

# Social psychology

[Psychology](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Social Psychology Examples of Psychological Phenomena in the movie “ I, Robot” The movie ‘ I, Robot’ was released in 2004 and is based on a series of short stories by Isaac Asimov. The movie is based in Chicago in the year 205, a time in which sentient robots are commonplace helpers. The robots are supposed to be governed by the three laws of robotics which ensure that the robots work for the betterment of human-kind and cannot cause direct harm to a human. The protagonist is a police officer Del Spooner who dislikes the robots and suffers from survivor’s guilt about being saved from an accident (by a robot) instead of a young girl. When he is asked to investigate the suspicious death of a scientist and friend, Dr. Alfred Lanning who founded the organization that supplies and manages the robots; he believes that a robot may be implicated. The latest experiments of the late scientist were focused on a robot named Sonny who seems to have emotions and claims to have dreams – making him far similar to humans themselves. Spooner attempts to identify the reasons why Sonny would have killed Dr. Lanning with the help of Susan Calvin, a Robopsychologist, and one of Lanning’s associates; and in the process he discovers that the late Dr. Lanning was being held hostage by another sentient software, and this software (known as VIKI) was responsible not only for Lanning planning suicide, but also the production of an army of robots who would keep humans under strict control in order to stop them from damaging their own lives. In the process, he learns to understand and trust Sonny who helps in stopping VIKI in the end. This movie provides an excellent opportunity to study human emotions and behaviors; particularly as it is possible to compare actions against those of the robots. In the very first 10 minutes, the movie provides an example of Prejudice. Prejudice is a set of negative attitudes towards members of a

<https://assignbuster.com/social-psychology-essay-samples-3/>

particular group simply because of their membership to that group (Baron and Bryne, 2000). A person who experiences prejudice responds to an object of prejudice in a negative manner regardless of proof to the contrary (Sanderson, 2010). In the movie, Spooner sees a robot running with a purse and assumes that the robot is stealing from someone. He chases the robot and stops it, only to realize that it was carrying the purse to its owner. This occurs in spite of the fact that robot programming restricts them from harming humans. It becomes evident that Spooner has a hatred for robots, and is prejudiced against them. This prejudice causes him to believe that the robot was attempting to steal the bag.

Halfway through the movie, there is a scene where sonny is being interrogated by Spooner since he is suspected of having killed Lanning. As a robot, he is not expected to understand or display emotion; but he displays a number of emotions as well as curiosity. Then he asks Spooner “ don’t you have to do something for someone if they ask you.... If you love them?” the scene shows how a simple, child-like mind processes powerful emotions like Love. Love is a combination of emotions and cognitions (Sanderson, 2010) that are often associated with particular behavior, and can be a part of a number of imitate relationships (Baron and Bryne, 2000). In this case, the scene brings out a number of fine details that come together to show that the robot Sonny did in his way ‘ love’ Dr. Lanning. He calls Lanning ‘ father’, displays anger at being accused of hurting him, and also displays sadness about Lanning’s death. The scene can be seen on youtube. com at [http://www. youtube. com/watch? v= 9pnLtsdSqU4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pnLtsdSqU4)

At the end of the movie, there is an example of the working of the Contact Hypothesis. The Contact Hypothesis states that if an individual holding a <https://assignbuster.com/social-psychology-essay-samples-3/>

prejudice comes in direct contact with the object of prejudice in order to complete some task that they deem significant and they achieve success, it is possible that there will be a reduction in the prejudice experienced (Baron and Bryne, 2000; Sanderson, 2010). The last scenes of the movie show a fight wherein Spooner and Calvin have to take the help of Sonny to stop a Robot supercomputer from gaining control over the world. When they succeed, Spooner shakes hands with Sonny and winks at him – a running thread that shows trust and friendship in the movie. The combined efforts taken by them reduced Spooner's prejudice towards the robot.

#### References

Baron, R. A., and Bryne, D. (2000). *Social Psychology*. (8th Ed). New York: Allyn and Bacon.

Sanderson, C. A. (2010). *Social Psychology*. New Jersey: Wiley.