors.com/>
2. For each demonstration provide a short write-up
3. Write-up requirements
  - a. Summarize the demonstration
  - b. Define and explain the term being demonstrated
  - c. Provide a personal example

#### **Activity 2: Fundamental Attribution Error**

Directions: Provide a possible disposition and situation for each circumstance below.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/aug/09/world-in-context-mindware-tools-for-sharp-thinking>

1. Why was Bill Gates successful?  
Disposition:  
Situation:
2. Why might economist Smith have twice as many publication in refereed journals?  
Disposition:  
Situation:
3. Why might Jane who graduated from college in 2009 not be successful in finding a job?  
Disposition:  
Situation:
4. Why might someone commit a horrible crime, such as murder?  
Disposition:  
Situation:
5. Shown two essays about Cuba's political system written for a college assignment. One essay was favorable and the other was not. The participant reading the favorable essay was told the author was required to write a pro-Cuba essay. The participant reading the unfavorable essay was told the author was required to write an anti-Cuba essay. Why was the first author viewed as more favorable to Cuba?  
Disposition:  
Situation:
6. Princeton theological students were asked to give a sermon on the other side of campus. The route to follow was provided. Some were told they had lots of time,

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and some were told they were already late. On the way to their location they all passed a man sitting in a doorway in need of obvious help. More students not in a rush offered help than the students that were in a rush. Why do the students that help the man receive a more favorable impression?

Disposition:

Situation:

Reflection:

1. Assess your own answers. Were you more likely to make a dispositional or situational attribution?
2. How does the fundamental attribution error, when we assume the disposition and overlook the situation, get us in trouble?

## Answer Key

1. Why was Bill Gates successful?  
Disposition: Assume he was lucky.  
Situation: But he had access to computers throughout his high school career and beyond.
2. Why might economist Smith have twice as many publication in refereed journals?  
Disposition: Assume more talented and hardworking.  
Situation: But he earned his PhD in a “fat year” when there were university jobs available.
3. Why might Jane who graduated from college in 2009 not be successful in finding a job?  
Disposition: Assume not smart enough  
Situation: But earning a degree during the recession can have long lasting effects.
4. Why might someone commit a horrible crime, such as murder?  
Disposition: The individual is immoral  
Situation: The criminal may perceive the situation demanded it, such as the person reached for a weapon.
5. Shown two essays about Cuba’s political system written for a college assignment. One essay was favorable and the other was not. The participant reading the favorable essay was told the author was required to write a pro-Cuba essay. The participant reading the unfavorable essay was told the author was required to write an anti-Cuba essay. Why was the first author viewed as more favorable to Cuba?  
Disposition: The first author (pro-Cuba essay) was viewed as more favorable because they wrote about favorable arguments.  
Situation: But participants failed to remember that it was an assignment provided by the professor.
6. Princeton theological students were asked to give a sermon on the other side of campus. The route to follow was provided. Some were told they had lots of time, and some were told they were already late. On the way to their location they all passed a man sitting in a doorway in need of obvious help. More students not in a rush offered help than the students that were in a rush. Why do the students that help the man receive a more favorable impression?  
Disposition: Those that offer help are viewed as kind and those that do not offer help are considered rude.  
Situation: But being a rush can influence whether one offers help.

## Reflection:

3. Assess your own answers. Were you more likely to make a dispositional or situational attribution?

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4. How does the fundamental attribution error, when we assume the disposition and overlook the situation, get us in trouble?
  - We might be too trusting, hire incompetent people, or assume future behavior.