

PSYCHOLOGY FOR THE MENTALIST



BY ANDY LUTTRELL

FOREWORD BY PATRICK REDFORD

This is a sneak preview of Andy Luttrell's
Psychology for the Mentalist. To purchase
the full book, please visit:
www.PatrickRedford.com

**Psychology
For the
Mentalist**

Andy Luttrell

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Foreword

“This is the book I always wanted to write.”

If you’re thinking, “who is Andy Luttrell and why should I care about this book?”, let me answer both of those questions with three words: information is power. If you’re taking the time to read this diatribe at the beginning of this text, I’m sure you’re also the type to read the introduction that follows. This is where you’ll learn who Andy is and why he’s more than qualified to present this work. If you’re not the type to read forewords or introductions, then you won’t be reading these words anyway.

When Andy first approached me with this project, I was excited. Then I watched it come together and I was ecstatic. I wanted to help bring an audience to this text because it deserves to be read. Here you’ll find a mix of performance theory, technique and actual cited psychological research to back up the information.

Full stop.

Cited research? Evidence? Not just theoretical information based on trial and error? All of this in a conjuring arts text!/? Yes. Welcome to *Psychology for the Mentalist*.

This is the book I always wanted to write. This book will quickly become a classic important text. Whether you’re an amateur performer or a professional, the information that Andy has compiled will help you hone your current material and help forge new territory. With these techniques, you’ll not only appear to really be manipulating, influencing, and reading minds but you’ll *actually be* influencing, manipulating, and reading minds.

Psychology for the Mentalist is an inspired work. I suspect it will influence the majority of those who spend the time with its text to reap much reward. Combine these psychological principles that Andy meticulously dissects with the modus operandi of classic conjuring techniques and you’ll be have a powerful performance toolbox to create real miracles.

The first section of this book deals directly with belief perseverance and the power that an explanation, when attached to a truth or fiction, has over our mind. It is my belief that as performers (that demonstrate the ability to read and influence minds), we have a great responsibility to take care of our audiences. We have the real ability to influence what people believe and what shapes individuals' realities. It may seem a ridiculous notion that a simple magic trick can shape and influence one's entire foundation of belief, but religions have been started on less. How are you going to use the information in these pages? Personally, I'll choose to use my powers for good. Well, mostly.

This book will find a home alongside some of my most treasured books in my personal library, and I trust it finds a satisfying home in yours as well.

-Patrick G. Redford (2015)

Introduction

Mentalism and psychology have a close relationship. On the one hand, many mentalists choose to frame their abilities as rooted in a deep understanding of human psychology, and on the other hand, the term “psychology” is used to refer to real techniques and presentational nuances (e.g., psychological forces, psychological subtleties, and techniques that allow you to do mind reading effects “for real”).

However, although the term “psychology” gets used a lot, it rarely references the actual research conducted in psychological science every day throughout the world. The kinds of skills that people display under the guise of “psychological illusions” often bear little resemblance to what social scientists actually investigate, and the psychological ploys that have been offered in the magic and mentalism community are not often grounded in the research literature and are instead derived from trial and error experiences in the field.

I have no qualms with any of this. Whether the *number seven force* came from laboratory experiments or from the experience of working performers doesn’t matter as long as it’s reliable. Similarly, if a presentational premise is not actually consistent with the research, then it probably means the effect is impressive. Social psychological experiments yield fascinating results that inform theories of human thought and behavior, but they don’t necessarily make for great theatre.

Still, scientific research in psychology remains largely unrepresented in the available literature for mentalists and magicians, and over the last several years, I have noticed an interest in such topics.¹ There have

1 Of course, this interest in the intersection of magic and psychology goes back a long way. I remember reading the “Conjuring Psychology” columns in old issues of *Linking Ring* magazine that were given to me, for instance. The interest goes both ways; psychologists have often looked to conjuring techniques to gain insight into cognitive and perceptual process (see Lachapelle, 2008). For instance, Norman Triplett (often credited with conducting the first experiment in social psychology) wrote a treatise in 1900 titled “The Psychology of Conjuring Deceptions.” Alfred Binet, the developer of one of the first intelligence tests, invited five magicians into his lab in 1894 so that he may better understand human perception (Binet, 1984; for more, see Lachapelle, 2008). Yet another key figure in psychology’s history,

been plenty of requests on Internet message boards for books related to psychology, and there are plenty of wonderful books that get recommended in response. What I have tried to do, however, is isolate some of the more interesting findings in the field of social psychology that appear—even if distantly—relevant to the performance of mentalism.

Where do I come off writing a book about mentalism and psychology? I find myself neatly situated at the intersection of the two fields, and hopefully I'm able to translate one of them for the benefit of the other. I am a long time magic fanatic, having caught the "magic bug" when I was young. I grew up performing magic on stage, in restaurants, and behind the counter of a magic shop. In college, my interests shifted sharply toward mentalism where I have remained a curious consumer and enthusiastic informal performer.

An important point, I should note, is that I am not a professional, so if you are looking for tried and true techniques honed over years of experience, you won't find them here. That said, I have no shortage of performing and communication experience. I teach classes to college students, for example, and I have gotten used to zipping up presentations so that a bunch of tired students are engaged and interested, even at 8:00 in the morning. I am also a stand-up comedian, and I perform regularly, which can come with similar challenges—getting a bunch of intoxicated adults engaged and interested at 1:00 in the morning. I mention this mostly to reassure you that although I do not regularly perform mentalism, I have knowledge and experience enough to talk about such performances.

As far as my expertise in psychology, I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in social psychology. I received my M.A. three years ago and am in the process of wrapping up my time in graduate school, hoping to continue on this journey as an academic. My own research focuses on opinion certainty and the persuasion process, but my education has given me a broad knowledge base in the field, which I hope to share

Joseph Jastrow, published a wonderfully titled piece in 1896: "Psychological Notes Upon Sleight-of-Hand Experts." More recently, cognitive neuroscientists have taken to studying magic tricks to further understand how the brain processes information and visual stimuli (for reviews, see Macknik, King, Randi, Robbins, Teller, Thompson, & Martinez-Conde, 2008; Macknik & Martinez-Conde, 2011).

with you.

I also teach *Introduction to Social Psychology* as well as *Stereotyping and Prejudice*, which has prepared me for translating the research from the cold, boring research reports to a graspable level of understanding without sacrificing accuracy. You can find other examples of my attempts to share psychological science with a broad audience at my website, socialpsychonline.com

My knowledge is centered in *social* psychology, which is a subset of the field that studies individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a social context. I think this particular subfield of psychology is especially relevant to mentalism, but I will also draw on what I know from cognitive, developmental, and biological psychology throughout this book.

My goal is for this book to be something like a springboard for your own ideas and adaptations. I will review research in a variety of domains across psychology, pointing out individual experiments that gave rise to what we now know about people in their social worlds. I foresee two general applications of this information.

The first is as a basis for ***presentational premises***. Psychological scientists have been thinking about human thought for a long time, and they have uncovered some fascinating patterns of behavior that are relevant to our everyday experiences. These patterns may inspire new effects, routines, or twists on existing demonstrations. The more we know about actual human psychology, the more varied (and authentic) our mentalism presentations become.

The second application is as a basis for ***techniques and subtleties***. This is the application for which I must recognize my role as a mere messenger. Throughout this book, I offer thoughts as to how the research in psychology might be applied to create deeper miracles, but I admit that these are largely speculative. My aim is to provide the seeds for what readers might take and turn into astounding, reliable psychological techniques. For instance, I review research in the field of social compliance whereby simple linguistic touches can increase the likelihood that someone will comply with a request.

Many of the research studies will not already be applied to the specific conditions that are of interest to a mentalist, so the actual implementation may take a little adjustment. However, when I know about studies that test the conditions under which a phenomenon is more likely to appear (these are called “moderators” of effects), I will be sure to acknowledge them. I offer to take care of the brainwork up front by finding, compiling, and reviewing research that seems applicable to mentalism, but from there, the implementation is up to you.

Of course, I can only scratch the surface of each of these many avenues of psychological research. I cannot create an exhaustive review of social psychology—look to textbooks for that—but I am careful to cite my sources, which should put you on the right path if anything in particular jumps out at you. Also, there have been plenty of books written by journalists and researchers themselves that aim to provide a review of social scientific knowledge for the general public. You can find a list of such books in the appendix, and I do my best to acknowledge these books within the sections of *this* text where relevant.

Please enjoy the following pages. It has been a lot of fun for me to formally write a review of the science that I have grown so fond of and to think about the many ways in which these research programs can enrich and inform our art. If anything in these pages inspires you, I would love to hear about new presentations born out of these concepts or successful applications to true psychological subtleties and “real mind-reading” demonstrations.

- Andy Luttrell

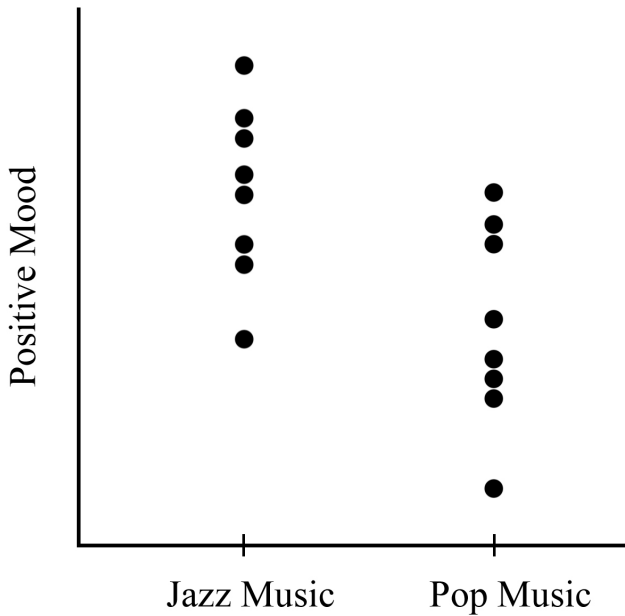
A Comment on Research Psychology's Applicability

It is worth noting that the research literature in psychology hardly represents a repository of information ready to inform dynamic and sure-fire mentalism methods. Purely psychological methods are far from perfect and rarely achieve 100% accuracy in accomplishing an effect. I agree with Banachek's goal in his first *Psychological Subtleties* release that these psychological ploys are well suited to subtly strengthening the legitimacy of a mentalist's demonstrations. But as recent interests in the mentalism community highlight, there *do* exist many methods that rely on "real" methods that produce success more often than not. Therefore, I don't mean to discount the pursuit of such methods, but my point is that research in psychological science does not necessarily already contain these sorts of methods.

The reason why psychological research isn't the same as pre-packaged mind-reading methods is that this research deals in *averages* and *tendencies*. Psychologists learn about people's thoughts and behaviors by observing how many different people respond under the same conditions. A positive finding is when there's a tendency *on average* for people to respond in a particular way.

By way of a very simple example, imagine a study that manipulates the music playing in a waiting room and examines how it affects people's reports of their mood. For half the people, jazz music plays in the room, and for the other half, pop music plays. Possible results of this experiment are represented in the figure below.

Each dot represents one person and how happy he or she feels on a positivity scale. It's clear that the people who heard jazz music report feeling happier *on average* than the people who heard pop music. As long as the average positivity was different enough between conditions to be considered *statistically* different (i.e., not just by chance), this kind of effect could be published as a scientifically acceptable effect: hearing jazz music (vs. pop music) in the environment causes more positive mood.



You will note, however, that some people in the “pop music” condition were happier than some people in the “jazz music” condition. Just because there’s a difference *on average* doesn’t mean that this effect applies equally to everyone. This is the point I want to emphasize.

The research I share in this book is about tendencies and averages. Thus, it would be a mistake to assume that these scientific results can be used as sure-fire, ready-made methods. The value of the purely psychological methods in the mentalism literature is that they are built on practice and tailoring to nuances of particular people and particular situations. What I offer hasn’t been tinkered with in this way—it will take inspired and creative mentalists to take this information and use it as a base for exploring its unique applications.

It is also worth keeping in mind that the people in these studies may not have been in the same mind frame as they will be as participants in the mentalism demonstration. For instance, participants in a psychology study may have been filling out surveys in a computer lab on weekday afternoons. They may have cared little about the

researcher and had no idea what the goals of the research were. *Your* participants, however, will be witnessing feats of mentalism in an entertainment context, knowing full well that the performer will try to read their minds, predict the future, etc. That said, do not discount the content of this book. There is a lot here, and its applications are limited only by your imagination.

There are at least two ways to deal with the fact that psychological tendencies do not perfectly predict individual responses, and these are by no means unique to my own thinking. One is to use them as subtleties—added convincers aimed to enhance an effect without relying on them for the big moment. The other is to use them as “Major Effects,” in the parlance of Mr. Bob Cassidy. An idea for this follows.

Psychological Thought Projection (Effect)

This is just a simple presentation I’ve come up with for maximizing the impact of the simplest of psychological forces. Of course, having an audience full of people engage in a psychological force procedure has been around for a long time. Its power lies in how it embraces the “tendency”-ness of such forces. Just because most people think of the number 7 when asked to think of a number from 1 – 10 doesn’t ensure that any *one* person will do so. By having a whole group think of a number, you capitalize on the tendency for people to think of the number 7 and minimize the importance of people who happen not to think of that number.

This presentation is designed to take this simple effect and address the possibility that people will think, “I’ll bet most people think of 7—there’s nothing psychic or...psychological illusion-y about it.”

Effect: You invite someone to the stage to assist you. You pull out a stack of business cards and ask her to take one at random and secretly look at what’s written on it. You explain, “*Okay, Michelle is thinking of something that she chose at random. Michelle, please continue to think of this, and as you do, try to mentally project that thought out into the audience. That might feel weird, but just imagine that you’re standing here and the thought leaves your mind and spreads throughout the crowd.*”

You continue, *"As she's thinking of this, in a moment I'm going to ask you all to 'receive' the thought. The best thing is to not overthink it and go with your gut. Ready? When I snap my fingers...everyone think of a number between one and ten. *Snap* Any number between 1 and 10—the first that pops into your mind. Hold onto that thought. Remember the number that came to you."*

You show everyone the stack of cards. A different number from 1 – 10 is written on each card. *"There was a different number on each card, and Michelle just took one at random to send to you. For the first time, Michelle, show us your card—what number were you sending out? Seven? Out there in the audience—raise your hand please if you thought of the number seven!"*

If all went according to plan, the majority of the audience should have their hands raised.

Explanation: I really like this approach because it takes the performer out of the equation. This is simply an act of mind reading between the volunteer on stage and the people in the audience. At no point does it even seem like *you* know what the number is. It also addresses the potential explanation that "everyone thinks of 7" because presumably it could have been any number that the person was trying to send.

In reality, the only method is forcing the number 7. You can do this however you like, but I like to use a one-way pack of cards in which the number 7 is written on all 10 cards. This makes everything look very free and fair. After the volunteer selects one and thinks of it, you can pocket the stack of cards and later pull out a different stack that does have different numbers written on it. There is plenty of cover for doing this during the business of having the thought projected to the audience.

Belief Perseverance: The Power of Explanation

As mind readers, we are in the business of dancing around people's beliefs. More so than magic, our demonstrations of thought reading, precognition, and influence test people's theories about the world and may even *inform* their beliefs. If you adopt the psychological angle, you may instill the belief that people can in fact be deeply and powerfully influenced at subconscious levels. If you adopt a psychic presentation, you might create a belief in the supernatural, you might test the strength of someone's non-belief, and you might also provide an anomaly for a skeptic to explain away. Because of this, it is worth spending at least some time discussing what psychologists have had to say about cases where pre-existing beliefs are met with relevant evidence.

First, social psychologists use the term "belief perseverance" to refer to times when people hold tightly to their initial beliefs even when new information directly contradicts it. Although this casts a very wide net, *belief perseverance* is usually studied with respect to information that discredits the *basis* for forming the belief at all.

As a relevant example, let's say I give you a test that's meant to measure your psychic ability by holding up ESP cards one by one and asking you to guess which symbol is on each one. Although I keep the backs of the cards facing you the whole time, I record all of your answers, and at the end of the test, I tell you how you did. I tell you that your psychic abilities are powerful! You guessed 17 out of 20 ESP cards correctly, which is significantly better than what most people do.

Now I have you fill out some extra surveys about your previous experience with psychic phenomena, but before you leave, I pull you aside and say, "Thanks for doing the surveys, but I should tell you that we actually just made up your results on the ESP test. Honestly, I wasn't even paying attention to your guesses. I tell everyone they got 17 out 20." Any rational person in this situation would realize that

since the results he received had nothing to do with his actual ability, he should discredit the belief that he'd come to form about himself (i.e., having some psychic ability). Instead, even though the basis of the belief was firmly and completely discredited, people often come away from an experience like this continuing to think they have some psychic abilities.

In psychological research, this can be a problem because any experimenters who use deception in their studies are ethically obligated to "debrief" the participants to inform them of the true nature of the study. Indeed, a lot of the research on belief perseverance has been motivated by an interest in the effectiveness of these procedures.

An early demonstration of this effect used a situation very similar to the example I gave in the previous paragraph (although I'm not aware of anyone using "psychic ability" as the belief people form about themselves). Participants in this study engaged in a fairly morbid task in which they had to classify 25 suicide notes as real or fictitious. As they did the task, the participants were given pre-scripted feedback. Regardless of how they categorized the notes, they were either told that they were correct most of the time or incorrect most of the time, which led them to form beliefs about their ability to discern real notes from fake ones.

At the end of the study, though, even though the experimenters carefully explained that the accuracy feedback they gave was pre-scripted and unrelated to their performance on the note classification task, the people who had been told they did well on the task *continued* to believe they were better at judging real vs. fake notes than the people who had been told they didn't do well (Ross, Lepper, & Hubbard, 1975). Once again, even though the basis for the belief had been totally discredited, people carried on with the beliefs they formed about themselves anyway.

This can be an issue in courtrooms as well. Imagine someone provides an eyewitness testimony in a trial that strongly suggests that the person in question is guilty, but it later comes to light that the testimony was made up. According to belief perseverance, discrediting the testimony may not do much to change the jury's

verdict. In fact, some research has shown this to be the case in mock trial settings (Loftus, 1974).

Somewhat similarly, jurors sometimes have difficulty fully avoiding the use of evidence that the judge deemed inadmissible when making their final verdicts (Sue, Smith, & Caldwell, 1973; Thompson, Fong, & Rosenhan, 1981). For instance, in a trial to decide the guilt of someone suspected of committing theft, it may come to light that this person had actually been convicted of theft some years ago. In such a case, the judge might rule this information inadmissible as evidence and tell the jury to disregard this piece of information when coming to a decision. However, compared to conditions in which this information never came to light at all, jurors are still more likely to find the defendant guilty when they learn about his previous offense even when the judge specifically asks for that information to be dropped from the consideration.²

The reason why belief perseverance occurs, however, is almost more interesting than the fact that it occurs at all. The key seems to be in the power of explanation. That is, when we form beliefs, we can do so by creating compelling explanations for why something is true. So if you tell me that I did really well at distinguishing real suicide notes from fake ones, I'm unlikely to take that at face value and instead I start to create a compelling narrative for how I was able to do so well at that task ("I have an eye for detail," "I'm good at scrutinizing written communication," "I've been successful in the past at similar tasks," etc.).

At this point, when you tell me that the feedback was fake, you've only discredited the event that inspired my explanation. You haven't discredited all of the reasons I came up with on my own to explain why I'm good at this activity. Even though the "debriefing" appears to undermine the basis for the belief I formed, in reality, the basis for the belief is *really* the explanation I created on my own and not just the score you told me.

Craig Anderson and his colleagues (1980) presented the first

² Although this is all interesting and consistent with belief perseverance, I do feel it's my duty to also mention other reassuring research that has shown that in many cases, jurors are able to appropriately reject discredited or otherwise inadmissible evidence in forming final verdicts (e.g., Kennedy & Haygood, 1992).

evidence for the power of explanation in belief perseverance. In their studies, they presented participants with information and told them that the goal of the activity was to discern relationships between personal characteristics and behavioral outcomes. The information they received in this activity was designed such that people formed a belief about the relationship between risk-taking and being a successful firefighter. After the activity, though, the experimenters either told the participants that the information in the activity was completely fabricated or said nothing about the fictitious nature of the information. As you would expect from belief perseverance, even when the participants were told that the information was fake, they continued to believe in the belief they had formed about the relationship between risk-taking and success as a firefighter. Importantly, this was true regardless of whether their information led them to believe a positive association (i.e., riskier people make better firefighters) or a negative association (i.e., riskier people make worse firefighters).

Going one step further, though, Anderson et al. (1980) found that the degree of belief perseverance depended on how much people created their own explanations for the relationships they appeared to uncover in the information. If people spontaneously generated more intricate explanations (which they could tell by reading explanations that participants wrote), they held onto their initial beliefs more firmly. Similarly, if the experimenters *asked* the participants to come up with an explanation for the relationship, those participants held onto those initial beliefs more than participants who were not guided to explain the belief (see also Anderson & Sechler, 1986).

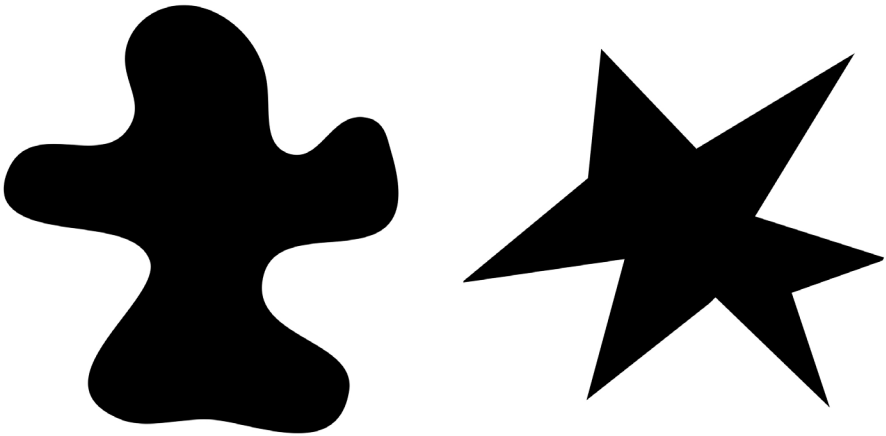
The Psychology of Disclaimers

This all strikes me as relevant to the common debate among mentalists about the use of “disclaimers.” What do we tell people about our abilities? Do we fess up and say it’s all tricks or do we confidently proclaim that our abilities are true indications of psychic ability? According to belief perseverance, it may not really matter, which matches the intuition and experiences of many performers.

Even after a lengthy disclaimer, audience members still walk away thinking that you have a supernatural gift. Therefore, if your performance is strong enough to instill in the audience the belief that you actually can see into people's minds or that you do possess an expert understanding of human nonverbal communication, then even if it later comes to light that you're just a magician with a penchant for holding his fingers to his temples, they may continue to cling to the belief."

Sure, maybe that one thing was just a magic trick," they might think, "but the way he was able to tell that woman about her childhood memory—that's really something." If your goal, however, is to ensure a persistent belief about you, then you may wish to take a lesson from the power of explanation and encourage people to convince themselves, with their own explanations, that you do have the ability to do what you claim.

Bouba and Kiki



Take a look at these two images. These are Martian hieroglyphics, and the Martians call one of them “bouba” and one of them “kiki.” Which do you think is “bouba” and which do you think is “kiki”? If you’re like 95% of people around the world, you’d say the one on the left is “bouba” and the one on the right is “kiki” (Ramachandran & Hubbard, 2001).

It’s an astounding regularity that doesn’t seem to differ between languages and even occurs for pre-literate 2.5-year-old kids (Davis, 1961; Maurer, Pathman, & Mondloch, 2006). The genesis of the link between these shapes and those names is in the work of Wolfgang Köhler (1929) who instead used the names “baluma” or “maluma” for the round shape and “takete” for the spiky shape. The effect has been repeated by other experimenters (e.g., Holland & Wertheimer, 1964), sometimes with variations on the names (e.g., “uloomu” instead of “bouba” or “maluma”; Davis, 1961).

Exactly why there is such overwhelming consistency in the link between those names and those images is still unclear. At first, people thought it was just because the words contained letters that visually resembled the curved vs. angular nature of the images (e.g., the “t” and “k” in *takete* and the “b,” “m,” and “u” in *baluma*). However, because the effect has been shown in other languages and using only spoken words, this explanation doesn’t account for the findings. Another

explanation is that angular, spiky shapes like the ones in the image resemble the motions our mouths make when pronouncing a word like “kiki” whereas the round shapes in the other image resemble the movements needed to pronounce a word like “bouba” (Ramachandran & Hubbard, 2001).

Still another explanation is that objects in the real world that look like image on the right are more likely to actually produce sounds similar to “kiki” whereas objects that look like the image on the left are more likely to actually produce sounds similar to “bouba.” Indeed, lower frequency sounds often come from larger, softer objects, and higher frequency sounds often come from smaller, angular objects.

Regardless of why this effect occurs, with some presentational tweaking, it can be turned into a reliable psychological force that can be used as a quick, purely “psychological” demonstration that can transition into a larger effect.

The Maluma-Takete Force

Print the images from the beginning of this section onto two pieces of cardstock. Alternatively, you can draw them yourself on the backs of index cards or business cards. On the back of the card with the round shape, write the word “Maluma,” and on the back of the card with the angular shape, write the word “Takete.”

To present this, set the two cards on the table side by side with the images facing up.

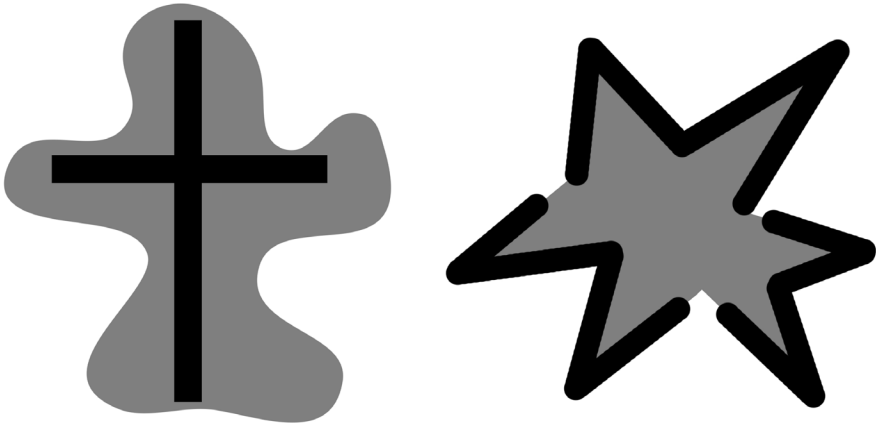
“These are two images that come from an old mythology. They’ve been found on old parchment in Northeast Africa. I’m not sure exactly what they mean, but one of them was always referred to as “Maluma” and the other as “Takete.” I’m not going to tell you which is which—I want you to guess. Just go with your gut and use your intuition to connect with the people who used to draw these pictures. Which one do you think is Maluma and which is Takete?”

After they say what they think, assuming they’re like most people and correctly assign the images to their names, you can turn the cards

over to reveal the correct name. "Great job. That's totally right."

The following subtlety is built into these particular images³ and allows you to make the effect more unique to the person who registered his or her guess.

"I knew you'd get this right. You seem to have a good sense of intuition and ability to connect with others. Oftentimes, people think too literally and make the wrong guess here. As you can see, this image (i.e., the angular one) actually resembles the letter 'M,' the first letter in 'Maluma.' and this other image (i.e., the round one) looks like the letter 't,' as in 'Takete.' But of course, that's just what the letters look like in English. When you get too narrowly focused on your own experiences, your own language, it distracts you from being able to understand the experiences of others. Since you seem to do that pretty well, I'd like to try something else with you..."



The last bit is intended to elevate a simple psychological consistency

3 Although the images I am using in this section and to implement the force are not from the existing research on the Bouba/Kiki phenomenon, I have tested these specific images in an online survey. Regardless of whether the round shape is on the left or on the right, people correctly identified the round shape as "Maluma" and the angular shape as "Takete" about 85% of the time. In addition, I asked the participants whether they were familiar with these names or images, and 58 of the 60 respondents said that they were not at all familiar with this experiment.

to something more meaningful. Even though nearly everyone will make the same guess as to which name belongs to which symbol, the framing of this force makes it seem more like *this person* was able to do something important. Now, this effect alone is not necessarily mind-blowing mentalism as there are really only two guesses the person could make, so it's up to you to present this well, take advantage of the psychological "force," but not rely on it to carry the effect.

So what happens if the person gets it "wrong"? You have a few options. The first is to brush it off in the same way any psychological force could be brushed off. I will sometimes turn over the cards anyway to reveal the error. After all, how could you possibly hold the person accountable for failing to guess the words related to an old North African mythology?

"That's an interesting guess. As it turns out, it's actually this one that's Maluma and this one that's Takete. I mean, how could you know that? I didn't know it until I read it in a book. After all, this is the problem with language... the words have a clear meaning to those who speak the language, but to those who don't, it's just another sound that carries no particular meaning."

This could transition into any effect in which you reveal the word someone is thinking of. If there are other people watching as well, you can turn it into a "reading" in the same way people often suggest getting out of other psychological forces that fail. By this I mean you can turn to the others watching and ask whether they thought the same or the opposite with regard to which picture was named what. Most of them will say that they had actually thought the opposite (i.e., as you would have predicted). Now you can turn this into a reading about what makes this person unique.

"Well look at that. In fact, it's true that most of the time people think that this one is Maluma and this one is Takete, but I did have a feeling that you would be the type of person who goes for the opposite—that's why I picked you to make the guess. Whether consciously or not, you pick up on nuanced clues that many people miss. Everyone, look at the images again. This one (the round

one) is actually in the general shape of a 't,' the first letter of 'Takete.' In the other one (the angular one) you can clearly see the letter 'M,' the first letter of 'Maluma.' Pete, you picked up on this beautifully—just as I thought you might—so I'd like to try something else with you."

Alternatively, you can build a multiple outs method for this. Since there are only two possible outcomes, this wouldn't be too difficult. I haven't done this personally, but it could certainly work for you. In fact, if you are presenting this to several people, having the backup plan could pay off. After the person says his or her guess, you can take the opportunity to ask everyone else what they would say; most of them will provide the "normal" guess. Therefore, your reveal suggests you knew that *this* person was going to go counter to the norm, which would be pretty impressive.

I realize I've spent a lot of time outlining "outs" that you'll probably never need, but I wanted to illustrate some ways you can handle a "miss" to keep things going. Because this micro effect would never stand on its own anyway, the risk is minimal. However, when the person gets it right, you have a very pure demonstration of the person's intuition that would be a nice segue into a prediction effect that's presented as a more sophisticated demonstration of the person's intuition.

Note also that I chose to go with "Maluma" and "Takete" as the names for this force. There were a few reasons for this. The first is that it was easier to create the images that look like "M" and "t" to set up the alternative route the participant could have taken. The second is that these names sounded more plausible as having come from a real language and mythology than "Bouba" and "Kiki." The final is that the more recent "Bouba" and "Kiki" names are the ones that popular psychology authors use when talking about this effect. Although the risk is fairly small because it isn't a commonly reported effect, I chose to use the more obscure names in the event that the participant later encounters the "Bouba/Kiki" effect in a book or something. These considerations aside, you are free to use whichever variation you find more comfortable.