Applying Social Psychology in the "Shark Tank"
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Objectives:
- See how social psychology can help address real world problems and affect change
- Demonstrate the utility of class concepts outside of the classroom
- Practice explaining psychological concepts to a non-academic audience
- Provide experience on how to pitch an idea with creativity and enthusiasm
- Consider the costs of such programs and ideas

The idea:

In this adaptation of the popular television program "Shark Tank," students explore the idea of **social entrepreneurship**, with the goal of applying social psychology in the world around them.

Over the course of the semester, they devise a plan to apply a course concept to address a social problem (such as voter apathy, food waste, loneliness, etc.) and then, as a team, make a ten-minute pitch to a panel (which could be their fellow students, other faculty, etc.) on how they might address this problem. (This could also be done individually in a small class or if you have a lot of time.)

Students enjoy making their pitches, hearing the pitches of their classmates, and voting on a winner. It's a great way to end the course, showing how it is practical while reinforcing key concepts in a novel way.

Examples from this past semester:
- Create a product and use social media influencers to popularize a unique "nicotine patch bracelet" to help people break the vaping habit (social psychology concept – conformity and norms).
- Create a dating app using research-based advice for attraction and relationship success (social psychology concepts – emphasizing similarities, building intimacy through self-disclosure)
- Motivate students to walk to campus rather than driving by emphasizing how many students actually walk (social psychology concept – descriptive norm) and giving a message of approval to walkers (social psychology concept – injunctive norm)
- Address police brutality with a socioemotional education program for officers (social psychology concepts – fundamental attribution error, implicit biases, loving-kindness meditation to build empathy).

Grading criteria:

Appropriate use of technology, creativity, accuracy of describing/applying class concepts, accuracy of describing activity, presentation style (preparation, enthusiasm, not reading off slides/notecards), adhering to time limit