

# Chapter 11

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# Personality



**Figure 11.1** What makes two individuals have different personalities? (credit: modification of work by Nicolas Alejandro)

## Chapter Outline

- 11.1 What Is Personality?
- 11.2 Freud and the Psychodynamic Perspective
- 11.3 Neo-Freudians: Adler, Erikson, Jung, and Horney
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- 11.8 Cultural Understandings of Personality
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## Introduction

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Three months before William Jefferson Blythe III was born, his father died in a car accident. He was raised by his mother, Virginia Dell, and grandparents, in Hope, Arkansas. When he turned 4, his mother married Roger Clinton, Jr., an alcoholic who was physically abusive to William's mother. Six years later, Virginia gave birth to another son, Roger. William, who later took the last name Clinton from his stepfather, became the 42nd president of the United States. While Bill Clinton was making his political ascendance, his half-brother, Roger Clinton, was arrested numerous times for drug charges, including possession, conspiracy to distribute cocaine, and driving under the influence, serving time in jail. Two brothers, raised by the same people, took radically different paths in their lives. Why did they make the choices they did? What internal forces shaped their decisions? Personality psychology can help us answer these questions and more.

## 11.1 What Is Personality?

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define personality
- Describe early theories about personality development

**Personality** refers to the long-standing traits and patterns that propel individuals to consistently think, feel, and behave in specific ways. Our personality is what makes us unique individuals. Each person has an idiosyncratic pattern of enduring, long-term characteristics and a manner in which he or she interacts with other individuals and the world around them. Our personalities are thought to be long term, stable, and not easily changed. The word *personality* comes from the Latin word *persona*. In the ancient world, a persona was a mask worn by an actor. While we tend to think of a mask as being worn to conceal one's identity, the theatrical mask was originally used to either represent or project a specific personality trait of a character (**Figure 11.2**).

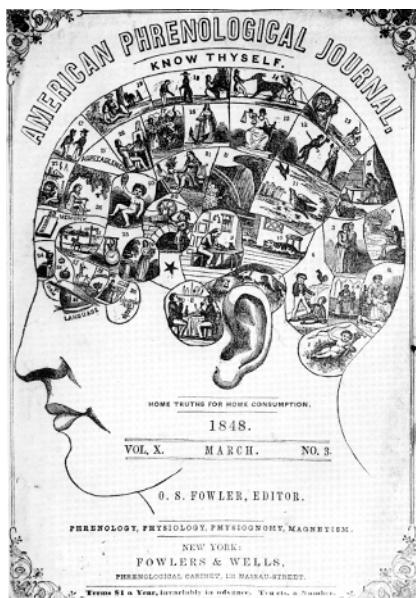


**Figure 11.2** Happy, sad, impatient, shy, fearful, curious, helpful. What characteristics describe your personality?

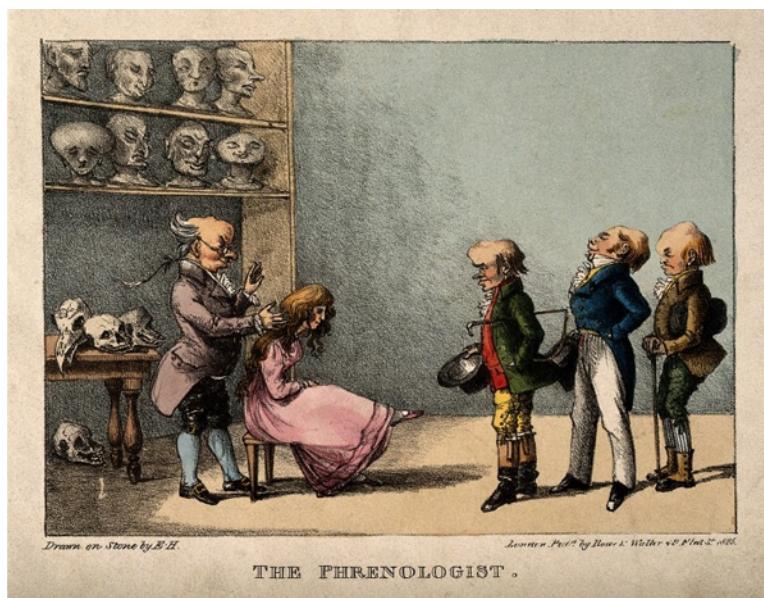
### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The concept of personality has been studied for at least 2,000 years, beginning with Hippocrates in 370 BCE (Fazeli, 2012). Hippocrates theorized that personality traits and human behaviors are based on four separate temperaments associated with four fluids ("humors") of the body: choleric temperament (yellow bile from the liver), melancholic temperament (black bile from the kidneys), sanguine temperament (red blood from the heart), and phlegmatic temperament (white phlegm from the lungs) (Clark & Watson, 2008; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Lecci & Magnavita, 2013; Noga, 2007). Centuries later, the influential Greek physician and philosopher Galen built on Hippocrates's theory, suggesting that both diseases and personality differences could be explained by imbalances in the humors and that each person exhibits one of the four temperaments. For example, the choleric person is passionate, ambitious, and bold; the melancholic person is reserved, anxious, and unhappy; the sanguine person is joyful, eager, and optimistic; and the phlegmatic person is calm, reliable, and thoughtful (Clark & Watson, 2008; Stelmack & Stalikas, 1991). Galen's theory was prevalent for over 1,000 years and continued to be popular through the Middle Ages.

In 1780, Franz Gall, a German physician, proposed that the distances between bumps on the skull reveal a person's personality traits, character, and mental abilities (**Figure 11.3**). According to Gall, measuring these distances revealed the sizes of the brain areas underneath, providing information that could be used to determine whether a person was friendly, prideful, murderous, kind, good with languages, and so on. Initially, phrenology was very popular; however, it was soon discredited for lack of empirical support and has long been relegated to the status of pseudoscience (Fancher, 1979).



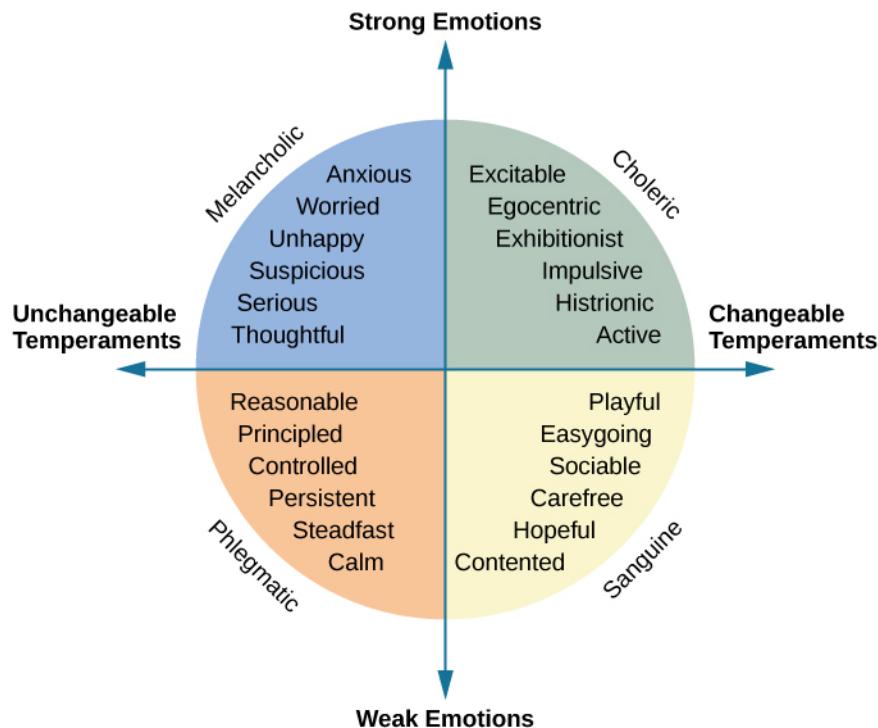
(a)



(b)

**Figure 11.3** The pseudoscience of measuring the areas of a person's skull is known as phrenology. (a) Gall developed a chart that depicted which areas of the skull corresponded to particular personality traits or characteristics (Hothersall, 1995). (b) An 1825 lithograph depicts Gall examining the skull of a young woman. (credit b: modification of work by Wellcome Library, London)

In the centuries after Galen, other researchers contributed to the development of his four primary temperament types, most prominently Immanuel Kant (in the 18th century) and psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (in the 19th century) (Eysenck, 2009; Stelmack & Stalikas, 1991; Wundt, 1874/1886) (**Figure 11.4**). Kant agreed with Galen that everyone could be sorted into one of the four temperaments and that there was no overlap between the four categories (Eysenck, 2009). He developed a list of traits that could be used to describe the personality of a person from each of the four temperaments. However, Wundt suggested that a better description of personality could be achieved using two major axes: emotional/nonemotional and changeable/unchangeable. The first axis separated strong from weak emotions (the melancholic and choleric temperaments from the phlegmatic and sanguine). The second axis divided the changeable temperaments (choleric and sanguine) from the unchangeable ones (melancholic and phlegmatic) (Eysenck, 2009).



**Figure 11.4** Developed from Galen’s theory of the four temperaments, Kant proposed trait words to describe each temperament. Wundt later suggested the arrangement of the traits on two major axes.

Sigmund Freud’s psychodynamic perspective of personality was the first comprehensive theory of personality, explaining a wide variety of both normal and abnormal behaviors. According to Freud, unconscious drives influenced by sex and aggression, along with childhood sexuality, are the forces that influence our personality. Freud attracted many followers who modified his ideas to create new theories about personality. These theorists, referred to as neo-Freudians, generally agreed with Freud that childhood experiences matter, but they reduced the emphasis on sex and focused more on the social environment and effects of culture on personality. The perspective of personality proposed by Freud and his followers was the dominant theory of personality for the first half of the 20th century.

Other major theories then emerged, including the learning, humanistic, biological, evolutionary, trait, and cultural perspectives. In this chapter, we will explore these various perspectives on personality in depth.

### LINK TO LEARNING



View this video for a [brief overview](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/mandela) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/mandela>) of some of the psychological perspectives on personality.

## 11.2 Freud and the Psychodynamic Perspective

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

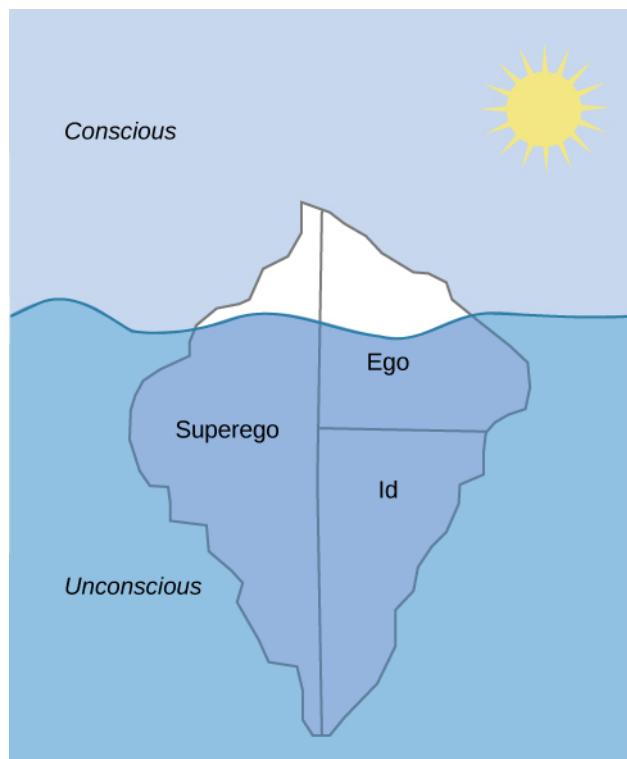
- Describe the assumptions of the psychodynamic perspective on personality development
  - Define and describe the nature and function of the id, ego, and superego
  - Define and describe the defense mechanisms
  - Define and describe the psychosexual stages of personality development
- 

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) is probably the most controversial and misunderstood psychological theorist. When reading Freud's theories, it is important to remember that he was a medical doctor, not a psychologist. There was no such thing as a degree in psychology at the time that he received his education, which can help us understand some of the controversy over his theories today. However, Freud was the first to systematically study and theorize the workings of the unconscious mind in the manner that we associate with modern psychology.

In the early years of his career, Freud worked with Josef Breuer, a Viennese physician. During this time, Freud became intrigued by the story of one of Breuer's patients, Bertha Pappenheim, who was referred to by the pseudonym Anna O. (Launer, 2005). Anna O. had been caring for her dying father when she began to experience symptoms such as partial paralysis, headaches, blurred vision, amnesia, and hallucinations (Launer, 2005). In Freud's day, these symptoms were commonly referred to as hysteria. Anna O. turned to Breuer for help. He spent 2 years (1880–1882) treating Anna O. and discovered that allowing her to talk about her experiences seemed to bring some relief of her symptoms. Anna O. called his treatment the "talking cure" (Launer, 2005). Despite the fact the Freud never met Anna O., her story served as the basis for the 1895 book, *Studies on Hysteria*, which he co-authored with Breuer. Based on Breuer's description of Anna O.'s treatment, Freud concluded that hysteria was the result of sexual abuse in childhood and that these traumatic experiences had been hidden from consciousness. Breuer disagreed with Freud, which soon ended their work together. However, Freud continued to work to refine talk therapy and build his theory on personality.

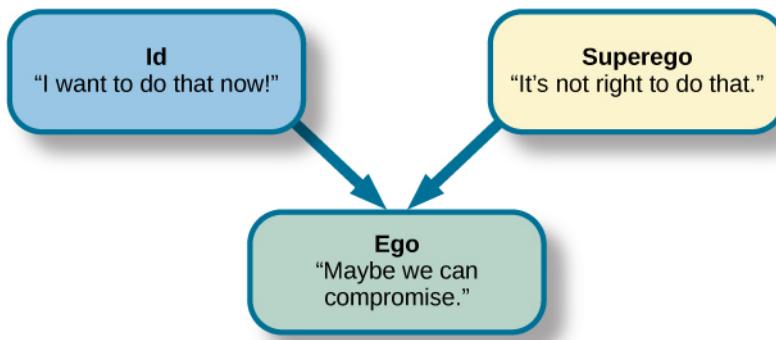
### LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

To explain the concept of conscious versus unconscious experience, Freud compared the mind to an iceberg (**Figure 11.5**). He said that only about one-tenth of our mind is **conscious**, and the rest of our mind is **unconscious**. Our unconscious refers to that mental activity of which we are unaware and are unable to access (Freud, 1923). According to Freud, unacceptable urges and desires are kept in our unconscious through a process called repression. For example, we sometimes say things that we don't intend to say by unintentionally substituting another word for the one we meant. You've probably heard of a Freudian slip, the term used to describe this. Freud suggested that slips of the tongue are actually sexual or aggressive urges, accidentally slipping out of our unconscious. Speech errors such as this are quite common. Seeing them as a reflection of unconscious desires, linguists today have found that slips of the tongue tend to occur when we are tired, nervous, or not at our optimal level of cognitive functioning (Motley, 2002).



**Figure 11.5** Freud believed that we are only aware of a small amount of our mind's activities and that most of it remains hidden from us in our unconscious. The information in our unconscious affects our behavior, although we are unaware of it.

According to Freud, our personality develops from a conflict between two forces: our biological aggressive and pleasure-seeking drives versus our internal (socialized) control over these drives. Our personality is the result of our efforts to balance these two competing forces. Freud suggested that we can understand this by imagining three interacting systems within our minds. He called them the id, ego, and superego (**Figure 11.6**).



**Figure 11.6** The job of the ego, or self, is to balance the aggressive/pleasure-seeking drives of the id with the moral control of the superego.

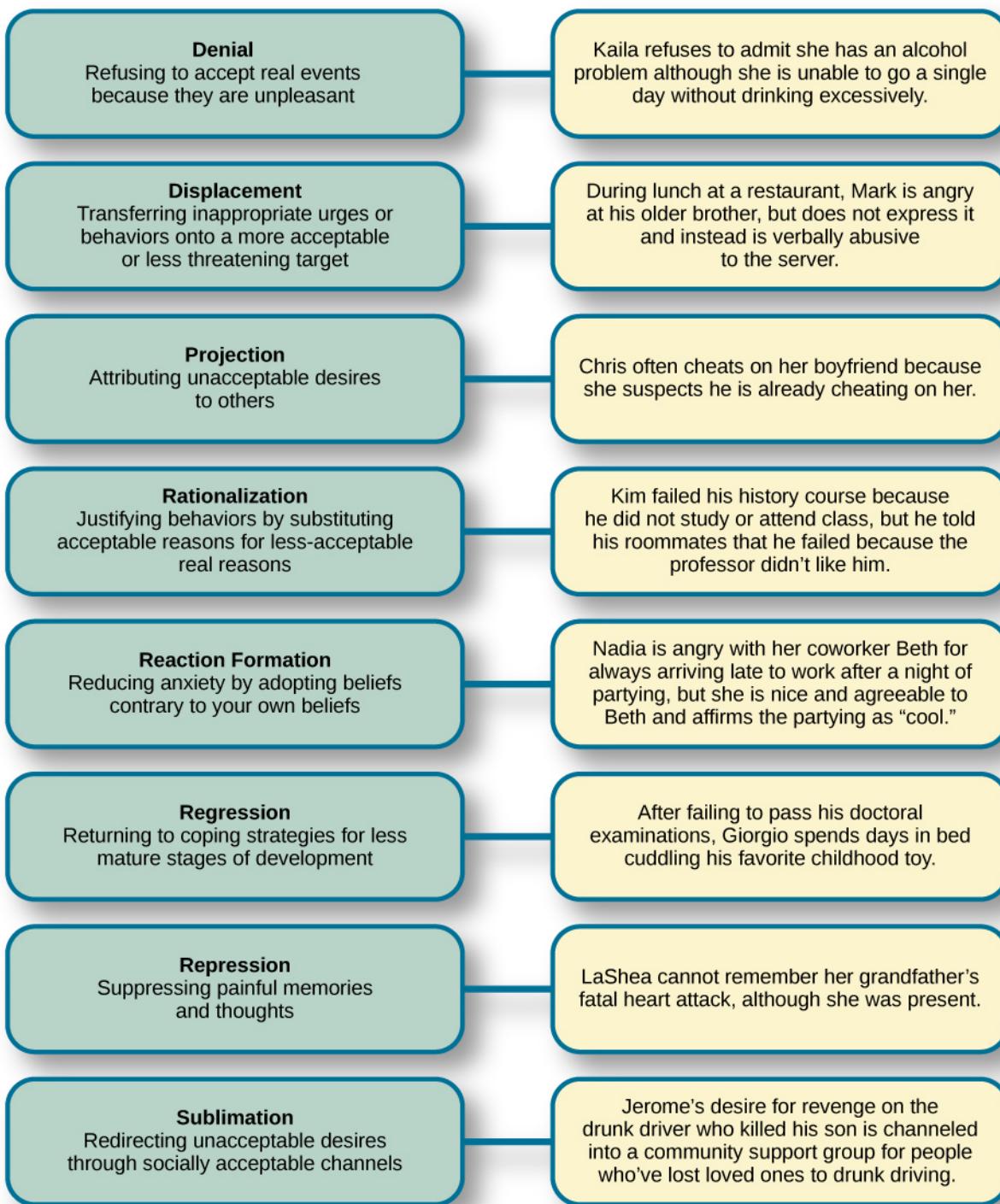
The unconscious **id** contains our most primitive drives or urges, and is present from birth. It directs impulses for hunger, thirst, and sex. Freud believed that the id operates on what he called the “pleasure principle,” in which the id seeks immediate gratification. Through social interactions with parents and others in a child’s environment, the ego and superego develop to help control the id. The **superego** develops as a child interacts with others, learning the social rules for right and wrong. The superego acts

as our conscience; it is our moral compass that tells us how we should behave. It strives for perfection and judges our behavior, leading to feelings of pride or—when we fall short of the ideal—feelings of guilt. In contrast to the instinctual id and the rule-based superego, the **ego** is the rational part of our personality. It's what Freud considered to be the self, and it is the part of our personality that is seen by others. Its job is to balance the demands of the id and superego in the context of reality; thus, it operates on what Freud called the "reality principle." The ego helps the id satisfy its desires in a realistic way.

The id and superego are in constant conflict, because the id wants instant gratification regardless of the consequences, but the superego tells us that we must behave in socially acceptable ways. Thus, the ego's job is to find the middle ground. It helps satisfy the id's desires in a rational way that will not lead us to feelings of guilt. According to Freud, a person who has a strong ego, which can balance the demands of the id and the superego, has a healthy personality. Freud maintained that imbalances in the system can lead to **neurosis** (a tendency to experience negative emotions), anxiety disorders, or unhealthy behaviors. For example, a person who is dominated by their id might be narcissistic and impulsive. A person with a dominant superego might be controlled by feelings of guilt and deny themselves even socially acceptable pleasures; conversely, if the superego is weak or absent, a person might become a psychopath. An overly dominant superego might be seen in an over-controlled individual whose rational grasp on reality is so strong that they are unaware of their emotional needs, or, in a neurotic who is overly defensive (overusing ego defense mechanisms).

## DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Freud believed that feelings of anxiety result from the ego's inability to mediate the conflict between the id and superego. When this happens, Freud believed that the ego seeks to restore balance through various protective measures known as defense mechanisms (**Figure 11.7**). When certain events, feelings, or yearnings cause an individual anxiety, the individual wishes to reduce that anxiety. To do that, the individual's unconscious mind uses ego **defense mechanisms**, unconscious protective behaviors that aim to reduce anxiety. The ego, usually conscious, resorts to unconscious strivings to protect the ego from being overwhelmed by anxiety. When we use defense mechanisms, we are unaware that we are using them. Further, they operate in various ways that distort reality. According to Freud, we all use ego defense mechanisms.



**Figure 11.7** Defense mechanisms are unconscious protective behaviors that work to reduce anxiety.

While everyone uses defense mechanisms, Freud believed that overuse of them may be problematic. For example, let's say Joe Smith is a high school football player. Deep down, Joe feels sexually attracted to males. His conscious belief is that being gay is immoral and that if he were gay, his family would disown him and he would be ostracized by his peers. Therefore, there is a conflict between his conscious beliefs (being gay is wrong and will result in being ostracized) and his unconscious urges (attraction to males). The idea that he might be gay causes Joe to have feelings of anxiety. How can he decrease his anxiety? Joe

may find himself acting very “macho,” making gay jokes, and picking on a school peer who is gay. This way, Joe’s unconscious impulses are further submerged.

There are several different types of defense mechanisms. For instance, in repression, anxiety-causing memories from consciousness are blocked. As an analogy, let’s say your car is making a strange noise, but because you do not have the money to get it fixed, you just turn up the radio so that you no longer hear the strange noise. Eventually you forget about it. Similarly, in the human psyche, if a memory is too overwhelming to deal with, it might be **repressed** and thus removed from conscious awareness (Freud, 1920). This repressed memory might cause symptoms in other areas.

Another defense mechanism is **reaction formation**, in which someone expresses feelings, thoughts, and behaviors opposite to their inclinations. In the above example, Joe made fun of a homosexual peer while himself being attracted to males. In **regression**, an individual acts much younger than their age. For example, a four-year-old child who resents the arrival of a newborn sibling may act like a baby and revert to drinking out of a bottle. In **projection**, a person refuses to acknowledge her own unconscious feelings and instead sees those feelings in someone else. Other defense mechanisms include **rationalization**, **displacement**, and **sublimation**.

#### LINK TO LEARNING



Watch this [video](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/defmech) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/defmech>) for a review of Freud’s defense mechanisms.

#### STAGES OF PSYCHOSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Freud believed that personality develops during early childhood: Childhood experiences shape our personalities as well as our behavior as adults. He asserted that we develop via a series of stages during childhood. Each of us must pass through these childhood stages, and if we do not have the proper nurturing and parenting during a stage, we will be stuck, or fixated, in that stage, even as adults.

In each **psychosexual stage of development**, the child’s pleasure-seeking urges, coming from the id, are focused on a different area of the body, called an erogenous zone. The stages are oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital (**Table 11.1**).

Freud’s psychosexual development theory is quite controversial. To understand the origins of the theory, it is helpful to be familiar with the political, social, and cultural influences of Freud’s day in Vienna at the turn of the 20th century. During this era, a climate of sexual repression, combined with limited understanding and education surrounding human sexuality, heavily influenced Freud’s perspective. Given that sex was a taboo topic, Freud assumed that negative emotional states (neuroses) stemmed from suppression of unconscious sexual and aggressive urges. For Freud, his own recollections and interpretations of patients’ experiences and dreams were sufficient proof that psychosexual stages were universal events in early childhood.

**Table 11.1 Freud's Stages of Psychosexual Development**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Erogenous Zone</b>	<b>Major Conflict</b>	<b>Adult Fixation Example</b>
Oral	0–1	Mouth	Weaning off breast or bottle	Smoking, overeating
Anal	1–3	Anus	Toilet training	Neatness, messiness
Phallic	3–6	Genitals	Oedipus/Electra complex	Vanity, overambition
Latency	6–12	None	None	None
Genital	12+	Genitals	None	None

## Oral Stage

In the **oral stage** (birth to 1 year), pleasure is focused on the mouth. Eating and the pleasure derived from sucking (nipples, pacifiers, and thumbs) play a large part in a baby's first year of life. At around 1 year of age, babies are weaned from the bottle or breast, and this process can create conflict if not handled properly by caregivers. According to Freud, an adult who smokes, drinks, overeats, or bites her nails is fixated in the oral stage of her psychosexual development; she may have been weaned too early or too late, resulting in these fixation tendencies, all of which seek to ease anxiety.

## Anal Stage

After passing through the oral stage, children enter what Freud termed the **anal stage** (1–3 years). In this stage, children experience pleasure in their bowel and bladder movements, so it makes sense that the conflict in this stage is over toilet training. Freud suggested that success at the anal stage depended on how parents handled toilet training. Parents who offer praise and rewards encourage positive results and can help children feel competent. Parents who are harsh in toilet training can cause a child to become fixated at the anal stage, leading to the development of an anal-retentive personality. The anal-retentive personality is stingy and stubborn, has a compulsive need for order and neatness, and might be considered a perfectionist. If parents are too lenient in toilet training, the child might also become fixated and display an anal-expulsive personality. The anal-expulsive personality is messy, careless, disorganized, and prone to emotional outbursts.

## Phallic Stage

Freud's third stage of psychosexual development is the **phallic stage** (3–6 years), corresponding to the age when children become aware of their bodies and recognize the differences between boys and girls. The erogenous zone in this stage is the genitals. Conflict arises when the child feels a desire for the opposite-sex parent, and jealousy and hatred toward the same-sex parent. For boys, this is called the Oedipus complex, involving a boy's desire for his mother and his urge to replace his father who is seen as a rival for the mother's attention. At the same time, the boy is afraid his father will punish him for his feelings, so he experiences *castration anxiety*. The Oedipus complex is successfully resolved when the boy begins to identify with his father as an indirect way to have the mother. Failure to resolve the Oedipus complex may result in fixation and development of a personality that might be described as vain and overly ambitious.

Girls experience a comparable conflict in the phallic stage—the Electra complex. The Electra complex, while often attributed to Freud, was actually proposed by Freud's protégé, Carl Jung (Jung & Kerenyi, 1963). A girl desires the attention of her father and wishes to take her mother's place. Jung also said that girls are angry with the mother for not providing them with a penis—hence the term *penis envy*. While

Freud initially embraced the Electra complex as a parallel to the Oedipus complex, he later rejected it, yet it remains as a cornerstone of Freudian theory, thanks in part to academics in the field (Freud, 1931/1968; Scott, 2005).

### Latency Period

Following the phallic stage of psychosexual development is a period known as the **latency period** (6 years to puberty). This period is not considered a stage, because sexual feelings are dormant as children focus on other pursuits, such as school, friendships, hobbies, and sports. Children generally engage in activities with peers of the same sex, which serves to consolidate a child's gender-role identity.

### Genital Stage

The final stage is the **genital stage** (from puberty on). In this stage, there is a sexual reawakening as the incestuous urges resurface. The young person redirects these urges to other, more socially acceptable partners (who often resemble the other-sex parent). People in this stage have mature sexual interests, which for Freud meant a strong desire for the opposite sex. Individuals who successfully completed the previous stages, reaching the genital stage with no fixations, are said to be well-balanced, healthy adults.

While most of Freud's ideas have not found support in modern research, we cannot discount the contributions that Freud has made to the field of psychology. It was Freud who pointed out that a large part of our mental life is influenced by the experiences of early childhood and takes place outside of our conscious awareness; his theories paved the way for others.

## 11.3 Neo-Freudians: Adler, Erikson, Jung, and Horney

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the concept of the inferiority complex
  - Discuss the core differences between Erikson's and Freud's views on personality
  - Discuss Jung's ideas of the collective unconscious and archetypes
  - Discuss the work of Karen Horney, including her revision of Freud's "penis envy"
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Freud attracted many followers who modified his ideas to create new theories about personality. These theorists, referred to as neo-Freudians, generally agreed with Freud that childhood experiences matter, but deemphasized sex, focusing more on the social environment and effects of culture on personality. Four notable neo-Freudians include Alfred Adler, Erik Erikson, Carl Jung (pronounced "Yoong"), and Karen Horney (pronounced "HORN-eye").

### ALFRED ADLER

Alfred Adler, a colleague of Freud's and the first president of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society (Freud's inner circle of colleagues), was the first major theorist to break away from Freud (**Figure 11.8**). He subsequently founded a school of psychology called **individual psychology**, which focuses on our drive to compensate for feelings of inferiority. Adler (1937, 1956) proposed the concept of the **inferiority complex**. An inferiority complex refers to a person's feelings that they lack worth and don't measure up to the standards of others or of society. Adler's ideas about inferiority represent a major difference between his thinking and Freud's. Freud believed that we are motivated by sexual and aggressive urges, but Adler (1930, 1961) believed that feelings of inferiority in childhood are what drive people to attempt to gain superiority and that this striving is the force behind all of our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.



**Figure 11.8** Alfred Adler proposed the concept of the inferiority complex.

Adler also believed in the importance of social connections, seeing childhood development emerging through social development rather than the sexual stages Freud outlined. Adler noted the inter-relatedness of humanity and the need to work together for the betterment of all. He said, "The happiness of mankind lies in working together, in living as if each individual had set himself the task of contributing to the common welfare" (Adler, 1964, p. 255) with the main goal of psychology being "to recognize the equal rights and equality of others" (Adler, 1961, p. 691).

With these ideas, Adler identified three fundamental social tasks that all of us must experience: occupational tasks (careers), societal tasks (friendship), and love tasks (finding an intimate partner for a long-term relationship). Rather than focus on sexual or aggressive motives for behavior as Freud did, Adler focused on social motives. He also emphasized conscious rather than unconscious motivation, since he believed that the three fundamental social tasks are explicitly known and pursued. That is not to say that Adler did not also believe in unconscious processes—he did—but he felt that conscious processes were more important.

One of Adler's major contributions to personality psychology was the idea that our birth order shapes our personality. He proposed that older siblings, who start out as the focus of their parents' attention but must share that attention once a new child joins the family, compensate by becoming overachievers. The youngest children, according to Adler, may be spoiled, leaving the middle child with the opportunity to minimize the negative dynamics of the youngest and oldest children. Despite popular attention, research has not conclusively confirmed Adler's hypotheses about birth order.

### LINK TO LEARNING



One of Adler's major contributions to personality psychology was the idea that our birth order shapes our personality. Follow [this link](http://openstaxcollege.org/II-best) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/II-best>) to view a summary of birth order theory.

### ERIK ERIKSON

As an art school dropout with an uncertain future, young Erik Erikson met Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, while he was tutoring the children of an American couple undergoing psychoanalysis in Vienna. It was Anna Freud who encouraged Erikson to study psychoanalysis. Erikson received his diploma from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute in 1933, and as Nazism spread across Europe, he fled the country and immigrated to the United States that same year. As you learned when you studied lifespan development, Erikson later proposed a psychosocial theory of development, suggesting that an individual's personality develops throughout the lifespan—a departure from Freud's view that personality is fixed in early life.

In his theory, Erikson emphasized the social relationships that are important at each stage of personality development, in contrast to Freud's emphasis on sex. Erikson identified eight stages, each of which represents a conflict or developmental task (**Table 11.2**). The development of a healthy personality and a sense of competence depend on the successful completion of each task.

**Table 11.2 Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development**

Stage	Age (years)	Developmental Task	Description
1	0–1	Trust vs. mistrust	Trust (or mistrust) that basic needs, such as nourishment and affection, will be met
2	1–3	Autonomy vs. shame/doubt	Sense of independence in many tasks develops
3	3–6	Initiative vs. guilt	Take initiative on some activities, may develop guilt when success not met or boundaries overstepped
4	7–11	Industry vs. inferiority	Develop self-confidence in abilities when competent or sense of inferiority when not
5	12–18	Identity vs. confusion	Experiment with and develop identity and roles
6	19–29	Intimacy vs. isolation	Establish intimacy and relationships with others
7	30–64	Generativity vs. stagnation	Contribute to society and be part of a family
8	65–	Integrity vs. despair	Assess and make sense of life and meaning of contributions

## CARL JUNG

Carl Jung (**Figure 11.9**) was a Swiss psychiatrist and protégé of Freud, who later split off from Freud and developed his own theory, which he called **analytical psychology**. The focus of analytical psychology is on working to balance opposing forces of conscious and unconscious thought, and experience within one's personality. According to Jung, this work is a continuous learning process—mainly occurring in the second half of life—of becoming aware of unconscious elements and integrating them into consciousness.



**Figure 11.9** Carl Jung was interested in exploring the collective unconscious.

Jung's split from Freud was based on two major disagreements. First, Jung, like Adler and Erikson, did not accept that sexual drive was the primary motivator in a person's mental life. Second, although Jung agreed with Freud's concept of a personal unconscious, he thought it to be incomplete. In addition to the personal unconscious, Jung focused on the collective unconscious.

The **collective unconscious** is a universal version of the personal unconscious, holding mental patterns, or memory traces, which are common to all of us (Jung, 1928). These ancestral memories, which Jung called **archetypes**, are represented by universal themes in various cultures, as expressed through literature, art, and dreams (Jung). Jung said that these themes reflect common experiences of people the world over, such as facing death, becoming independent, and striving for mastery. Jung (1964) believed that through biology, each person is handed down the same themes and that the same types of symbols—such as the hero, the maiden, the sage, and the trickster—are present in the folklore and fairy tales of every culture. In Jung's view, the task of integrating these unconscious archetypal aspects of the self is part of the self-realization process in the second half of life. With this orientation toward self-realization, Jung parted ways with Freud's belief that personality is determined solely by past events and anticipated the humanistic movement with its emphasis on self-actualization and orientation toward the future.

Jung also proposed two attitudes or approaches toward life: extroversion and introversion (Jung, 1923) (**Table 11.3**). These ideas are considered Jung's most important contributions to the field of personality psychology, as almost all models of personality now include these concepts. If you are an extrovert, then you are a person who is energized by being outgoing and socially oriented: You derive your energy from being around others. If you are an introvert, then you are a person who may be quiet and reserved, or you may be social, but your energy is derived from your inner psychic activity. Jung believed a balance between extroversion and introversion best served the goal of self-realization.

**Table 11.3 Introverts and Extroverts**

Introvert	Extrovert
Energized by being alone	Energized by being with others
Avoids attention	Seeks attention

**Table 11.3 Introverts and Extroverts**

Introvert	Extrovert
Speaks slowly and softly	Speaks quickly and loudly
Thinks before speaking	Thinks out loud
Stays on one topic	Jumps from topic to topic
Prefers written communication	Prefers verbal communication
Pays attention easily	Distractible
Cautious	Acts first, thinks later

Another concept proposed by Jung was the persona, which he referred to as a mask that we adopt. According to Jung, we consciously create this persona; however, it is derived from both our conscious experiences and our collective unconscious. What is the purpose of the persona? Jung believed that it is a compromise between who we really are (our true self) and what society expects us to be. We hide those parts of ourselves that are not aligned with society's expectations.

### LINK TO LEARNING



Jung's view of extroverted and introverted types serves as a basis of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This questionnaire describes a person's degree of introversion versus extroversion, thinking versus feeling, intuition versus sensation, and judging versus perceiving. This [site \(<http://openstaxcollege.org//myersbriggs>\)](http://openstaxcollege.org//myersbriggs) provides a modified questionnaire based on the MBTI.

### CONNECT THE CONCEPTS

### CONNECT THE CONCEPTS

#### Are Archetypes Genetically Based?

Jung proposed that human responses to archetypes are similar to instinctual responses in animals. One criticism of Jung is that there is no evidence that archetypes are biologically based or similar to animal instincts (Roesler, 2012). Jung formulated his ideas about 100 years ago, and great advances have been made in the field of genetics since that time. We've found that human babies are born with certain capacities, including the ability to acquire language. However, we've also found that symbolic information (such as archetypes) is not encoded on the genome and that babies cannot decode symbolism, refuting the idea of a biological basis to archetypes. Rather than being seen as purely biological, more recent research suggests that archetypes emerge directly from our experiences and are reflections of linguistic or cultural characteristics (Young-Eisendrath, 1995). Today, most Jungian scholars believe that the collective unconscious and archetypes are based on both innate and environmental influences, with the differences being in the role and degree of each (Sotirova-Kohli et al., 2013).

### KAREN HORNEY

Karen Horney was one of the first women trained as a Freudian psychoanalyst. During the Great Depression, Horney moved from Germany to the United States, and subsequently moved away from

Freud's teachings. Like Jung, Horney believed that each individual has the potential for self-realization and that the goal of psychoanalysis should be moving toward a healthy self rather than exploring early childhood patterns of dysfunction. Horney also disagreed with the Freudian idea that girls have penis envy and are jealous of male biological features. According to Horney, any jealousy is most likely culturally based, due to the greater privileges that males often have, meaning that the differences between men's and women's personalities are culturally based, not biologically based. She further suggested that men have womb envy, because they cannot give birth.

Horney's theories focused on the role of unconscious anxiety. She suggested that normal growth can be blocked by basic anxiety stemming from needs not being met, such as childhood experiences of loneliness and/or isolation. How do children learn to handle this anxiety? Horney suggested three styles of coping (**Table 11.4**). The first coping style, *moving toward people*, relies on affiliation and dependence. These children become dependent on their parents and other caregivers in an effort to receive attention and affection, which provides relief from anxiety (Burger, 2008). When these children grow up, they tend to use this same coping strategy to deal with relationships, expressing an intense need for love and acceptance (Burger, 2008). The second coping style, *moving against people*, relies on aggression and assertiveness. Children with this coping style find that fighting is the best way to deal with an unhappy home situation, and they deal with their feelings of insecurity by bullying other children (Burger, 2008). As adults, people with this coping style tend to lash out with hurtful comments and exploit others (Burger, 2008). The third coping style, *moving away from people*, centers on detachment and isolation. These children handle their anxiety by withdrawing from the world. They need privacy and tend to be self-sufficient. When these children are adults, they continue to avoid such things as love and friendship, and they also tend to gravitate toward careers that require little interaction with others (Burger, 2008).

**Table 11.4 Horney's Coping Styles**

Coping Style	Description	Example
Moving toward people	Affiliation and dependence	Child seeking positive attention and affection from parent; adult needing love
Moving against people	Aggression and manipulation	Child fighting or bullying other children; adult who is abrasive and verbally hurtful, or who exploits others
Moving away from people	Detachment and isolation	Child withdrawn from the world and isolated; adult loner

Horney believed these three styles are ways in which people typically cope with day-to-day problems; however, the three coping styles can become neurotic strategies if they are used rigidly and compulsively, leading a person to become alienated from others.

## 11.4 Learning Approaches

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the behaviorist perspective on personality
- Describe the cognitive perspective on personality
- Describe the social cognitive perspective on personality

In contrast to the psychodynamic approaches of Freud and the neo-Freudians, which relate personality to

inner (and hidden) processes, the learning approaches focus only on observable behavior. This illustrates one significant advantage of the learning approaches over psychodynamics: Because learning approaches involve observable, measurable phenomena, they can be scientifically tested.

## THE BEHAVIORAL PERSPECTIVE

Behaviorists do not believe in biological determinism: They do not see personality traits as inborn. Instead, they view personality as significantly shaped by the reinforcements and consequences outside of the organism. In other words, people behave in a consistent manner based on prior learning. B. F. Skinner, a strict behaviorist, believed that environment was solely responsible for all behavior, including the enduring, consistent behavior patterns studied by personality theorists.

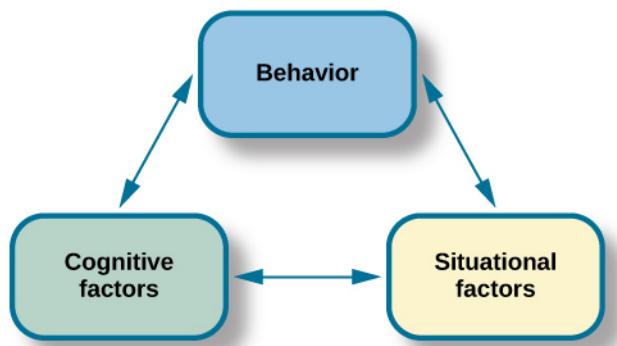
As you may recall from your study on the psychology of learning, Skinner proposed that we demonstrate consistent behavior patterns because we have developed certain response tendencies (Skinner, 1953). In other words, we *learn* to behave in particular ways. We increase the behaviors that lead to positive consequences, and we decrease the behaviors that lead to negative consequences. Skinner disagreed with Freud's idea that personality is fixed in childhood. He argued that personality develops over our entire life, not only in the first few years. Our responses can change as we come across new situations; therefore, we can expect more variability over time in personality than Freud would anticipate. For example, consider a young woman, Greta, a risk taker. She drives fast and participates in dangerous sports such as hang gliding and kiteboarding. But after she gets married and has children, the system of reinforcements and punishments in her environment changes. Speeding and extreme sports are no longer reinforced, so she no longer engages in those behaviors. In fact, Greta now describes herself as a cautious person.

## THE SOCIAL-COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Albert Bandura agreed with Skinner that personality develops through learning. He disagreed, however, with Skinner's strict behaviorist approach to personality development, because he felt that thinking and reasoning are important components of learning. He presented a **social-cognitive theory** of personality that emphasizes both learning and cognition as sources of individual differences in personality. In social-cognitive theory, the concepts of reciprocal determinism, observational learning, and self-efficacy all play a part in personality development.

### Reciprocal Determinism

In contrast to Skinner's idea that the environment alone determines behavior, Bandura (1990) proposed the concept of **reciprocal determinism**, in which cognitive processes, behavior, and context all interact, each factor influencing and being influenced by the others simultaneously (**Figure 11.10**). *Cognitive processes* refer to all characteristics previously learned, including beliefs, expectations, and personality characteristics. *Behavior* refers to anything that we do that may be rewarded or punished. Finally, the *context* in which the behavior occurs refers to the environment or situation, which includes rewarding/punishing stimuli.



**Figure 11.10** Bandura proposed the idea of reciprocal determinism: Our behavior, cognitive processes, and situational context all influence each other.

Consider, for example, that you're at a festival and one of the attractions is bungee jumping from a bridge. Do you do it? In this example, the behavior is bungee jumping. Cognitive factors that might influence this behavior include your beliefs and values, and your past experiences with similar behaviors. Finally, context refers to the reward structure for the behavior. According to reciprocal determinism, all of these factors are in play.

### Observational Learning

Bandura's key contribution to learning theory was the idea that much learning is vicarious. We learn by observing someone else's behavior and its consequences, which Bandura called observational learning. He felt that this type of learning also plays a part in the development of our personality. Just as we learn individual behaviors, we learn new behavior patterns when we see them performed by other people or models. Drawing on the behaviorists' ideas about reinforcement, Bandura suggested that whether we choose to imitate a model's behavior depends on whether we see the model reinforced or punished. Through observational learning, we come to learn what behaviors are acceptable and rewarded in our culture, and we also learn to inhibit deviant or socially unacceptable behaviors by seeing what behaviors are punished.

We can see the principles of reciprocal determinism at work in observational learning. For example, personal factors determine which behaviors in the environment a person chooses to imitate, and those environmental events in turn are processed cognitively according to other personal factors.

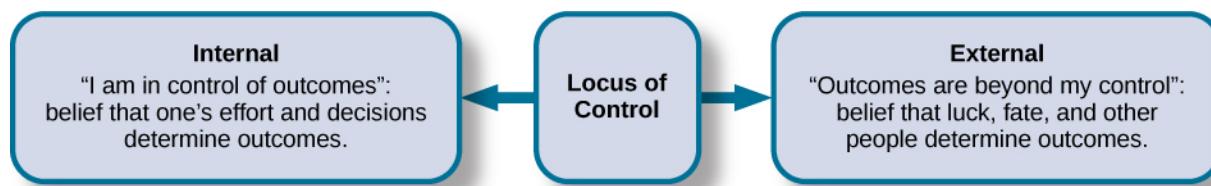
### Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977, 1995) has studied a number of cognitive and personal factors that affect learning and personality development, and most recently has focused on the concept of self-efficacy. **Self-efficacy** is our level of confidence in our own abilities, developed through our social experiences. Self-efficacy affects how we approach challenges and reach goals. In observational learning, self-efficacy is a cognitive factor that affects which behaviors we choose to imitate as well as our success in performing those behaviors.

People who have high self-efficacy believe that their goals are within reach, have a positive view of challenges seeing them as tasks to be mastered, develop a deep interest in and strong commitment to the activities in which they are involved, and quickly recover from setbacks. Conversely, people with low self-efficacy avoid challenging tasks because they doubt their ability to be successful, tend to focus on failure and negative outcomes, and lose confidence in their abilities if they experience setbacks. Feelings of self-efficacy can be specific to certain situations. For instance, a student might feel confident in her ability in English class but much less so in math class.

## JULIAN ROTTER AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

Julian Rotter (1966) proposed the concept of locus of control, another cognitive factor that affects learning and personality development. Distinct from self-efficacy, which involves our belief in our own abilities, **locus of control** refers to our beliefs about the power we have over our lives. In Rotter's view, people possess either an internal or an external locus of control (**Figure 11.11**). Those of us with an internal locus of control ("internals") tend to believe that most of our outcomes are the direct result of our efforts. Those of us with an external locus of control ("externals") tend to believe that our outcomes are outside of our control. Externals see their lives as being controlled by other people, luck, or chance. For example, say you didn't spend much time studying for your psychology test and went out to dinner with friends instead. When you receive your test score, you see that you earned a D. If you possess an internal locus of control, you would most likely admit that you failed because you didn't spend enough time studying and decide to study more for the next test. On the other hand, if you possess an external locus of control, you might conclude that the test was too hard and not bother studying for the next test, because you figure you will fail it anyway. Researchers have found that people with an internal locus of control perform better academically, achieve more in their careers, are more independent, are healthier, are better able to cope, and are less depressed than people who have an external locus of control (Benassi, Sweeney, & Durfour, 1988; Lefcourt, 1982; Maltby, Day, & Macaskill, 2007; Whyte, 1977, 1978, 1980).



**Figure 11.11** Locus of control occurs on a continuum from internal to external.

### LINK TO LEARNING



Take the [Locus of Control](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/locuscontrol) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/locuscontrol>) questionnaire. Scores range from 0 to 13. A low score on this questionnaire indicates an internal locus of control, and a high score indicates an external locus of control.

## WALTER MISCHEL AND THE PERSON-SITUATION DEBATE

Walter Mischel was a student of Julian Rotter and taught for years at Stanford, where he was a colleague of Albert Bandura. Mischel surveyed several decades of empirical psychological literature regarding trait prediction of behavior, and his conclusion shook the foundations of personality psychology. Mischel found that the data did not support the central principle of the field—that a person's personality traits are consistent across situations. His report triggered a decades-long period of self-examination, known as the person-situation debate, among personality psychologists.

Mischel suggested that perhaps we were looking for consistency in the wrong places. He found that although behavior was inconsistent across different situations, it was much more consistent within situations—so that a person's behavior in one situation would likely be repeated in a similar one. And as you will see next regarding his famous "marshmallow test," Mischel also found that behavior is consistent in equivalent situations across time.

One of Mischel's most notable contributions to personality psychology was his ideas on self-regulation.

According to Lecci & Magnavita (2013), "Self-regulation is the process of identifying a goal or set of goals and, in pursuing these goals, using both internal (e.g., thoughts and affect) and external (e.g., responses of anything or anyone in the environment) feedback to maximize goal attainment" (p. 6.3). Self-regulation is also known as will power. When we talk about will power, we tend to think of it as the ability to delay gratification. For example, Bettina's teenage daughter made strawberry cupcakes, and they looked delicious. However, Bettina forfeited the pleasure of eating one, because she is training for a 5K race and wants to be fit and do well in the race. Would you be able to resist getting a small reward now in order to get a larger reward later? This is the question Mischel investigated in his now-classic marshmallow test.

Mischel designed a study to assess self-regulation in young children. In the marshmallow study, Mischel and his colleagues placed a preschool child in a room with one marshmallow on the table. The child was told that he could either eat the marshmallow now, or wait until the researcher returned to the room and then he could have two marshmallows (Mischel, Ebbesen & Raskoff, 1972). This was repeated with hundreds of preschoolers. What Mischel and his team found was that young children differ in their degree of self-control. Mischel and his colleagues continued to follow this group of preschoolers through high school, and what do you think they discovered? The children who had more self-control in preschool (the ones who waited for the bigger reward) were more successful in high school. They had higher SAT scores, had positive peer relationships, and were less likely to have substance abuse issues; as adults, they also had more stable marriages (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989; Mischel et al., 2010). On the other hand, those children who had poor self-control in preschool (the ones who grabbed the one marshmallow) were not as successful in high school, and they were found to have academic and behavioral problems.

### LINK TO LEARNING



To learn more about the marshmallow test and view the test given to children in Columbia, follow the link below to Joachim de Posada's **TEDTalks** (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/TEDPosada>) video.

Today, the debate is mostly resolved, and most psychologists consider both the situation and personal factors in understanding behavior. For Mischel (1993), people are situation processors. The children in the marshmallow test each processed, or interpreted, the rewards structure of that situation in their own way. Mischel's approach to personality stresses the importance of both the situation and the way the person perceives the situation. Instead of behavior being determined by the situation, people use cognitive processes to interpret the situation and then behave in accordance with that interpretation.

## 11.5 Humanistic Approaches

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the contributions of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers to personality development

As the "third force" in psychology, humanism is touted as a reaction both to the pessimistic determinism of psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on psychological disturbance, and to the behaviorists' view of humans passively reacting to the environment, which has been criticized as making people out to be personality-less robots. It does not suggest that psychoanalytic, behaviorist, and other points of view are incorrect but argues that these perspectives do not recognize the depth and meaning of human experience, and fail to recognize the innate capacity for self-directed change and transforming personal experiences. This

perspective focuses on how healthy people develop. One pioneering humanist, Abraham Maslow, studied people who he considered to be healthy, creative, and productive, including Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and others. Maslow (1950, 1970) found that such people share similar characteristics, such as being open, creative, loving, spontaneous, compassionate, concerned for others, and accepting of themselves. When you studied motivation, you learned about one of the best-known humanistic theories, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, in which Maslow proposes that human beings have certain needs in common and that these needs must be met in a certain order. The highest need is the need for self-actualization, which is the achievement of our fullest potential.

Another humanistic theorist was Carl Rogers. One of Rogers's main ideas about personality regards **self-concept**, our thoughts and feelings about ourselves. How would you respond to the question, "Who am I?" Your answer can show how you see yourself. If your response is primarily positive, then you tend to feel good about who you are, and you see the world as a safe and positive place. If your response is mainly negative, then you may feel unhappy with who you are. Rogers further divided the self into two categories: the ideal self and the real self. The **ideal self** is the person that you would like to be; the **real self** is the person you actually are. Rogers focused on the idea that we need to achieve consistency between these two selves. We experience **congruence** when our thoughts about our real self and ideal self are very similar—in other words, when our self-concept is accurate. High congruence leads to a greater sense of self-worth and a healthy, productive life. Parents can help their children achieve this by giving them unconditional positive regard, or unconditional love. According to Rogers (1980), "As persons are accepted and prized, they tend to develop a more caring attitude towards themselves" (p. 116). Conversely, when there is a great discrepancy between our ideal and actual selves, we experience a state Rogers called **incongruence**, which can lead to maladjustment. Both Rogers's and Maslow's theories focus on individual choices and do not believe that biology is deterministic.

## 11.6 Biological Approaches

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the findings of the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart as they relate to personality and genetics
  - Discuss temperament and describe the three infant temperaments identified by Thomas and Chess
  - Discuss the evolutionary perspective on personality development
- 

How much of our personality is in-born and biological, and how much is influenced by the environment and culture we are raised in? Psychologists who favor the biological approach believe that inherited predispositions as well as physiological processes can be used to explain differences in our personalities (Burger, 2008).

In the field of behavioral genetics, the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart—a well-known study of the genetic basis for personality—conducted research with twins from 1979 to 1999. In studying 350 pairs of twins, including pairs of identical and fraternal twins reared together and apart, researchers found that identical twins, whether raised together or apart, have very similar personalities (Bouchard, 1994; Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990; Segal, 2012). These findings suggest the heritability of some personality traits. **Heritability** refers to the proportion of difference among people that is attributed to genetics. Some of the traits that the study reported as having more than a 0.50 heritability ratio include leadership, obedience to authority, a sense of well-being, alienation, resistance to stress, and fearfulness. The implication is that some aspects of our personalities are largely controlled by genetics; however, it's important to point out that traits are not determined by a single gene, but by a combination of many genes,

as well as by epigenetic factors that control whether the genes are expressed.

### LINK TO LEARNING



To what extent is our personality dictated by our genetic makeup? View this [video](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/personDNA) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/personDNA>) to learn more.

## TEMPERAMENT

Most contemporary psychologists believe temperament has a biological basis due to its appearance very early in our lives (Rothbart, 2011). As you learned when you studied lifespan development, Thomas and Chess (1977) found that babies could be categorized into one of three temperaments: easy, difficult, or slow to warm up. However, environmental factors (family interactions, for example) and maturation can affect the ways in which children's personalities are expressed (Carter et al., 2008).

Research suggests that there are two dimensions of our temperament that are important parts of our adult personality—reactivity and self-regulation (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Evans, 2000). Reactivity refers to how we respond to new or challenging environmental stimuli; self-regulation refers to our ability to control that response (Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981; Rothbart, Sheese, Rueda, & Posner, 2011). For example, one person may immediately respond to new stimuli with a high level of anxiety, while another barely notices it.

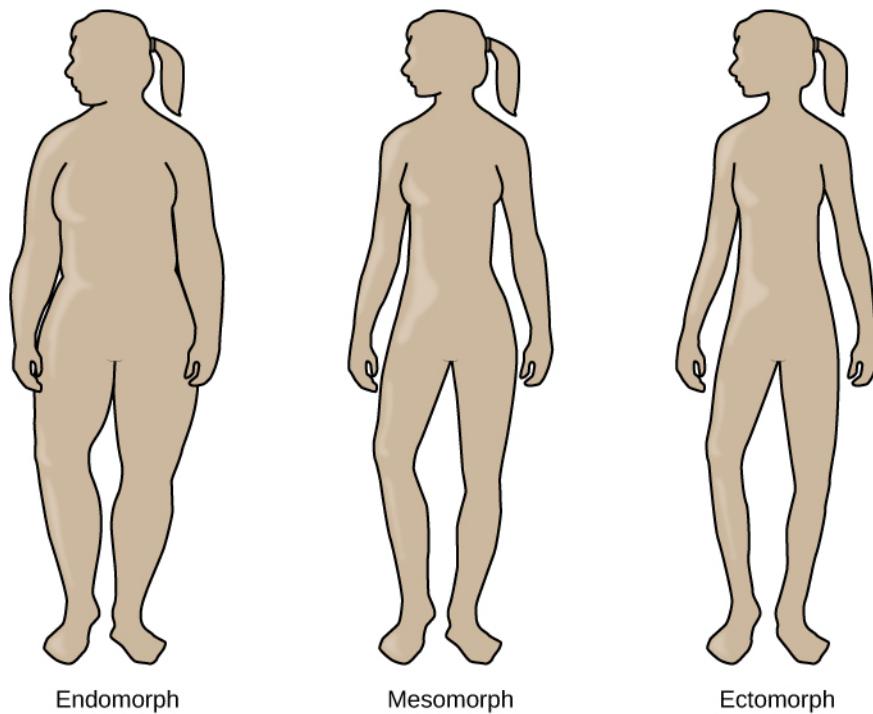
### CONNECT THE CONCEPTS

### CONNECT THE CONCEPTS

#### Body Type and Temperament

Is there an association between your body type and your temperament? The constitutional perspective, which examines the relationship between the structure of the human body and behavior, seeks to answer this question (Genovese, 2008). The first comprehensive system of constitutional psychology was proposed by American psychologist William H. Sheldon (1940, 1942). He believed that your body type can be linked to your personality. Sheldon's life's work was spent observing human bodies and temperaments. Based on his observations and interviews of hundreds of people, he proposed three body/personality types, which he called somatotypes.

The three somatotypes are ectomorphs, endomorphs, and mesomorphs (Figure 11.12). Ectomorphs are thin with a small bone structure and very little fat on their bodies. According to Sheldon, the ectomorph personality is anxious, self-conscious, artistic, thoughtful, quiet, and private. They enjoy intellectual stimulation and feel uncomfortable in social situations. Actors Adrien Brody and Nicole Kidman would be characterized as ectomorphs. Endomorphs are the opposite of ectomorphs. Endomorphs have narrow shoulders and wide hips, and carry extra fat on their round bodies. Sheldon described endomorphs as being relaxed, comfortable, good-humored, even-tempered, sociable, and tolerant. Endomorphs enjoy affection and detest disapproval. Queen Latifah and Jack Black would be considered endomorphs. The third somatype is the mesomorph. This body type falls between the ectomorph and the endomorph. Mesomorphs have large bone structure, well-defined muscles, broad shoulders, narrow waists, and attractive, strong bodies. According to Sheldon, mesomorphs are adventurous, assertive, competitive, and fearless. They are curious and enjoy trying new things, but can also be obnoxious and aggressive. Channing Tatum and Scarlett Johansson would likely be mesomorphs.



**Figure 11.12** Sheldon proposed three somatotypes: endomorphs, mesomorphs, and ectomorphs. Do you think Sheldon's ideas about somatotypes are generally accurate about most people?

Sheldon (1949) also conducted further research into somatotypes and criminality. He measured the physical proportions of hundreds of juvenile delinquent boys in comparison to male college students, and found that problem youth were primarily mesomorphs. Why might this be? Perhaps it's because they are quick to anger and don't have the restraint demonstrated by ectomorphs. Maybe it's because a person with a mesomorphic body type reflects high levels of testosterone, which may lead to more aggressive behavior. Can you think of other explanations for Sheldon's findings?

Sheldon's method of somatotyping is not without criticism, as it has been considered largely subjective (Carter & Heath, 1990; Cortés & Gatti, 1972; Parnell, 1958). More systematic and controlled research methods did not support his findings (Eysenck, 1970). Consequently, it's not uncommon to see his theory labeled as pseudoscience, much like Gall's theory of phrenology (Rafter, 2007; Rosenbaum, 1995). However, studies involving correlations between somatotype, temperament, and children's school performance (Sanford et al., 1943; Parnell); somatotype and performance of pilots during wartime (Damon, 1955); and somatotype and temperament (Peterson, Liivamagi, & Koskel, 2006) did support his theory.

## 11.7 Trait Theorists

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss early trait theories of Cattell and Eysenck
- Discuss the Big Five factors and describe someone who is high and low on each of the five traits

Trait theorists believe personality can be understood via the approach that all people have certain **traits**, or characteristic ways of behaving. Do you tend to be sociable or shy? Passive or aggressive? Optimistic or pessimistic? Moody or even-tempered? Early trait theorists tried to describe all human personality traits.

For example, one trait theorist, Gordon Allport (Allport & Odbert, 1936), found 4,500 words in the English language that could describe people. He organized these personality traits into three categories: cardinal traits, central traits, and secondary traits. A cardinal trait is one that dominates your entire personality, and hence your life—such as Ebenezer Scrooge's greed and Mother Theresa's altruism. Cardinal traits are not very common: Few people have personalities dominated by a single trait. Instead, our personalities typically are composed of multiple traits. Central traits are those that make up our personalities (such as loyal, kind, agreeable, friendly, sneaky, wild, and grouchy). Secondary traits are those that are not quite as obvious or as consistent as central traits. They are present under specific circumstances and include preferences and attitudes. For example, one person gets angry when people try to tickle him; another can only sleep on the left side of the bed; and yet another always orders her salad dressing on the side. And you—although not normally an anxious person—feel nervous before making a speech in front of your English class.

In an effort to make the list of traits more manageable, Raymond Cattell (1946, 1957) narrowed down the list to about 171 traits. However, saying that a trait is either present or absent does not accurately reflect a person's uniqueness, because all of our personalities are actually made up of the same traits; we differ only in the degree to which each trait is expressed. Cattell (1957) identified 16 factors or dimensions of personality: warmth, reasoning, emotional stability, dominance, liveliness, rule-consciousness, social boldness, sensitivity, vigilance, abstractedness,私ateness, apprehension, openness to change, self-reliance, perfectionism, and tension (**Table 11.5**). He developed a personality assessment based on these 16 factors, called the 16PF. Instead of a trait being present or absent, each dimension is scored over a continuum, from high to low. For example, your level of warmth describes how warm, caring, and nice to others you are. If you score low on this index, you tend to be more distant and cold. A high score on this index signifies you are supportive and comforting.

**Table 11.5 Personality Factors Measured by the 16PF Questionnaire**

Factor	Low Score	High Score
Warmth	Reserved, detached	Outgoing, supportive
Intellect	Concrete thinker	Analytical
Emotional stability	Moody, irritable	Stable, calm
Aggressiveness	Docile, submissive	Controlling, dominant
Liveliness	Somber, prudent	Adventurous, spontaneous
Dutifulness	Unreliable	Conscientious
Social assertiveness	Shy, restrained	Uninhibited, bold
Sensitivity	Tough-minded	Sensitive, caring
Paranoia	Trusting	Suspicious
Abstractness	Conventional	Imaginative
Introversion	Open, straightforward	Private, shrewd
Anxiety	Confident	Apprehensive
Openmindedness	Closeminded, traditional	Curious, experimental
Independence	Outgoing, social	Self-sufficient

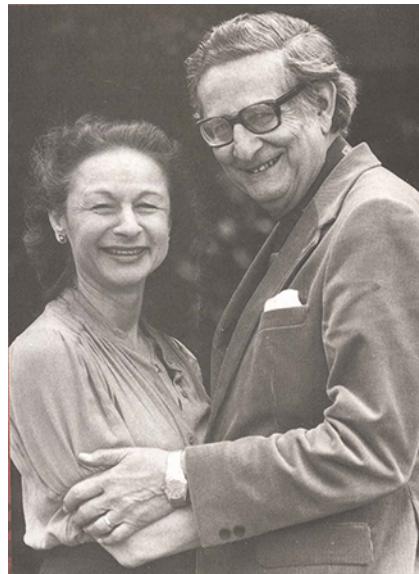
**Table 11.5 Personality Factors Measured by the 16PF Questionnaire**

Factor	Low Score	High Score
Perfectionism	Disorganized, casual	Organized, precise
Tension	Relaxed	Stressed

**LINK TO LEARNING**

Follow this [link](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/cattell) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/cattell>) to an assessment based on Cattell's 16PF questionnaire to see which personality traits dominate your personality.

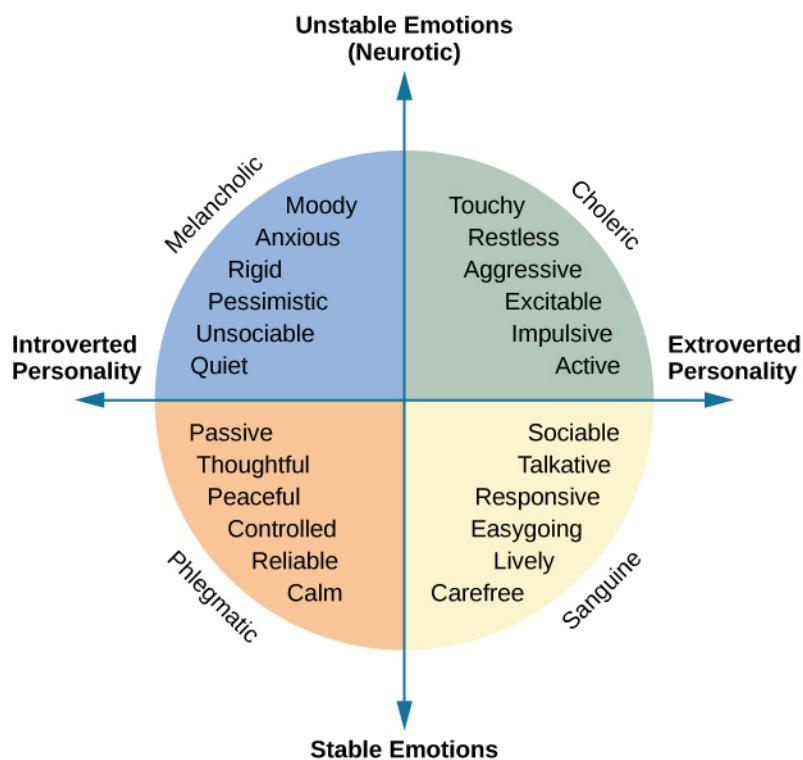
Psychologists Hans and Sybil Eysenck were personality theorists (Figure 11.13) who focused on **temperament**, the inborn, genetically based personality differences that you studied earlier in the chapter. They believed personality is largely governed by biology. The Eysencks (Eysenck, 1990, 1992; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1963) viewed people as having two specific personality dimensions: extroversion/introversion and neuroticism/stability.



**Figure 11.13** Hans and Sybil Eysenck believed that our personality traits are influenced by our genetic inheritance. (credit: "Sirswindon"/Wikimedia Commons)

According to their theory, people high on the trait of extroversion are sociable and outgoing, and readily connect with others, whereas people high on the trait of introversion have a higher need to be alone, engage in solitary behaviors, and limit their interactions with others. In the neuroticism/stability dimension, people high on neuroticism tend to be anxious; they tend to have an overactive sympathetic nervous system and, even with low stress, their bodies and emotional state tend to go into a flight-or-fight reaction. In contrast, people high on stability tend to need more stimulation to activate their flight-or-fight reaction and are considered more emotionally stable. Based on these two dimensions, the Eysencks' theory divides people into four quadrants. These quadrants are sometimes compared with the four temperaments

described by the Greeks: melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic, and sanguine (**Figure 11.14**).



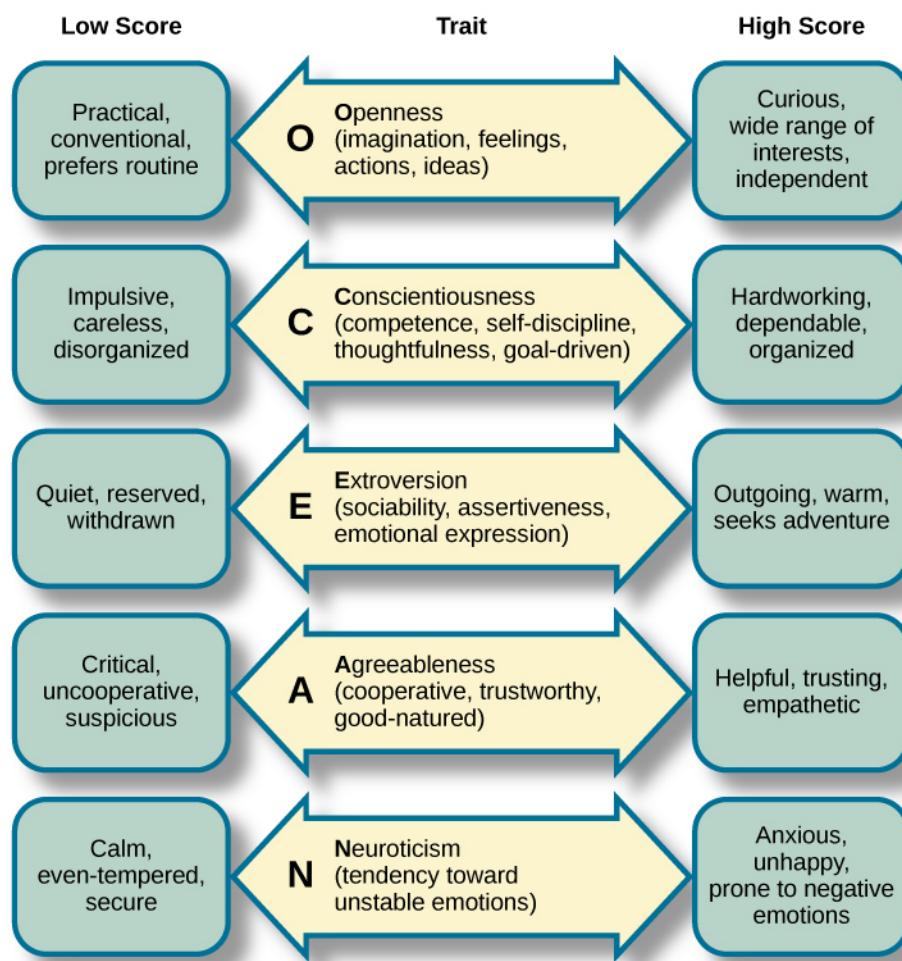
**Figure 11.14** The Eysencks described two factors to account for variations in our personalities: extroversion/introversion and emotional stability/instability.

Later, the Eysencks added a third dimension: psychotism versus superego control (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985). In this dimension, people who are high on psychotism tend to be independent thinkers, cold, nonconformists, impulsive, antisocial, and hostile, whereas people who are high on superego control tend to have high impulse control—they are more altruistic, empathetic, cooperative, and conventional (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett, 1985).

While Cattell's 16 factors may be too broad, the Eysenck's two-factor system has been criticized for being too narrow. Another personality theory, called the **Five Factor Model**, effectively hits a middle ground, with its five factors referred to as the Big Five personality traits. It is the most popular theory in personality psychology today and the most accurate approximation of the basic trait dimensions (Funder, 2001). The five traits are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (**Figure 11.15**). A helpful way to remember the traits is by using the mnemonic OCEAN.

In the Five Factor Model, each person has each trait, but they occur along a spectrum. Openness to experience is characterized by imagination, feelings, actions, and ideas. People who score high on this trait tend to be curious and have a wide range of interests. Conscientiousness is characterized by competence, self-discipline, thoughtfulness, and achievement-striving (goal-directed behavior). People who score high on this trait are hardworking and dependable. Numerous studies have found a positive correlation between conscientiousness and academic success (Akomolafe, 2013; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2008; Conrad & Patry, 2012; Noftle & Robins, 2007; Wagerman & Funder, 2007). Extroversion is characterized by sociability, assertiveness, excitement-seeking, and emotional expression. People who score high on this trait are usually described as outgoing and warm. Not surprisingly, people who score high on both extroversion and openness are more likely to participate in adventure and risky sports due to their curious and excitement-seeking nature (Tok, 2011). The fourth trait is agreeableness, which is the tendency to be pleasant, cooperative, trustworthy, and good-natured. People who score low on

agreeableness tend to be described as rude and uncooperative, yet one recent study reported that men who scored low on this trait actually earned more money than men who were considered more agreeable (Judge, Livingston, & Hurst, 2012). The last of the Big Five traits is neuroticism, which is the tendency to experience negative emotions. People high on neuroticism tend to experience emotional instability and are characterized as angry, impulsive, and hostile. Watson and Clark (1984) found that people reporting high levels of neuroticism also tend to report feeling anxious and unhappy. In contrast, people who score low in neuroticism tend to be calm and even-tempered.



**Figure 11.15** In the Five Factor Model, each person has five traits, each scored on a continuum from high to low. In the center column, notice that the first letter of each trait spells the mnemonic OCEAN.

The Big Five personality factors each represent a range between two extremes. In reality, most of us tend to lie somewhere midway along the continuum of each factor, rather than at polar ends. It's important to note that the Big Five traits are relatively stable over our lifespan, with some tendency for the traits to increase or decrease slightly. Researchers have found that conscientiousness increases through young adulthood into middle age, as we become better able to manage our personal relationships and careers (Donnellan & Lucas, 2008). Agreeableness also increases with age, peaking between 50 to 70 years (Terracciano, McCrae, Brant, & Costa, 2005). Neuroticism and extroversion tend to decline slightly with age (Donnellan & Lucas; Terracciano et al.). Additionally, The Big Five traits have been shown to exist across ethnicities, cultures, and ages, and may have substantial biological and genetic components (Jang, Livesley, & Vernon, 1996; Jang et al., 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Schmitt et al., 2007).

**LINK TO LEARNING**

To find out about your personality and where you fall on the Big Five traits, follow this link (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/big5>) to take the Big Five personality test.

## 11.8 Cultural Understandings of Personality

### Learning Objectives

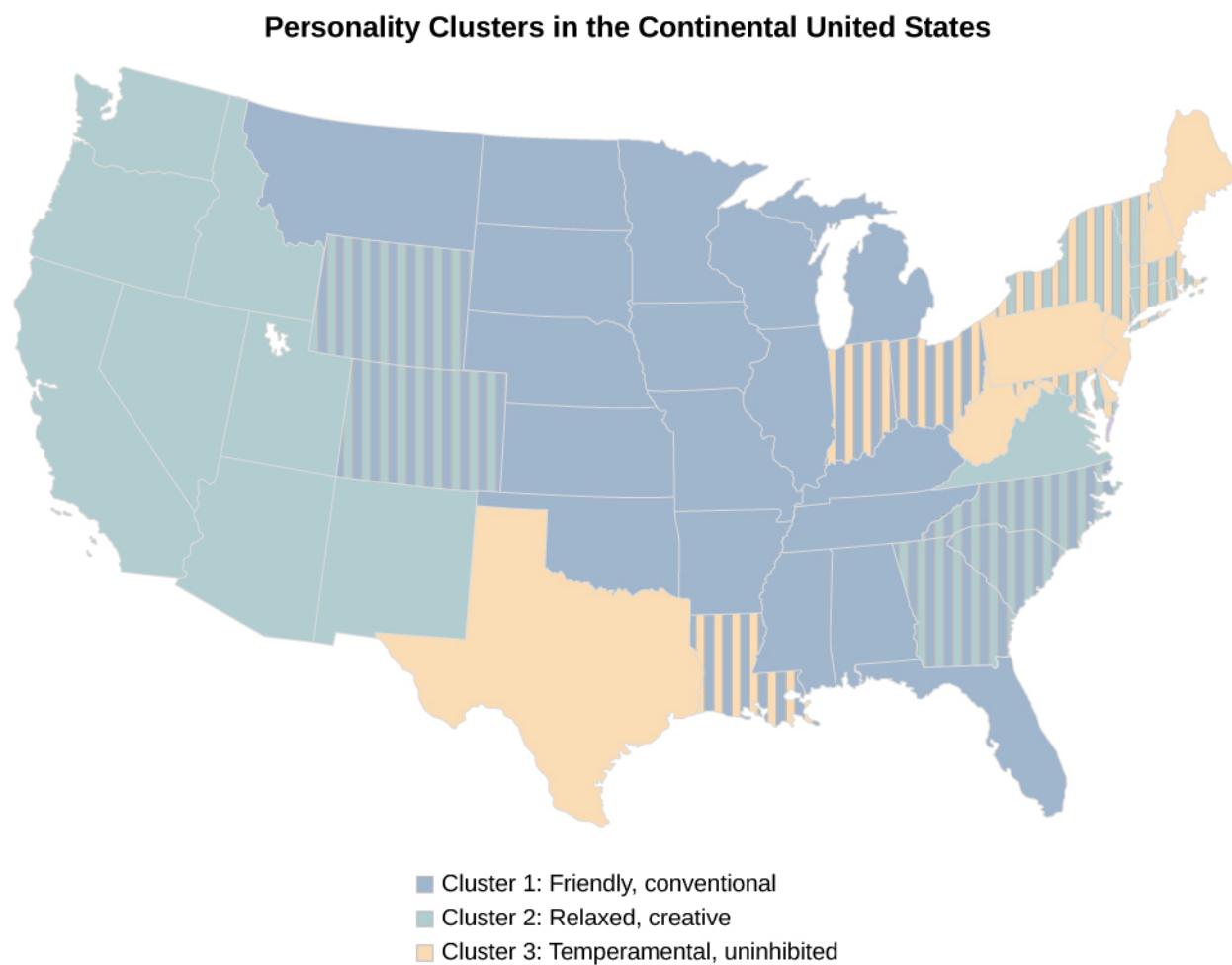
By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Discuss personality differences of people from collectivist and individualist cultures
- Discuss the three approaches to studying personality in a cultural context

As you have learned in this chapter, personality is shaped by both genetic and environmental factors. The culture in which you live is one of the most important environmental factors that shapes your personality (Triandis & Suh, 2002). The term **culture** refers to all of the beliefs, customs, art, and traditions of a particular society. Culture is transmitted to people through language as well as through the modeling of culturally acceptable and nonacceptable behaviors that are either rewarded or punished (Triandis & Suh, 2002). With these ideas in mind, personality psychologists have become interested in the role of culture in understanding personality. They ask whether personality traits are the same across cultures or if there are variations. It appears that there are both universal and culture-specific aspects that account for variation in people's personalities.

Why might it be important to consider cultural influences on personality? Western ideas about personality may not be applicable to other cultures (Benet-Martinez & Oishi, 2008). In fact, there is evidence that the strength of personality traits varies across cultures. Let's take a look at some of the Big Five factors (conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness, and extroversion) across cultures. As you will learn when you study social psychology, Asian cultures are more collectivist, and people in these cultures tend to be less extroverted. People in Central and South American cultures tend to score higher on openness to experience, whereas Europeans score higher on neuroticism (Benet-Martinez & Karakitapoglu-Aygun, 2003).

According to this study, there also seem to be regional personality differences within the United States (**Figure 11.16**). Researchers analyzed responses from over 1.5 million individuals in the United States and found that there are three distinct regional personality clusters: Cluster 1, which is in the Upper Midwest and Deep South, is dominated by people who fall into the "friendly and conventional" personality; Cluster 2, which includes the West, is dominated by people who are more relaxed, emotionally stable, calm, and creative; and Cluster 3, which includes the Northeast, has more people who are stressed, irritable, and depressed. People who live in Clusters 2 and 3 are also generally more open (Rentfrow et al., 2013).



**Figure 11.16** Researchers found three distinct regional personality clusters in the United States. People tend to be friendly and conventional in the Upper Midwest and Deep South; relaxed, emotionally stable, and creative in the West; and stressed, irritable, and depressed in the Northeast (Rentfrow et al., 2013).

One explanation for the regional differences is **selective migration** (Rentfrow et al., 2013). Selective migration is the concept that people choose to move to places that are compatible with their personalities and needs. For example, a person high on the agreeable scale would likely want to live near family and friends, and would choose to settle or remain in such an area. In contrast, someone high on openness would prefer to settle in a place that is recognized as diverse and innovative (such as California).

## PERSONALITY IN INDIVIDUALIST AND COLLECTIVIST CULTURES

Individualist cultures and collectivist cultures place emphasis on different basic values. People who live in individualist cultures tend to believe that independence, competition, and personal achievement are important. Individuals in Western nations such as the United States, England, and Australia score high on individualism (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmier, 2002). People who live in collectivist cultures value social harmony, respectfulness, and group needs over individual needs. Individuals who live in countries in Asia, Africa, and South America score high on collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). These values influence personality. For example, Yang (2006) found that people in individualist cultures displayed more personally oriented personality traits, whereas people in collectivist cultures displayed more socially oriented personality traits.

## APPROACHES TO STUDYING PERSONALITY IN A CULTURAL CONTEXT

There are three approaches that can be used to study personality in a cultural context, the *cultural-comparative approach*; the *indigenous approach*; and the *combined approach*, which incorporates elements of both views. Since ideas about personality have a Western basis, the cultural-comparative approach seeks to test Western ideas about personality in other cultures to determine whether they can be generalized and if they have cultural validity (Cheung van de Vijver, & Leong, 2011). For example, recall from the previous section on the trait perspective that researchers used the cultural-comparative approach to test the universality of McCrae and Costa's Five Factor Model. They found applicability in numerous cultures around the world, with the Big Five traits being stable in many cultures (McCrae & Costa, 1997; McCrae et al., 2005). The indigenous approach came about in reaction to the dominance of Western approaches to the study of personality in non-Western settings (Cheung et al., 2011). Because Western-based personality assessments cannot fully capture the personality constructs of other cultures, the indigenous model has led to the development of personality assessment instruments that are based on constructs relevant to the culture being studied (Cheung et al., 2011). The third approach to cross-cultural studies of personality is the combined approach, which serves as a bridge between Western and indigenous psychology as a way of understanding both universal and cultural variations in personality (Cheung et al., 2011).

## 11.9 Personality Assessment

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Discuss the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory
  - Recognize and describe common projective tests used in personality assessment
- 

Roberto, Mikhail, and Nat are college friends and all want to be police officers. Roberto is quiet and shy, lacks self-confidence, and usually follows others. He is a kind person, but lacks motivation. Mikhail is loud and boisterous, a leader. He works hard, but is impulsive and drinks too much on the weekends. Nat is thoughtful and well liked. He is trustworthy, but sometimes he has difficulty making quick decisions. Of these three men, who would make the best police officer? What qualities and personality factors make someone a good police officer? What makes someone a bad or dangerous police officer?

A police officer's job is very high in stress, and law enforcement agencies want to make sure they hire the right people. Personality testing is often used for this purpose—to screen applicants for employment and job training. Personality tests are also used in criminal cases and custody battles, and to assess psychological disorders. This section explores the best known among the many different types of personality tests.

### SELF-REPORT INVENTORIES

Self-report inventories are a kind of objective test used to assess personality. They typically use multiple-choice items or numbered scales, which represent a range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). They often are called Likert scales after their developer, Rensis Likert (1932) (**Figure 11.17**).

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	No Opinion	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I am easygoing.	<input type="radio"/>				
I have high standards.	<input type="radio"/>				
I enjoy time alone.	<input type="radio"/>				
I work well with others.	<input type="radio"/>				
I dislike confrontation.	<input type="radio"/>				
I prefer crowds over intimacy.	<input type="radio"/>				

**Figure 11.17** If you've ever taken a survey, you are probably familiar with Likert-type scale questions. Most personality inventories employ these types of response scales.

One of the most widely used personality inventories is the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)**, first published in 1943, with 504 true/false questions, and updated to the MMPI-2 in 1989, with 567 questions. The original MMPI was based on a small, limited sample, composed mostly of Minnesota farmers and psychiatric patients; the revised inventory was based on a more representative, national sample to allow for better standardization. The MMPI-2 takes 1–2 hours to complete. Responses are scored to produce a clinical profile composed of 10 scales: hypochondriasis, depression, hysteria, psychopathic deviance (social deviance), masculinity versus femininity, paranoia, psychastenia (obsessive/compulsive qualities), schizophrenia, hypomania, and social introversion. There is also a scale to ascertain risk factors for alcohol abuse. In 2008, the test was again revised, using more advanced methods, to the MMPI-2-RF. This version takes about one-half the time to complete and has only 338 questions (Figure 11.18). Despite the new test's advantages, the MMPI-2 is more established and is still more widely used. Typically, the tests are administered by computer. Although the MMPI was originally developed to assist in the clinical diagnosis of psychological disorders, it is now also used for occupational screening, such as in law enforcement, and in college, career, and marital counseling (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008).

	True	False
1. I like gardening magazines.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I am unhappy with my sex life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I feel like no one understands me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I think I would enjoy the work of a teacher.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I am not easily awakened by noise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Figure 11.18** These true/false questions resemble the kinds of questions you would find on the MMPI.

In addition to clinical scales, the tests also have validity and reliability scales. (Recall the concepts of reliability and validity from your study of psychological research.) One of the validity scales, the Lie Scale (or "L" Scale), consists of 15 items and is used to ascertain whether the respondent is "faking good" (underreporting psychological problems to appear healthier). For example, if someone responds "yes" to a number of unrealistically positive items such as "I have never told a lie," they may be trying to "fake

good" or appear better than they actually are.

Reliability scales test an instrument's consistency over time, assuring that if you take the MMPI-2-RF today and then again 5 years later, your two scores will be similar. Beutler, Nussbaum, and Meredith (1988) gave the MMPI to newly recruited police officers and then to the same police officers 2 years later. After 2 years on the job, police officers' responses indicated an increased vulnerability to alcoholism, somatic symptoms (vague, unexplained physical complaints), and anxiety. When the test was given an additional 2 years later (4 years after starting on the job), the results suggested high risk for alcohol-related difficulties.

## PROJECTIVE TESTS

Another method for assessment of personality is **projective testing**. This kind of test relies on one of the defense mechanisms proposed by Freud—projection—as a way to assess unconscious processes. During this type of testing, a series of ambiguous cards is shown to the person being tested, who then is encouraged to project his feelings, impulses, and desires onto the cards—by telling a story, interpreting an image, or completing a sentence. Many projective tests have undergone standardization procedures (for example, Exner, 2002) and can be used to access whether someone has unusual thoughts or a high level of anxiety, or is likely to become volatile. Some examples of projective tests are the Rorschach Inkblot Test, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), the Contemporized-Themes Concerning Blacks test, the TEMAS (Tell-Me-A-Story), and the Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB).

The **Rorschach Inkblot Test** was developed in 1921 by a Swiss psychologist named Hermann Rorschach (pronounced "ROAR-shock"). It is a series of symmetrical inkblot cards that are presented to a client by a psychologist. Upon presentation of each card, the psychologist asks the client, "What might this be?" What the test-taker sees reveals unconscious feelings and struggles (Piotrowski, 1987; Weiner, 2003). The Rorschach has been standardized using the Exner system and is effective in measuring depression, psychosis, and anxiety.

A second projective test is the **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)**, created in the 1930s by Henry Murray, an American psychologist, and a psychoanalyst named Christiana Morgan. A person taking the TAT is shown 8–12 ambiguous pictures and is asked to tell a story about each picture. The stories give insight into their social world, revealing hopes, fears, interests, and goals. The storytelling format helps to lower a person's resistance divulging unconscious personal details (Cramer, 2004). The TAT has been used in clinical settings to evaluate psychological disorders; more recently, it has been used in counseling settings to help clients gain a better understanding of themselves and achieve personal growth. Standardization of test administration is virtually nonexistent among clinicians, and the test tends to be modest to low on validity and reliability (Aronow, Weiss, & Rezinkoff, 2001; Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb, 2000). Despite these shortcomings, the TAT has been one of the most widely used projective tests.

A third projective test is the **Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB)** developed by Julian Rotter in 1950 (recall his theory of locus of control, covered earlier in this chapter). There are three forms of this test for use with different age groups: the school form, the college form, and the adult form. The tests include 40 incomplete sentences that people are asked to complete as quickly as possible (**Figure 11.19**). The average time for completing the test is approximately 20 minutes, as responses are only 1–2 words in length. This test is similar to a word association test, and like other types of projective tests, it is presumed that responses will reveal desires, fears, and struggles. The RISB is used in screening college students for adjustment problems and in career counseling (Holaday, Smith, & Sherry, 2010; Rotter & Rafferty 1950).

1. I feel...	
2. I regret...	
3. At home...	
4. My mother...	
5. My greatest worry...	

**Figure 11.19** These incomplete sentences resemble the types of questions on the RISB. How would you complete these sentences?

For many decades, these traditional projective tests have been used in cross-cultural personality assessments. However, it was found that test bias limited their usefulness (Hoy-Watkins & Jenkins-Moore, 2008). It is difficult to assess the personalities and lifestyles of members of widely divergent ethnic/cultural groups using personality instruments based on data from a single culture or race (Hoy-Watkins & Jenkins-Moore, 2008). For example, when the TAT was used with African-American test takers, the result was often shorter story length and low levels of cultural identification (Duzant, 2005). Therefore, it was vital to develop other personality assessments that explored factors such as race, language, and level of acculturation (Hoy-Watkins & Jenkins-Moore, 2008). To address this need, Robert Williams developed the first culturally specific projective test designed to reflect the everyday life experiences of African Americans (Hoy-Watkins & Jenkins-Moore, 2008). The updated version of the instrument is the **Contemporized-Themes Concerning Blacks Test (C-TCB)** (Williams, 1972). The C-TCB contains 20 color images that show scenes of African-American lifestyles. When the C-TCB was compared with the TAT for African Americans, it was found that use of the C-TCB led to increased story length, higher degrees of positive feelings, and stronger identification with the C-TCB (Hoy, 1997; Hoy-Watkins & Jenkins-Moore, 2008).

The **TEMAS Multicultural Thematic Apperception Test** is another tool designed to be culturally relevant to minority groups, especially Hispanic youths. TEMAS—standing for “Tell Me a Story” but also a play on the Spanish word *temas* (themes)—uses images and storytelling cues that relate to minority culture (Constantino, 1982).

## Key Terms

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**anal stage** psychosexual stage in which children experience pleasure in their bowel and bladder movements

**analytical psychology** Jung's theory focusing on the balance of opposing forces within one's personality and the significance of the collective unconscious

**archetype** pattern that exists in our collective unconscious across cultures and societies

**collective unconscious** common psychological tendencies that have been passed down from one generation to the next

**congruence** state of being in which our thoughts about our real and ideal selves are very similar

**conscious** mental activity (thoughts, feelings, and memories) that we can access at any time

**Contemporized-Themes Concerning Blacks Test (C-TCB)** projective test designed to be culturally relevant to African Americans, using images that relate to African-American culture

**culture** all of the beliefs, customs, art, and traditions of a particular society

**defense mechanism** unconscious protective behaviors designed to reduce ego anxiety

**displacement** ego defense mechanism in which a person transfers inappropriate urges or behaviors toward a more acceptable or less threatening target

**ego** aspect of personality that represents the self, or the part of one's personality that is visible to others

**Five Factor Model** theory that personality is composed of five factors or traits, including openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism

**genital stage** psychosexual stage in which the focus is on mature sexual interests

**heritability** proportion of difference among people that is attributed to genetics

**id** aspect of personality that consists of our most primitive drives or urges, including impulses for hunger, thirst, and sex

**ideal self** person we would like to be

**incongruence** state of being in which there is a great discrepancy between our real and ideal selves

**individual psychology** school of psychology proposed by Adler that focuses on our drive to compensate for feelings of inferiority

**inferiority complex** refers to a person's feelings that they lack worth and don't measure up to others' or to society's standards

**latency period** psychosexual stage in which sexual feelings are dormant

**locus of control** beliefs about the power we have over our lives; an external locus of control is the belief that our outcomes are outside of our control; an internal locus of control is the belief that we control our own outcomes

**Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)** personality test composed of a series of true/false questions in order to establish a clinical profile of an individual

**neurosis** tendency to experience negative emotions

**oral stage** psychosexual stage in which an infant's pleasure is focused on the mouth

**personality** long-standing traits and patterns that propel individuals to consistently think, feel, and behave in specific ways

**phallic stage** psychosexual stage in which the focus is on the genitals

**projection** ego defense mechanism in which a person confronted with anxiety disguises their unacceptable urges or behaviors by attributing them to other people

**Projective test** personality assessment in which a person responds to ambiguous stimuli, revealing hidden feelings, impulses, and desires

**psychosexual stages of development** stages of child development in which a child's pleasure-seeking urges are focused on specific areas of the body called erogenous zones

**rationalization** ego defense mechanism in which a person confronted with anxiety makes excuses to justify behavior

**reaction formation** ego defense mechanism in which a person confronted with anxiety swaps unacceptable urges or behaviors for their opposites

**real self** person who we actually are

**reciprocal determinism** belief that one's environment can determine behavior, but at the same time, people can influence the environment with both their thoughts and behaviors

**regression** ego defense mechanism in which a person confronted with anxiety returns to a more immature behavioral state

**repression** ego defense mechanism in which anxiety-related thoughts and memories are kept in the unconscious

**Rorschach Inkblot Test** projective test that employs a series of symmetrical inkblot cards that are presented to a client by a psychologist in an effort to reveal the person's unconscious desires, fears, and struggles

**Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB)** projective test that is similar to a word association test in which a person completes sentences in order to reveal their unconscious desires, fears, and struggles

**selective migration** concept that people choose to move to places that are compatible with their personalities and needs

**self-concept** our thoughts and feelings about ourselves

**self-efficacy** someone's level of confidence in their own abilities

**social-cognitive theory** Bandura's theory of personality that emphasizes both cognition and learning as sources of individual differences in personality

**sublimation** ego defense mechanism in which unacceptable urges are channeled into more appropriate activities

**superego** aspect of the personality that serves as one's moral compass, or conscience

**TEMAS Multicultural Thematic Apperception Test** projective test designed to be culturally relevant to minority groups, especially Hispanic youths, using images and storytelling that relate to minority culture

**temperament** how a person reacts to the world, including their activity level, starting when they are very young

**Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** projective test in which people are presented with ambiguous images, and they then make up stories to go with the images in an effort to uncover their unconscious desires, fears, and struggles

**traits** characteristic ways of behaving

**unconscious** mental activity of which we are unaware and unable to access

## Summary

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### 11.1 What Is Personality?

Personality has been studied for over 2,000 years, beginning with Hippocrates. More recent theories of personality have been proposed, including Freud's psychodynamic perspective, which holds that personality is formed through early childhood experiences. Other perspectives then emerged in reaction to the psychodynamic perspective, including the learning, humanistic, biological, trait, and cultural perspectives.

### 11.2 Freud and the Psychodynamic Perspective

Sigmund Freud presented the first comprehensive theory of personality. He was also the first to recognize that much of our mental life takes place outside of our conscious awareness. Freud also proposed three components to our personality: the id, ego, and superego. The job of the ego is to balance the sexual and aggressive drives of the id with the moral ideal of the superego. Freud also said that personality develops through a series of psychosexual stages. In each stage, pleasure focuses on a specific erogenous zone. Failure to resolve a stage can lead one to become fixated in that stage, leading to unhealthy personality traits. Successful resolution of the stages leads to a healthy adult.

### 11.3 Neo-Freudians: Adler, Erikson, Jung, and Horney

The neo-Freudians were psychologists whose work followed from Freud's. They generally agreed with Freud that childhood experiences matter, but they decreased the emphasis on sex and focused more on the social environment and effects of culture on personality. Some of the notable neo-Freudians are Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, and Karen Horney. The neo-Freudian approaches have been criticized, because they tend to be philosophical rather than based on sound scientific research. For example, Jung's conclusions about the existence of the collective unconscious are based on myths, legends, dreams, and art. In addition, as with Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the neo-Freudians based much of their theories of personality on information from their patients.

### 11.4 Learning Approaches

Behavioral theorists view personality as significantly shaped and impacted by the reinforcements and consequences outside of the organism. People behave in a consistent manner based on prior learning. B. F. Skinner, a prominent behaviorist, said that we demonstrate consistent behavior patterns, because we have developed certain response tendencies. Mischel focused on how personal goals play a role in the self-regulation process. Albert Bandura said that one's environment can determine behavior, but at the same time, people can influence the environment with both their thoughts and behaviors, which is known as reciprocal determinism. Bandura also emphasized how we learn from watching others. He felt that this type of learning also plays a part in the development of our personality. Bandura discussed the concept of self-efficacy, which is our level of confidence in our own abilities. Finally, Rotter proposed the concept of locus of control, which refers to our beliefs about the power we have over our lives. He said that people

fall along a continuum between a purely internal and a purely external locus of control.

### 11.5 Humanistic Approaches

Humanistic psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers focused on the growth potential of healthy individuals. They believed that people strive to become self-actualized. Both Rogers's and Maslow's theories greatly contributed to our understanding of the self. They emphasized free will and self-determination, with each individual desiring to become the best person they can become.

### 11.6 Biological Approaches

Some aspects of our personalities are largely controlled by genetics; however, environmental factors (such as family interactions) and maturation can affect the ways in which children's personalities are expressed.

### 11.7 Trait Theorists

Trait theorists attempt to explain our personality by identifying our stable characteristics and ways of behaving. They have identified important dimensions of personality. The Five Factor Model is the most widely accepted trait theory today. The five factors are openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. These traits occur along a continuum.

### 11.8 Cultural Understandings of Personality

The culture in which you live is one of the most important environmental factors that shapes your personality. Western ideas about personality may not be applicable to other cultures. In fact, there is evidence that the strength of personality traits varies across cultures. Individualist cultures and collectivist cultures place emphasis on different basic values. People who live in individualist cultures tend to believe that independence, competition, and personal achievement are important. People who live in collectivist cultures value social harmony, respectfulness, and group needs over individual needs. There are three approaches that can be used to study personality in a cultural context: the cultural-comparative approach, the indigenous approach, and the combined approach, which incorporates both elements of both views.

### 11.9 Personality Assessment

Personality tests are techniques designed to measure one's personality. They are used to diagnose psychological problems as well as to screen candidates for college and employment. There are two types of personality tests: self-report inventories and projective tests. The MMPI is one of the most common self-report inventories. It asks a series of true/false questions that are designed to provide a clinical profile of an individual. Projective tests use ambiguous images or other ambiguous stimuli to assess an individual's unconscious fears, desires, and challenges. The Rorschach Inkblot Test, the TAT, the RISB, and the C-TCB are all forms of projective tests.

## Review Questions

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1. Personality is thought to be \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. short term and easily changed
  - b. a pattern of short-term characteristics
  - c. unstable and short term
  - d. long term, stable and not easily changed
2. The long-standing traits and patterns that propel individuals to consistently think, feel, and behave in specific ways are known as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. psychodynamic
  - b. temperament
  - c. humors
  - d. personality
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is credited with the first comprehensive theory of personality.
  - a. Hippocrates
  - b. Gall
  - c. Wundt
  - d. Freud
4. An early science that tried to correlate personality with measurements of parts of a person's skull is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. phrenology
  - b. psychology
  - c. physiology
  - d. personality psychology

5. The id operates on the \_\_\_\_\_ principle.
- reality
  - pleasure
  - instant gratification
  - guilt
6. The ego defense mechanism in which a person who is confronted with anxiety returns to a more immature behavioral stage is called \_\_\_\_\_.
- repression
  - regression
  - reaction formation
  - rationalization
7. The Oedipus complex occurs in the \_\_\_\_\_ stage of psychosexual development.
- oral
  - anal
  - phallic
  - latency
8. The universal bank of ideas, images, and concepts that have been passed down through the generations from our ancestors refers to \_\_\_\_\_.
- archetypes
  - intuition
  - collective unconscious
  - personality types
9. Self-regulation is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- self-efficacy
  - will power
  - internal locus of control
  - external locus of control
10. Your level of confidence in your own abilities is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- self-efficacy
  - self-concept
  - self-control
  - self-esteem
11. Jane believes that she got a bad grade on her psychology paper because her professor doesn't like her. Jane most likely has an \_\_\_\_\_ locus of control.
- internal
  - external
  - intrinsic
  - extrinsic
12. Self-concept refers to \_\_\_\_\_.
- our level of confidence in our own abilities
  - all of our thoughts and feelings about ourselves
  - the belief that we control our own outcomes
  - the belief that our outcomes are outside of our control
13. The idea that people's ideas about themselves should match their actions is called \_\_\_\_\_.
- confluence
  - conscious
  - conscientiousness
  - congruence
14. The way a person reacts to the world, starting when they are very young, including the person's activity level is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- traits
  - temperament
  - heritability
  - personality
15. Brianna is 18 months old. She cries frequently, is hard to soothe, and wakes frequently during the night. According to Thomas and Chess, she would be considered \_\_\_\_\_.
- an easy baby
  - a difficult baby
  - a slow to warm up baby
  - a colicky baby
16. According to the findings of the Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart, identical twins, whether raised together or apart have \_\_\_\_\_ personalities.
- slightly different
  - very different
  - slightly similar
  - very similar
17. Temperament refers to \_\_\_\_\_.
- inborn, genetically based personality differences
  - characteristic ways of behaving
  - conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, and extroversion
  - degree of introversion-extroversion

18. According to the Eysencks' theory, people who score high on neuroticism tend to be \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. calm  
b. stable  
c. outgoing  
d. anxious
19. The United States is considered a \_\_\_\_\_ culture.  
a. collectivistic  
b. individualist  
c. traditional  
d. nontraditional
20. The concept that people choose to move to places that are compatible with their personalities and needs is known as \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. selective migration  
b. personal oriented personality  
c. socially oriented personality  
d. individualism
21. Which of the following is NOT a projective test?  
a. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)  
b. Rorschach Inkblot Test  
c. Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)  
d. Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB)
22. A personality assessment in which a person responds to ambiguous stimuli, revealing unconscious feelings, impulses, and desires \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. self-report inventory  
b. projective test  
c. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)  
d. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
23. Which personality assessment employs a series of true/false questions?  
a. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)  
b. Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)  
c. Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank (RISB)  
d. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

### Critical Thinking Questions

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24. What makes a personal quality part of someone's personality?
25. How might the common expression "daddy's girl" be rooted in the idea of the Electra complex?
26. Describe the personality of someone who is fixated at the anal stage.
27. Describe the difference between extroverts and introverts in terms of what is energizing to each.
28. Discuss Horney's perspective on Freud's concept of penis envy.
29. Compare the personalities of someone who has high self-efficacy to someone who has low self-efficacy.
30. Compare and contrast Skinner's perspective on personality development to Freud's.
31. How might a temperament mix between parent and child affect family life?
32. How stable are the Big Five traits over one's lifespan?
33. Compare the personality of someone who scores high on agreeableness to someone who scores low on agreeableness.

34. Why might it be important to consider cultural influences on personality?
35. Why might a prospective employer screen applicants using personality assessments?
36. Why would a clinician give someone a projective test?

## Personal Application Questions

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37. How would you describe your own personality? Do you think that friends and family would describe you in much the same way? Why or why not?
38. How would you describe your personality in an online dating profile?
39. What are some of your positive and negative personality qualities? How do you think these qualities will affect your choice of career?
40. What are some examples of defense mechanisms that you have used yourself or have witnessed others using?
41. What is your birth order? Do you agree or disagree with Adler's description of your personality based on his birth order theory, as described in the Link to Learning? Provide examples for support.
42. Would you describe yourself as an extrovert or an introvert? Does this vary based on the situation? Provide examples to support your points.
43. Select an epic story that is popular in contemporary society (such as *Harry Potter* or *Star Wars*) and explain it terms of Jung's concept of archetypes.
44. Do you have an internal or an external locus of control? Provide examples to support your answer.
45. Respond to the question, "Who am I?" Based on your response, do you have a negative or a positive self-concept? What are some experiences that led you to develop this particular self-concept?
46. Research suggests that many of our personality characteristics have a genetic component. What traits do you think you inherited from your parents? Provide examples. How might modeling (environment) influenced your characteristics as well?
47. Review the Big Five personality traits shown in **Figure 11.15**. On which areas would you expect you'd score high? In which areas does the low score more accurately describe you?
48. According to the work of Rentfrow and colleagues, personalities are not randomly distributed. Instead they fit into distinct geographic clusters. Based on where you live, do you agree or disagree with the traits associated with yourself and the residents of your area of the country? Why or why not?
49. How objective do you think you can be about yourself in answering questions on self-report personality assessment measures? What implications might this have for the validity of the personality test?

# Chapter 12

# Social Psychology



**Figure 12.1** Trayvon Martin, 17, was shot to death at the hands of George Zimmerman, a volunteer neighborhood watchman, in 2012. Was his death the result of self-defense or racial bias? That question drew hundreds of people to rally on each side of this heated debate. (credit "signs": modification of work by David Shankbone; credit "walk": modification of work by "Fibonacci Blue"/Flickr)

## Chapter Outline

- 12.1 What Is Social Psychology?
- 12.2 Self-presentation
- 12.3 Attitudes and Persuasion
- 12.4 Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience
- 12.5 Prejudice and Discrimination
- 12.6 Aggression
- 12.7 Prosocial Behavior

## Introduction

Humans are diverse, and sometimes our differences make it challenging for us to get along with one another. A poignant example is that of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American who was shot by a neighborhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, in a predominantly White neighborhood in 2012. Zimmerman grew suspicious of the boy dressed in a hoodie and pursued Martin. A physical altercation ended with Zimmerman fatally shooting Martin. Zimmerman claimed that he acted in self-defense; Martin was unarmed. A Florida jury found Zimmerman not guilty of second degree murder nor of manslaughter.

Several groups protested what they deemed racial profiling and brutality against an unarmed Black male. Zimmerman, who has a Peruvian mother and a German father, was accused of being racist. Some media coverage was criticized for inflaming racial politics in their coverage. In spite of conflicts such as these, people also work together to create positive change. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, people rallied together and charitable donations skyrocket (Brown & Minty, 2006). This chapter explores how the presence of other people influences the behavior of individuals, dyads, and groups. Social factors can determine whether human behavior tends toward conflict or harmony.

## 12.1 What Is Social Psychology?

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define social psychology
- Describe situational versus dispositional influences on behavior
- Describe the fundamental attribution error

**Social psychology** examines how people affect one another, and it looks at the power of the situation. Social psychologists assert that an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are very much influenced by social situations. Essentially, people will change their behavior to align with the social situation at hand. If we are in a new situation or are unsure how to behave, we will take our cues from other individuals.

The field of social psychology studies topics at both the intra- and interpersonal levels. Intrapersonal topics (those that pertain to the individual) include emotions and attitudes, the self, and social cognition (the ways in which we think about ourselves and others). Interpersonal topics (those that pertain to dyads and groups) include helping behavior (Figure 12.2), aggression, prejudice and discrimination, attraction and close relationships, and group processes and intergroup relationships.



**Figure 12.2** Social psychology deals with all kinds of interactions between people, spanning a wide range of how we connect: from moments of confrontation to moments of working together and helping others, as shown here. (credit: Sgt. Derec Pierson, U.S. Army)

Social psychologists focus on how people construe or interpret situations and how these interpretations influence their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Thus, social psychology studies individuals in a social context and how situational variables interact to influence behavior. In this chapter, we discuss the intrapersonal processes of self-presentation, cognitive dissonance and attitude change, and the interpersonal processes of conformity and obedience, aggression and altruism, and, finally, love and attraction.

### SITUATIONAL AND DISPOSITIONAL INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR

Behavior is a product of both the situation (e.g., cultural influences, social roles, and the presence of bystanders) and of the person (e.g., personality characteristics). Subfields of psychology tend to focus on one influence or behavior over others. **Situationism** is the view that our behavior and actions are determined by our immediate environment and surroundings. In contrast, **dispositionism** holds that our behavior is determined by internal factors (Heider, 1958). An **internal factor** is an attribute of a person and includes personality traits and temperament. Social psychologists have tended to take the situationist perspective, whereas personality psychologists have promoted the dispositionist perspective.

Modern approaches to social psychology, however, take both the situation and the individual into account when studying human behavior (Fiske, Gilbert, & Lindzey, 2010). In fact, the field of social-personality psychology has emerged to study the complex interaction of internal and situational factors that affect human behavior (Mischel, 1977; Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003).

## FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

In the United States, the predominant culture tends to favor a dispositional approach in explaining human behavior. Why do you think this is? We tend to think that people are in control of their own behaviors, and, therefore, any behavior change must be due to something internal, such as their personality, habits, or temperament. According to some social psychologists, people tend to overemphasize internal factors as explanations—or attributions—for the behavior of other people. They tend to assume that the behavior of another person is a *trait* of that person, and to underestimate the power of the situation on the behavior of others. They tend to fail to recognize when the behavior of another is due to situational variables, and thus to the person's *state*. This erroneous assumption is called the **fundamental attribution error** (Ross, 1977; Riggio & Garcia, 2009). To better understand, imagine this scenario: Greg returns home from work, and upon opening the front door his wife happily greets him and inquires about his day. Instead of greeting his wife, Greg yells at her, "Leave me alone!" Why did Greg yell at his wife? How would someone committing the fundamental attribution error explain Greg's behavior? The most common response is that Greg is a mean, angry, or unfriendly person (his traits). This is an internal or dispositional explanation. However, imagine that Greg was just laid off from his job due to company downsizing. Would your explanation for Greg's behavior change? Your revised explanation might be that Greg was frustrated and disappointed for losing his job; therefore, he was in a bad mood (his state). This is now an external or situational explanation for Greg's behavior.

The fundamental attribution error is so powerful that people often overlook obvious situational influences on behavior. A classic example was demonstrated in a series of experiments known as the quizmaster study (Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977). Student participants were randomly assigned to play the role of a questioner (the quizmaster) or a contestant in a quiz game. Questioners developed difficult questions to which they knew the answers, and they presented these questions to the contestants. The contestants answered the questions correctly only 4 out of 10 times (**Figure 12.3**). After the task, the questioners and contestants were asked to rate their own general knowledge compared to the average student. Questioners did not rate their general knowledge higher than the contestants, but the contestants rated the questioners' intelligence higher than their own. In a second study, observers of the interaction also rated the questioner as having more general knowledge than the contestant. The obvious influence on performance is the situation. The questioners wrote the questions, so of course they had an advantage. Both the contestants and observers made an internal attribution for the performance. They concluded that the questioners must be more intelligent than the contestants.



**Figure 12.3** In the quizmaster study, people tended to disregard the influence of the situation and wrongly concluded that a questioner's knowledge was greater than their own. (credit: Steve Jurvetson)

As demonstrated in the example above, the fundamental attribution error is considered a powerful influence in how we explain the behaviors of others. However, it should be noted that some researchers

have suggested that the fundamental attribution error may not be as powerful as it is often portrayed. In fact, a recent review of more than 173 published studies suggests that several factors (e.g., high levels of idiosyncrasy of the character and how well hypothetical events are explained) play a role in determining just how influential the fundamental attribution error is (Malle, 2006).

## IS THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON?

You may be able to think of examples of the fundamental attribution error in your life. Do people in all cultures commit the fundamental attribution error? Research suggests that they do not. People from an **individualistic culture**, that is, a culture that focuses on individual achievement and autonomy, have the greatest tendency to commit the fundamental attribution error. Individualistic cultures, which tend to be found in western countries such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, promote a focus on the individual. Therefore, a person's disposition is thought to be the primary explanation for her behavior. In contrast, people from a **collectivistic culture**, that is, a culture that focuses on communal relationships with others, such as family, friends, and community (**Figure 12.4**), are less likely to commit the fundamental attribution error (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 2001).



**Figure 12.4** People from collectivistic cultures, such as some Asian cultures, are more likely to emphasize relationships with others than to focus primarily on the individual. Activities such as (a) preparing a meal, (b) hanging out, and (c) playing a game engage people in a group. (credit a: modification of work by Arian Zwegers; credit b: modification of work by "conbon33"/Flickr; credit c: modification of work by Anja Disseldorp)

Why do you think this is the case? Collectivistic cultures, which tend to be found in east Asian countries and in Latin American and African countries, focus on the group more than on the individual (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). This focus on others provides a broader perspective that takes into account both situational and cultural influences on behavior; thus, a more nuanced explanation of the causes of others' behavior becomes more likely. **Table 12.1** summarizes compares individualistic and collectivist cultures.

**Table 12.1 Characteristics of Individualistic and Collectivistic Cultures**

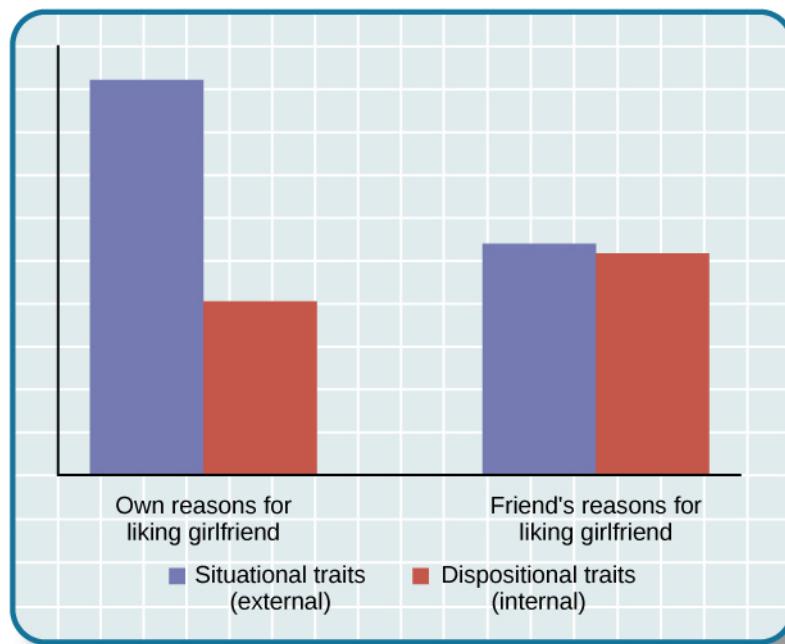
Individualistic Culture	Collectivistic Culture
Achievement oriented	Relationship oriented
Focus on autonomy	Focus on group autonomy
Dispositional perspective	Situational perspective
Independent	Interdependent
Analytic thinking style	Holistic thinking style

## ACTOR-OBSERVER BIAS

Returning to our earlier example, Greg knew that he lost his job, but an observer would not know. So a naïve observer would tend to attribute Greg's hostile behavior to Greg's disposition rather than to the

true, situational cause. Why do you think we underestimate the influence of the situation on the behaviors of others? One reason is that we often don't have all the information we need to make a situational explanation for another person's behavior. The only information we might have is what is observable. Due to this lack of information we have a tendency to assume the behavior is due to a dispositional, or internal, factor. When it comes to explaining our own behaviors, however, we have much more information available to us. If you came home from school or work angry and yelled at your dog or a loved one, what would your explanation be? You might say you were very tired or feeling unwell and needed quiet time—a situational explanation. The **actor-observer bias** is the phenomenon of attributing other people's behavior to internal factors (fundamental attribution error) while attributing our own behavior to situational forces (Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, & Marecek, 1973; Choi & Nisbett, 1998). As actors of behavior, we have more information available to explain our own behavior. However as observers, we have less information available; therefore, we tend to default to a dispositionist perspective.

One study on the actor-observer bias investigated reasons male participants gave for why they liked their girlfriend (Nisbett et al., 1973). When asked why participants liked their own girlfriend, participants focused on internal, dispositional qualities of their girlfriends (for example, her pleasant personality). The participants' explanations rarely included causes internal to themselves, such as dispositional traits (for example, "I need companionship."). In contrast, when speculating why a male friend likes his girlfriend, participants were equally likely to give dispositional and external explanations. This supports the idea that actors tend to provide few internal explanations but many situational explanations for their own behavior. In contrast, observers tend to provide more dispositional explanations for a friend's behavior (**Figure 12.5**).



**Figure 12.5** Actor-observer bias is evident when subjects explain their own reasons for liking a girlfriend versus their impressions of others' reasons for liking a girlfriend.

## SELF-SERVING BIAS

Following an outcome, self-serving bias are those attributions that enable us to see ourselves in favorable light (for example, making internal attributions for success and external attributions for failures). When you do well at a task, for example acing an exam, it is in your best interest to make a dispositional attribution for your behavior ("I'm smart.") instead of a situational one ("The exam was easy."). The

tendency of an individual to take credit by making dispositional or internal attributions for positive outcomes but situational or external attributions for negative outcomes is known as the **self-serving bias** (Miller & Ross, 1975). This bias serves to protect self-esteem. You can imagine that if people always made situational attributions for their behavior, they would never be able to take credit and feel good about their accomplishments.

We can understand self-serving bias by digging more deeply into **attribution**, a belief about the cause of a result. One model of attribution proposes three main dimensions: locus of control (internal versus external), stability (stable versus unstable), and controllability (controllable versus uncontrollable). In this context, stability refers to the extent to which the circumstances that result in a given outcome are changeable. The circumstances are considered stable if they are unlikely to change. Controllability refers to the extent to which the circumstances that are associated with a given outcome can be controlled. Obviously, those things that we have the power to control would be labeled controllable (Weiner, 1979).

Consider the example of how we explain our favorite sports team's wins. Research shows that we make internal, stable, and controllable attributions for our team's victory (**Figure 12.6**) (Grove, Hanrahan, & McInman, 1991). For example, we might tell ourselves that our team is talented (internal), consistently works hard (stable), and uses effective strategies (controllable). In contrast, we are more likely to make external, unstable, and uncontrollable attributions when our favorite team loses. For example, we might tell ourselves that the other team has more experienced players or that the referees were unfair (external), the other team played at home (unstable), and the cold weather affected our team's performance (uncontrollable).



**Figure 12.6** We tend to believe that our team wins because it's better, but loses for reasons it cannot control (Roesch & Amirkham, 1997). (credit: "TheAHL"/Flickr)

## JUST-WORLD HYPOTHESIS

One consequence of westerners' tendency to provide dispositional explanations for behavior is victim blame (Jost & Major, 2001). When people experience bad fortune, others tend to assume that they somehow are responsible for their own fate. A common ideology, or worldview, in the United States is the just-world hypothesis. The **just-world hypothesis** is the belief that people get the outcomes they deserve (Lerner & Miller, 1978). In order to maintain the belief that the world is a fair place, people tend to think that good people experience positive outcomes, and bad people experience negative outcomes (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Jost & Major, 2001). The ability to think of the world as a fair place, where people get what they deserve, allows us to feel that the world is predictable and that we have some control over our life outcomes (Jost et al., 2004; Jost & Major, 2001). For example, if you want to experience positive outcomes, you just need to work hard to get ahead in life.

Can you think of a negative consequence of the just-world hypothesis? One negative consequence is people's tendency to blame poor individuals for their plight. What common explanations are given for why people live in poverty? Have you heard statements such as, "The poor are lazy and just don't

want to work" or "Poor people just want to live off the government"? What types of explanations are these, dispositional or situational? These dispositional explanations are clear examples of the fundamental attribution error. Blaming poor people for their poverty ignores situational factors that impact them, such as high unemployment rates, recession, poor educational opportunities, and the familial cycle of poverty (**Figure 12.7**). Other research shows that people who hold just-world beliefs have negative attitudes toward people who are unemployed and people living with AIDS (Sutton & Douglas, 2005). In the United States and other countries, victims of sexual assault may find themselves blamed for their abuse. Victim advocacy groups, such as Domestic Violence Ended (DOVE), attend court in support of victims to ensure that blame is directed at the perpetrators of sexual violence, not the victims.



**Figure 12.7** People who hold just-world beliefs tend to blame the people in poverty for their circumstances, ignoring situational and cultural causes of poverty. (credit: Adrian Miles)

## 12.2 Self-presentation

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe social roles and how they influence behavior
- Explain what social norms are and how they influence behavior
- Define script
- Describe the findings of Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment

As you've learned, social psychology is the study of how people affect one another's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We have discussed situational perspectives and social psychology's emphasis on the ways in which a person's environment, including culture and other social influences, affect behavior. In this section, we examine situational forces that have a strong influence on human behavior including social roles, social norms, and scripts. We discuss how humans use the social environment as a source of information, or cues, on how to behave. Situational influences on our behavior have important consequences, such as whether we will help a stranger in an emergency or how we would behave in an unfamiliar environment.

### SOCIAL ROLES

One major social determinant of human behavior is our social roles. A **social role** is a pattern of behavior that is expected of a person in a given setting or group (Hare, 2003). Each one of us has several social roles. You may be, at the same time, a student, a parent, an aspiring teacher, a son or daughter, a spouse, and a lifeguard. How do these social roles influence your behavior? Social roles are defined by culturally shared knowledge. That is, nearly everyone in a given culture knows what behavior is expected of a person in a given role. For example, what is the social role for a student? If you look around a college classroom you will likely see students engaging in studious behavior, taking notes, listening to the professor, reading the textbook, and sitting quietly at their desks (**Figure 12.8**). Of course you may see students deviating from

the expected studious behavior such as texting on their phones or using Facebook on their laptops, but in all cases, the students that you observe are attending class—a part of the social role of students.



**Figure 12.8** Being a student is just one of the many social roles you have. (credit: "University of Michigan MSIS"/Flickr)

Social roles, and our related behavior, can vary across different settings. How do you behave when you are engaging in the role of son or daughter and attending a family function? Now imagine how you behave when you are engaged in the role of employee at your workplace. It is very likely that your behavior will be different. Perhaps you are more relaxed and outgoing with your family, making jokes and doing silly things. But at your workplace you might speak more professionally, and although you may be friendly, you are also serious and focused on getting the work completed. These are examples of how our social roles influence and often dictate our behavior to the extent that identity and personality can vary with context (that is, in different social groups) (Malloy, Albright, Kenny, Agatstein & Winquist, 1997).

## SOCIAL NORMS

As discussed previously, social roles are defined by a culture's shared knowledge of what is expected behavior of an individual in a specific role. This shared knowledge comes from social norms. A **social norm** is a group's expectation of what is appropriate and acceptable behavior for its members—how they are supposed to behave and think (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Berkowitz, 2004). How are we expected to act? What are we expected to talk about? What are we expected to wear? In our discussion of social roles we noted that colleges have social norms for students' behavior in the role of student and workplaces have social norms for employees' behaviors in the role of employee. Social norms are everywhere including in families, gangs, and on social media outlets. What are some social norms on Facebook?

### CONNECT THE CONCEPTS

### CONNECT THE CONCEPTS

#### Tweens, Teens, and Social Norms

My 11-year-old daughter, Jessica, recently told me she needed shorts and shirts for the summer, and that she wanted me to take her to a store at the mall that is popular with preteens and teens to buy them. I have noticed that many girls have clothes from that store, so I tried teasing her. I said, "All the shirts say 'Aero' on the front. If you are wearing a shirt like that and you have a substitute teacher, and the other girls are all wearing that type of shirt, won't the substitute teacher think you are all named 'Aero'?"

My daughter replied, in typical 11-year-old fashion, "Mom, you are not funny. Can we please go shopping?"

I tried a different tactic. I asked Jessica if having clothing from that particular store will make her popular. She replied, "No, it will not make me popular. It is what the popular kids wear. It will make me feel happier." How can a label or name brand make someone feel happier? Think back to what you've learned about lifespan development. What is it about pre-teens and young teens that make them want to fit in (**Figure 12.9**)? Does this change over time? Think back to your high school experience, or look around your college campus. What is the main name brand clothing you see? What messages do we get from the media about how to fit in?



**Figure 12.9** Young people struggle to become independent at the same time they are desperately trying to fit in with their peers. (credit: Monica Arellano-Ongpin)

## SCRIPTS

Because of social roles, people tend to know what behavior is expected of them in specific, familiar settings. A **script** is a person's knowledge about the sequence of events expected in a specific setting (Schank & Abelson, 1977). How do you act on the first day of school, when you walk into an elevator, or are at a restaurant? For example, at a restaurant in the United States, if we want the server's attention, we try to make eye contact. In Brazil, you would make the sound "psst" to get the server's attention. You can see the cultural differences in scripts. To an American, saying "psst" to a server might seem rude, yet to a Brazilian, trying to make eye contact might not seem an effective strategy. Scripts are important sources of information to guide behavior in given situations. Can you imagine being in an unfamiliar situation and not having a script for how to behave? This could be uncomfortable and confusing. How could you find out about social norms in an unfamiliar culture?

## ZIMBARDO'S STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT

The famous **Stanford prison experiment**, conducted by social psychologist Philip Zimbardo and his colleagues at Stanford University, demonstrated the power of social roles, social norms, and scripts. In the summer of 1971, an advertisement was placed in a California newspaper asking for male volunteers to participate in a study about the psychological effects of prison life. More than 70 men volunteered, and these volunteers then underwent psychological testing to eliminate candidates who had underlying psychiatric issues, medical issues, or a history of crime or drug abuse. The pool of volunteers was whittled down to 24 healthy male college students. Each student was paid \$15 per day and was randomly assigned to play the role of either a prisoner or a guard in the study. Based on what you have learned about research methods, why is it important that participants were randomly assigned?

A mock prison was constructed in the basement of the psychology building at Stanford. Participants assigned to play the role of prisoners were "arrested" at their homes by Palo Alto police officers, booked at a police station, and subsequently taken to the mock prison. The experiment was scheduled to run for several weeks. To the surprise of the researchers, both the "prisoners" and "guards" assumed their roles with zeal. In fact, on day 2, some of the prisoners revolted, and the guards quelled the rebellion by threatening the prisoners with night sticks. In a relatively short time, the guards came to harass the prisoners in an increasingly sadistic manner, through a complete lack of privacy, lack of basic comforts such as mattresses to sleep on, and through degrading chores and late-night counts.

The prisoners, in turn, began to show signs of severe anxiety and hopelessness—they began tolerating the guards' abuse. Even the Stanford professor who designed the study and was the head researcher, Philip Zimbardo, found himself acting as if the prison was real and his role, as prison supervisor, was real as well. After only six days, the experiment had to be ended due to the participants' deteriorating behavior. Zimbardo explained,

At this point it became clear that we had to end the study. We had created an overwhelmingly

powerful situation—a situation in which prisoners were withdrawing and behaving in pathological ways, and in which some of the guards were behaving sadistically. Even the “good” guards felt helpless to intervene, and none of the guards quit while the study was in progress. Indeed, it should be noted that no guard ever came late for his shift, called in sick, left early, or demanded extra pay for overtime work. (Zimbardo, 2013)

The Stanford prison experiment demonstrated the power of social roles, norms, and scripts in affecting human behavior. The guards and prisoners enacted their social roles by engaging in behaviors appropriate to the roles: The guards gave orders and the prisoners followed orders. Social norms require guards to be authoritarian and prisoners to be submissive. When prisoners rebelled, they violated these social norms, which led to upheaval. The specific acts engaged by the guards and the prisoners derived from scripts. For example, guards degraded the prisoners by forcing them do push-ups and by removing all privacy. Prisoners rebelled by throwing pillows and trashing their cells. Some prisoners became so immersed in their roles that they exhibited symptoms of mental breakdown; however, according to Zimbardo, none of the participants suffered long term harm (Alexander, 2001).

The Stanford Prison Experiment has some parallels with the abuse of prisoners of war by U.S. Army troops and CIA personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison in 2003 and 2004. The offenses at Abu Ghraib were documented by photographs of the abuse, some taken by the abusers themselves (**Figure 12.10**).



**Figure 12.10** Iraqi prisoners of war were abused by their American captors in Abu Ghraib prison, during the second Iraq war. (credit: United States Department of Defense)

### LINK TO LEARNING



Visit this [website](http://openstaxcollege.org//Stanford_psych) ([http://openstaxcollege.org//Stanford\\_psych](http://openstaxcollege.org//Stanford_psych)) to hear an NPR interview with Philip Zimbardo where he discusses the parallels between the Stanford prison experiment and the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

## 12.3 Attitudes and Persuasion

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define attitude
  - Describe how people's attitudes are internally changed through cognitive dissonance
  - Explain how people's attitudes are externally changed through persuasion
  - Describe the peripheral and central routes to persuasion
- 

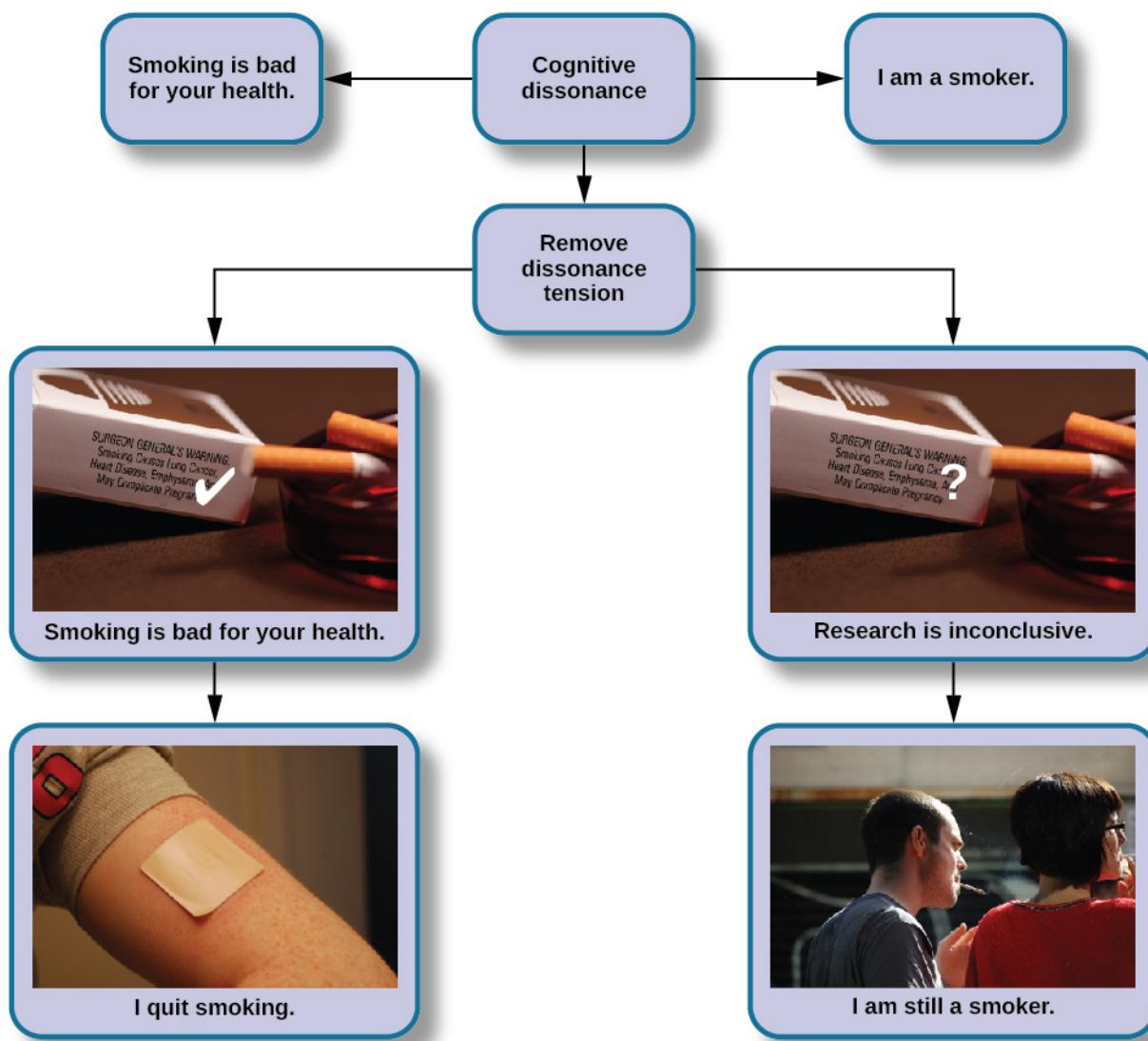
Social psychologists have documented how the power of the situation can influence our behaviors. Now we turn to how the power of the situation can influence our attitudes and beliefs. **Attitude** is our evaluation of a person, an idea, or an object. We have attitudes for many things ranging from products that we might pick up in the supermarket to people around the world to political policies. Typically, attitudes are favorable or unfavorable: positive or negative (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). And, they have three components: an affective component (feelings), a behavioral component (the effect of the attitude on behavior), and a cognitive component (belief and knowledge) (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960).

For example, you may hold a positive attitude toward recycling. This attitude should result in positive feelings toward recycling (such as "It makes me feel good to recycle" or "I enjoy knowing that I make a small difference in reducing the amount of waste that ends up in landfills"). Certainly, this attitude should be reflected in our behavior: You actually recycle as often as you can. Finally, this attitude will be reflected in favorable thoughts (for example, "Recycling is good for the environment" or "Recycling is the responsible thing to do").

Our attitudes and beliefs are not only influenced by external forces, but also by internal influences that we control. Like our behavior, our attitudes and thoughts are not always changed by situational pressures, but they can be consciously changed by our own free will. In this section we discuss the conditions under which we would want to change our own attitudes and beliefs.

### WHAT IS COGNITIVE DISSONANCE?

Social psychologists have documented that feeling good about ourselves and maintaining positive self-esteem is a powerful motivator of human behavior (Tavris & Aronson, 2008). In the United States, members of the predominant culture typically think very highly of themselves and view themselves as good people who are above average on many desirable traits (Ehrlinger, Gilovich, & Ross, 2005). Often, our behavior, attitudes, and beliefs are affected when we experience a threat to our self-esteem or positive self-image. Psychologist Leon Festinger (1957) defined **cognitive dissonance** as psychological discomfort arising from holding two or more inconsistent attitudes, behaviors, or cognitions (thoughts, beliefs, or opinions). Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance states that when we experience a conflict in our behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs that runs counter to our positive self-perceptions, we experience psychological discomfort (dissonance). For example, if you believe smoking is bad for your health but you continue to smoke, you experience conflict between your belief and behavior (**Figure 12.11**).



**Figure 12.11** Cognitive dissonance is aroused by inconsistent beliefs and behaviors. Believing cigarettes are bad for your health, but smoking cigarettes anyway, can cause cognitive dissonance. To reduce cognitive dissonance, individuals can change their behavior, as in quitting smoking, or change their belief, such as discounting the evidence that smoking is harmful. (credit “cigarettes”: modification of work by CDC/Debora Cartagena; “patch”: modification of “RegBarc”/Wikimedia Commons; “smoking”: modification of work by Tim Parkinson)

Later research documented that only conflicting cognitions that threaten individuals' positive self-image cause dissonance (Greenwald & Ronis, 1978). Additional research found that dissonance is not only psychologically uncomfortable but also can cause physiological arousal (Croyle & Cooper, 1983) and activate regions of the brain important in emotions and cognitive functioning (van Veen, Krug, Schooler, & Carter, 2009). When we experience cognitive dissonance, we are motivated to decrease it because it is psychologically, physically, and mentally uncomfortable. We can reduce cognitive dissonance by bringing our cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors in line—that is, making them harmonious. This can be done in different ways, such as:

- changing our discrepant behavior (e.g., stop smoking),
- changing our cognitions through rationalization or denial (e.g., telling ourselves that health risks can be reduced by smoking filtered cigarettes),
- adding a new cognition (e.g., “Smoking suppresses my appetite so I don't become overweight,

which is good for my health.”).

A classic example of cognitive dissonance is John, a 20-year-old who enlists in the military. During boot camp he is awakened at 5:00 a.m., is chronically sleep deprived, yelled at, covered in sand flea bites, physically bruised and battered, and mentally exhausted (**Figure 12.12**). It gets worse. Recruits that make it to week 11 of boot camp have to do 54 hours of continuous training.



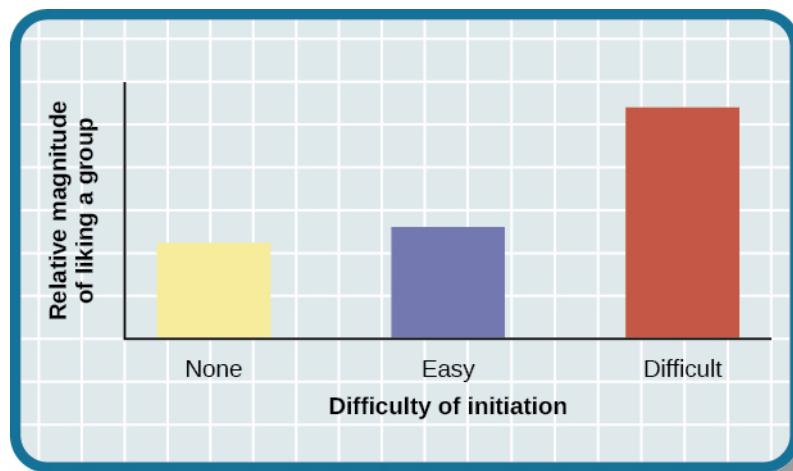
**Figure 12.12** A person who has chosen a difficult path must deal with cognitive dissonance in addition to many other discomforts. (credit: Tyler J. Bolken)

Not surprisingly, John is miserable. No one likes to be miserable. In this type of situation, people can change their beliefs, their attitudes, or their behaviors. The last option, a change of behaviors, is not available to John. He has signed on to the military for four years, and he cannot legally leave.

If John keeps thinking about how miserable he is, it is going to be a very long four years. He will be in a constant state of cognitive dissonance. As an alternative to this misery, John can change his beliefs or attitudes. He can tell himself, “I am becoming stronger, healthier, and sharper. I am learning discipline and how to defend myself and my country. What I am doing is really important.” If this is his belief, he will realize that he is becoming stronger through his challenges. He then will feel better and not experience cognitive dissonance, which is an uncomfortable state.

### The Effect of Initiation

The military example demonstrates the observation that a difficult initiation into a group influences us to like the group *more*, due to the justification of effort. We do not want to have wasted time and effort to join a group that we eventually leave. A classic experiment by Aronson and Mills (1959) demonstrated this justification of effort effect. College students volunteered to join a campus group that would meet regularly to discuss the psychology of sex. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: no initiation, an easy initiation, and a difficult initiation into the group. After participating in the first discussion, which was deliberately made very boring, participants rated how much they liked the group. Participants who underwent a difficult initiation process to join the group rated the group more favorably than did participants with an easy initiation or no initiation (**Figure 12.13**).



**Figure 12.13** Justification of effort has a distinct effect on a person liking a group. Students in the difficult initiation condition liked the group more than students in other conditions due to the justification of effort.

Similar effects can be seen in a more recent study of how student effort affects course evaluations. Heckert, Latier, Ringwald-Burton, and Drazen (2006) surveyed 463 undergraduates enrolled in courses at a midwestern university about the amount of effort that their courses required of them. In addition, the students were also asked to evaluate various aspects of the course. Given what you've just read, it will come as no surprise that those courses that were associated with the highest level of effort were evaluated as being more valuable than those that did not. Furthermore, students indicated that they learned more in courses that required more effort, regardless of the grades that they received in those courses (Heckert et al., 2006).

Besides the classic military example and group initiation, can you think of other examples of cognitive dissonance? Here is one: Marco and Maria live in Fairfield County, Connecticut, which is one of the wealthiest areas in the United States and has a very high cost of living. Marco telecommutes from home and Maria does not work outside of the home. They rent a very small house for more than \$3000 a month. Maria shops at consignment stores for clothes and economizes where she can. They complain that they never have any money and that they cannot buy anything new. When asked why they do not move to a less expensive location, since Marco telecommutes, they respond that Fairfield County is beautiful, they love the beaches, and they feel comfortable there. How does the theory of cognitive dissonance apply to Marco and Maria's choices?

## PERSUASION

In the previous section we discussed that the motivation to reduce cognitive dissonance leads us to change our attitudes, behaviors, and/or cognitions to make them consonant. **Persuasion** is the process of changing our attitude toward something based on some kind of communication. Much of the persuasion we experience comes from outside forces. How do people convince others to change their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (**Figure 12.14**)? What communications do you receive that attempt to persuade you to change your attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors?



**Figure 12.14** We encounter attempts at persuasion attempts everywhere. Persuasion is not limited to formal advertising; we are confronted with it throughout our everyday world. (credit: Robert Couse-Baker)

A subfield of social psychology studies persuasion and social influence, providing us with a plethora of information on how humans can be persuaded by others.

### **Yale Attitude Change Approach**

The topic of persuasion has been one of the most extensively researched areas in social psychology (Fiske et al., 2010). During the Second World War, Carl Hovland extensively researched persuasion for the U.S. Army. After the war, Hovland continued his exploration of persuasion at Yale University. Out of this work came a model called the Yale attitude change approach, which describes the conditions under which people tend to change their attitudes. Hovland demonstrated that certain features of the source of a persuasive message, the content of the message, and the characteristics of the audience will influence the persuasiveness of a message (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

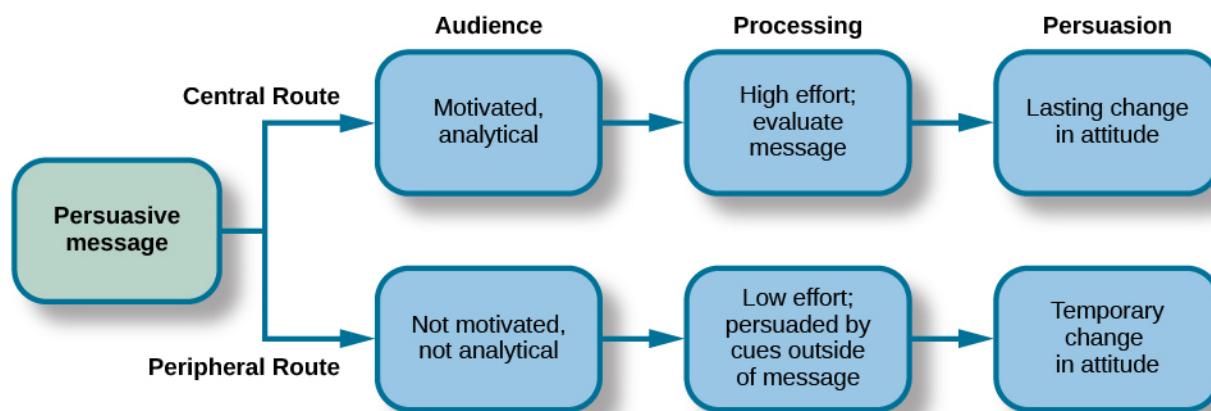
Features of the source of the persuasive message include the credibility of the speaker (Hovland & Weiss, 1951) and the physical attractiveness of the speaker (Eagly & Chaiken, 1975; Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1997). Thus, speakers who are credible, or have expertise on the topic, and who are deemed as trustworthy are more persuasive than less credible speakers. Similarly, more attractive speakers are more persuasive than less attractive speakers. The use of famous actors and athletes to advertise products on television and in print relies on this principle. The immediate and long term impact of the persuasion also depends, however, on the credibility of the messenger (Kumkale & Albarracín, 2004).

Features of the message itself that affect persuasion include subtlety (the quality of being important, but not obvious) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Walster & Festinger, 1962); sidedness (that is, having more than one side) (Crowley & Hoyer, 1994; Igou & Bless, 2003; Lumsdaine & Janis, 1953); timing (Haugtvedt & Wegener, 1994; Miller & Campbell, 1959), and whether both sides are presented. Messages that are more subtle are more persuasive than direct messages. Arguments that occur first, such as in a debate, are more influential if messages are given back-to-back. However, if there is a delay after the first message, and before the audience needs to make a decision, the last message presented will tend to be more persuasive (Miller & Campbell, 1959).

Features of the audience that affect persuasion are attention (Albarracín & Wyer, 2001; Festinger & Maccoby, 1964), intelligence, self-esteem (Rhodes & Wood, 1992), and age (Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). In order to be persuaded, audience members must be paying attention. People with lower intelligence are more easily persuaded than people with higher intelligence; whereas people with moderate self-esteem are more easily persuaded than people with higher or lower self-esteem (Rhodes & Wood, 1992). Finally, younger adults aged 18–25 are more persuadable than older adults.

## Elaboration Likelihood Model

An especially popular model that describes the dynamics of persuasion is the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The elaboration likelihood model considers the variables of the attitude change approach—that is, features of the source of the persuasive message, contents of the message, and characteristics of the audience are used to determine when attitude change will occur. According to the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, there are two main routes that play a role in delivering a persuasive message: central and peripheral (Figure 12.15).



**Figure 12.15** Persuasion can take one of two paths, and the durability of the end result depends on the path.

The **central route** is logic driven and uses data and facts to convince people of an argument's worthiness. For example, a car company seeking to persuade you to purchase their model will emphasize the car's safety features and fuel economy. This is a direct route to persuasion that focuses on the quality of the information. In order for the central route of persuasion to be effective in changing attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors, the argument must be strong and, if successful, will result in lasting attitude change.

The central route to persuasion works best when the target of persuasion, or the audience, is analytical and willing to engage in processing of the information. From an advertiser's perspective, what products would be best sold using the central route to persuasion? What audience would most likely be influenced to buy the product? One example is buying a computer. It is likely, for example, that small business owners might be especially influenced by the focus on the computer's quality and features such as processing speed and memory capacity.

The **peripheral route** is an indirect route that uses peripheral cues to associate positivity with the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Instead of focusing on the facts and a product's quality, the peripheral route relies on association with positive characteristics such as positive emotions and celebrity endorsement. For example, having a popular athlete advertise athletic shoes is a common method used to encourage young adults to purchase the shoes. This route to attitude change does not require much effort or information processing. This method of persuasion may promote positivity toward the message or product, but it typically results in less permanent attitude or behavior change. The audience does not need to be analytical or motivated to process the message. In fact, a peripheral route to persuasion may not even be noticed by the audience, for example in the strategy of product placement. Product placement refers to putting a product with a clear brand name or brand identity in a TV show or movie to promote the product (Gupta & Lord, 1998). For example, one season of the reality series *American Idol* prominently showed the panel of judges drinking out of cups that displayed the Coca-Cola logo. What other products would be best sold using the peripheral route to persuasion? Another example is clothing: A retailer may focus on celebrities that are wearing the same style of clothing.

## Foot-in-the-door Technique

Researchers have tested many persuasion strategies that are effective in selling products and changing people's attitude, ideas, and behaviors. One effective strategy is the foot-in-the-door technique (Cialdini, 2001; Pliner, Hart, Kohl, & Saari, 1974). Using the **foot-in-the-door technique**, the persuader gets a person to agree to bestow a small favor or to buy a small item, only to later request a larger favor or purchase of a bigger item. The foot-in-the-door technique was demonstrated in a study by Freedman and Fraser (1966) in which participants who agreed to post small sign in their yard or sign a petition were more likely to agree to put a large sign in their yard than people who declined the first request (Figure 12.16). Research on this technique also illustrates the principle of consistency (Cialdini, 2001): Our past behavior often directs our future behavior, and we have a desire to maintain consistency once we have a committed to a behavior.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 12.16** With the foot-in-the-door technique, a small request such as (a) wearing a campaign button can turn into a large request, such as (b) putting campaigns signs in your yard. (credit a: modification of work by Joe Crawford; credit b: modification of work by "shutterblog"/Flickr)

A common application of foot-in-the-door is when teens ask their parents for a small permission (for example, extending curfew by a half hour) and then asking them for something larger. Having granted the smaller request increases the likelihood that parents will acquiesce with the later, larger request.

How would a store owner use the foot-in-the-door technique to sell you an expensive product? For example, say that you are buying the latest model smartphone, and the salesperson suggests you purchase the best data plan. You agree to this. The salesperson then suggests a bigger purchase—the three-year extended warranty. After agreeing to the smaller request, you are more likely to also agree to the larger request. You may have encountered this if you have bought a car. When salespeople realize that a buyer intends to purchase a certain model, they might try to get the customer to pay for many or most available options on the car.

## 12.4 Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

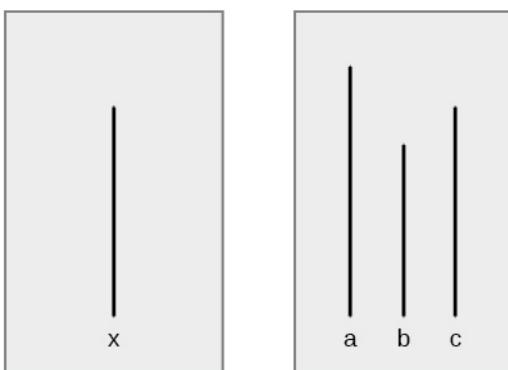
- Explain the Asch effect
- Define conformity and types of social influence
- Describe Stanley Milgram's experiment and its implications
- Define groupthink, social facilitation, and social loafing

In this section, we discuss additional ways in which people influence others. The topics of conformity, social influence, obedience, and group processes demonstrate the power of the social situation to change our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We begin this section with a discussion of a famous social

psychology experiment that demonstrated how susceptible humans are to outside social pressures.

## CONFORMITY

Solomon Asch conducted several experiments in the 1950s to determine how people are affected by the thoughts and behaviors of other people. In one study, a group of participants was shown a series of printed line segments of different lengths: a, b, and c (**Figure 12.17**). Participants were then shown a fourth line segment: x. They were asked to identify which line segment from the first group (a, b, or c) most closely resembled the fourth line segment in length.



**Figure 12.17** These line segments illustrate the judgment task in Asch's conformity study. Which line on the right—a, b, or c—is the same length as line x on the left?

Each group of participants had only one true, naïve subject. The remaining members of the group were confederates of the researcher. A **confederate** is a person who is aware of the experiment and works for the researcher. Confederates are used to manipulate social situations as part of the research design, and the true, naïve participants believe that confederates are, like them, uninformed participants in the experiment. In Asch's study, the confederates identified a line segment that was obviously shorter than the target line—a wrong answer. The naïve participant then had to identify aloud the line segment that best matched the target line segment.

How often do you think the true participant aligned with the confederates' response? That is, how often do you think the group influenced the participant, and the participant gave the wrong answer? Asch (1955) found that 76% of participants conformed to group pressure at least once by indicating the incorrect line. **Conformity** is the change in a person's behavior to go along with the group, even if he does not agree with the group. Why would people give the wrong answer? What factors would increase or decrease someone giving in or conforming to group pressure?

The **Asch effect** is the influence of the group majority on an individual's judgment.

What factors make a person more likely to yield to group pressure? Research shows that the size of the majority, the presence of another dissenter, and the public or relatively private nature of responses are key influences on conformity.

- The size of the majority: The greater the number of people in the majority, the more likely an individual will conform. There is, however, an upper limit: a point where adding more members does not increase conformity. In Asch's study, conformity increased with the number of people in the majority—up to seven individuals. At numbers beyond seven, conformity leveled off and decreased slightly (Asch, 1955).
- The presence of another dissenter: If there is at least one dissenter, conformity rates drop to near zero (Asch, 1955).
- The public or private nature of the responses: When responses are made publicly (in front of others), conformity is more likely; however, when responses are made privately (e.g., writing down the

response), conformity is less likely (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

The finding that conformity is more likely to occur when responses are public than when they are private is the reason government elections require voting in secret, so we are not coerced by others (**Figure 12.18**). The Asch effect can be easily seen in children when they have to publicly vote for something. For example, if the teacher asks whether the children would rather have extra recess, no homework, or candy, once a few children vote, the rest will comply and go with the majority. In a different classroom, the majority might vote differently, and most of the children would comply with that majority. When someone's vote changes if it is made in public versus private, this is known as compliance. Compliance can be a form of conformity. Compliance is going along with a request or demand, even if you do not agree with the request. In Asch's studies, the participants complied by giving the wrong answers, but privately did not accept that the obvious wrong answers were correct.

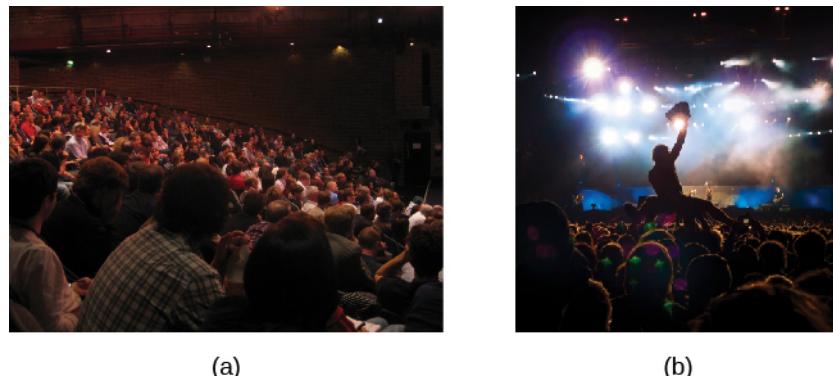


**Figure 12.18** Voting for government officials in the United States is private to reduce the pressure of conformity. (credit: Nicole Klauss)

Now that you have learned about the Asch line experiments, why do you think the participants conformed? The correct answer to the line segment question was obvious, and it was an easy task. Researchers have categorized the motivation to conform into two types: normative social influence and informational social influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

In **normative social influence**, people conform to the group norm to fit in, to feel good, and to be accepted by the group. However, with **informational social influence**, people conform because they believe the group is competent and has the correct information, particularly when the task or situation is ambiguous. What type of social influence was operating in the Asch conformity studies? Since the line judgment task was unambiguous, participants did not need to rely on the group for information. Instead, participants complied to fit in and avoid ridicule, an instance of normative social influence.

An example of informational social influence may be what to do in an emergency situation. Imagine that you are in a movie theater watching a film and what seems to be smoke comes in the theater from under the emergency exit door. You are not certain that it is smoke—it might be a special effect for the movie, such as a fog machine. When you are uncertain you will tend to look at the behavior of others in the theater. If other people show concern and get up to leave, you are likely to do the same. However, if others seem unconcerned, you are likely to stay put and continue watching the movie (**Figure 12.19**).



(a)

(b)

**Figure 12.19** People in crowds tend to take cues from others and act accordingly. (a) An audience is listening to a lecture and people are relatively quiet, still, and attentive to the speaker on the stage. (b) An audience is at a rock concert where people are dancing, singing, and possibly engaging in activities like crowd surfing. (credit a: modification of work by Matt Brown; credit b: modification of work by Christian Holmér)

How would you have behaved if you were a participant in Asch's study? Many students say they would not conform, that the study is outdated, and that people nowadays are more independent. To some extent this may be true. Research suggests that overall rates of conformity may have reduced since the time of Asch's research. Furthermore, efforts to replicate Asch's study have made it clear that many factors determine how likely it is that someone will demonstrate conformity to the group. These factors include the participant's age, gender, and socio-cultural background (Bond & Smith, 1996; Larsen, 1990; Walker & Andrade, 1996).

### LINK TO LEARNING



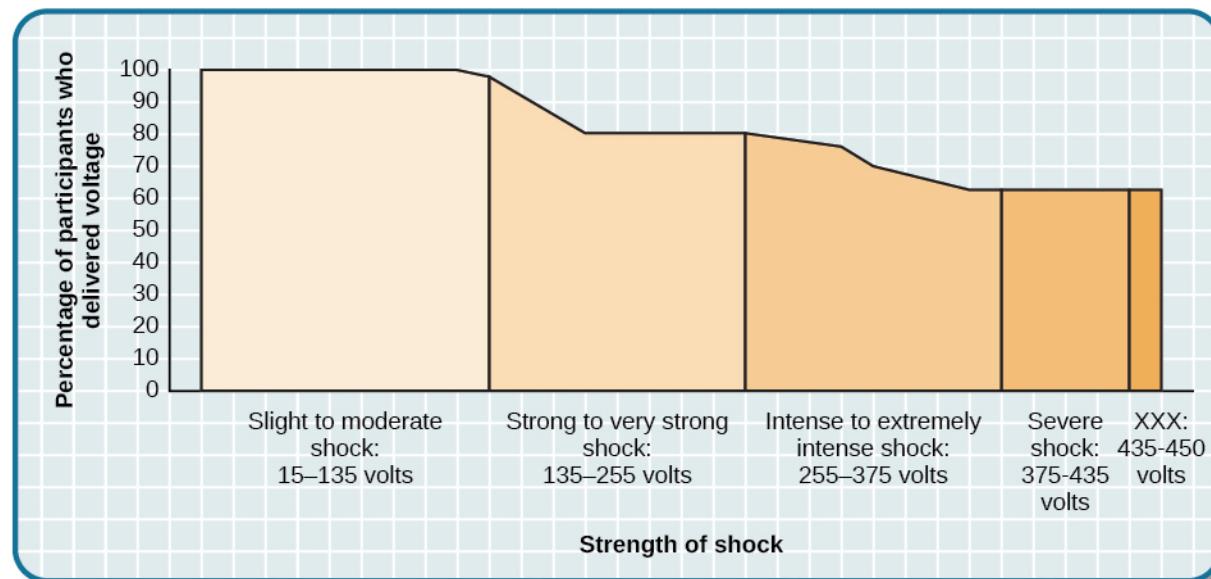
Watch this [video](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Asch2) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Asch2>) to see a replication of the Asch experiment.

### STANLEY MILGRAM'S EXPERIMENT

Conformity is one effect of the influence of others on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Another form of social influence is obedience to authority. **Obedience** is the change of an individual's behavior to comply with a demand by an authority figure. People often comply with the request because they are concerned about a consequence if they do not comply. To demonstrate this phenomenon, we review another classic social psychology experiment.

Stanley Milgram was a social psychology professor at Yale who was influenced by the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a Nazi war criminal. Eichmann's defense for the atrocities he committed was that he was "just following orders." Milgram (1963) wanted to test the validity of this defense, so he designed an experiment and initially recruited 40 men for his experiment. The volunteer participants were led to believe that they were participating in a study to improve learning and memory. The participants were told that they were to teach other students (learners) correct answers to a series of test items. The participants were shown how to use a device that they were told delivered electric shocks of different intensities to the learners. The participants were told to shock the learners if they gave a wrong answer to a test item—that the shock would help them to learn. The participants gave (or believed they gave) the learners shocks, which increased in 15-volt increments, all the way up to 450 volts. The participants did not know that the learners were confederates and that the confederates did not actually receive shocks.

In response to a string of incorrect answers from the learners, the participants obediently and repeatedly shocked them. The confederate learners cried out for help, begged the participant teachers to stop, and even complained of heart trouble. Yet, when the researcher told the participant-teachers to continue the shock, 65% of the participants continued the shock to the maximum voltage and to the point that the learner became unresponsive (**Figure 12.20**). What makes someone obey authority to the point of potentially causing serious harm to another person?



**Figure 12.20** The Milgram experiment showed the surprising degree to which people obey authority. Two out of three (65%) participants continued to administer shocks to an unresponsive learner.

Several variations of the original Milgram experiment were conducted to test the boundaries of obedience. When certain features of the situation were changed, participants were less likely to continue to deliver shocks (Milgram, 1965). For example, when the setting of the experiment was moved to an office building, the percentage of participants who delivered the highest shock dropped to 48%. When the learner was in the same room as the teacher, the highest shock rate dropped to 40%. When the teachers' and learners' hands were touching, the highest shock rate dropped to 30%. When the researcher gave the orders by phone, the rate dropped to 23%. These variations show that when the humanity of the person being shocked was increased, obedience decreased. Similarly, when the authority of the experimenter decreased, so did obedience.

This case is still very applicable today. What does a person do if an authority figure orders something done? What if the person believes it is incorrect, or worse, unethical? In a study by Martin and Bull (2008), midwives privately filled out a questionnaire regarding best practices and expectations in delivering a baby. Then, a more senior midwife and supervisor asked the junior midwives to do something they had previously stated they were opposed to. Most of the junior midwives were obedient to authority, going against their own beliefs.

## GROUPTHINK

When in group settings, we are often influenced by the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors around us. Whether it is due to normative or informational social influence, groups have power to influence individuals. Another phenomenon of group conformity is groupthink. **Groupthink** is the modification of the opinions of members of a group to align with what they believe is the group consensus (Janis, 1972). In group situations, the group often takes action that individuals would not perform outside the group setting because groups make more extreme decisions than individuals do. Moreover, groupthink

can hinder opposing trains of thought. This elimination of diverse opinions contributes to faulty decision by the group.

### DIG DEEPER

#### Groupthink in the U.S. Government

There have been several instances of groupthink in the U.S. government. One example occurred when the United States led a small coalition of nations to invade Iraq in March 2003. This invasion occurred because a small group of advisors and former President George W. Bush were convinced that Iraq represented a significant terrorism threat with a large stockpile of weapons of mass destruction at its disposal. Although some of these individuals may have had some doubts about the credibility of the information available to them at the time, in the end, the group arrived at a consensus that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and represented a significant threat to national security. It later came to light that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction, but not until the invasion was well underway. As a result, 6000 American soldiers were killed and many more civilians died. How did the Bush administration arrive at their conclusions? Here is a video of Colin Powell discussing the information he had, 10 years after his famous United Nations speech,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vU6KMYIDyWc> ("Colin Powell regrets," 2011).

Do you see evidence of groupthink?

Why does groupthink occur? There are several causes of groupthink, which makes it preventable. When the group is highly cohesive, or has a strong sense of connection, maintaining group harmony may become more important to the group than making sound decisions. If the group leader is directive and makes his opinions known, this may discourage group members from disagreeing with the leader. If the group is isolated from hearing alternative or new viewpoints, groupthink may be more likely. How do you know when groupthink is occurring?

There are several symptoms of groupthink including the following:

- perceiving the group as invulnerable or invincible—believing it can do no wrong
- believing the group is morally correct
- self-censorship by group members, such as withholding information to avoid disrupting the group consensus
- the quashing of dissenting group members' opinions
- the shielding of the group leader from dissenting views
- perceiving an illusion of unanimity among group members
- holding stereotypes or negative attitudes toward the out-group or others' with differing viewpoints (Janis, 1972)

Given the causes and symptoms of groupthink, how can it be avoided? There are several strategies that can improve group decision making including seeking outside opinions, voting in private, having the leader withhold position statements until all group members have voiced their views, conducting research on all viewpoints, weighing the costs and benefits of all options, and developing a contingency plan (Janis, 1972; Mitchell & Eckstein, 2009).

### GROUP POLARIZATION

Another phenomenon that occurs within group settings is group polarization. **Group polarization** (Teger & Pruitt, 1967) is the strengthening of an original group attitude after the discussion of views within a group. That is, if a group initially favors a viewpoint, after discussion the group consensus is likely a

stronger endorsement of the viewpoint. Conversely, if the group was initially opposed to a viewpoint, group discussion would likely lead to stronger opposition. Group polarization explains many actions taken by groups that would not be undertaken by individuals. Group polarization can be observed at political conventions, when platforms of the party are supported by individuals who, when not in a group, would decline to support them. A more everyday example is a group's discussion of how attractive someone is. Does your opinion change if you find someone attractive, but your friends do not agree? If your friends vociferously agree, might you then find this person even more attractive?

## Social Facilitation

Not all intergroup interactions lead to the negative outcomes we have described. Sometimes being in a group situation can improve performance. **Social facilitation** occurs when an individual performs better when an audience is watching than when the individual performs the behavior alone. This typically occurs when people are performing a task for which they are skilled. Can you think of an example in which having an audience could improve performance? One common example is sports. Skilled basketball players will be more likely to make a free throw basket when surrounded by a cheering audience than when playing alone in the gym (**Figure 12.21**). However, there are instances when even skilled athletes can have difficulty under pressure. For example, if an athlete is less skilled or nervous about making a free throw, having an audience may actually hinder rather than help. In sum, social facilitation is likely to occur for easy tasks, or tasks at which we are skilled, but worse performance may occur when performing in front of others, depending on the task.



**Figure 12.21** The attention of the crowd can motivate a skilled athlete. (credit: Tommy Gilligan/USMA)

## Social Loafing

Another way in which a group presence can affect our performance is social loafing. **Social loafing** is the exertion of less effort by a person working together with a group. Social loafing occurs when our individual performance cannot be evaluated separately from the group. Thus, group performance declines on easy tasks (Karau & Williams, 1993). Essentially individual group members loaf and let other group members pick up the slack. Because each individual's efforts cannot be evaluated, individuals become less motivated to perform well. For example, consider a group of people cooperating to clean litter from the roadside. Some people will exert a great amount of effort, while others will exert little effort. Yet the entire job gets done, and it may not be obvious who worked hard and who didn't.

As a college student you may have experienced social loafing while working on a group project. Have you ever had to contribute more than your fair share because your fellow group members weren't putting in the work? This may happen when a professor assigns a group grade instead of individual grades. If

the professor doesn't know how much effort each student contributed to a project, some students may be inclined to let more conscientious students do more of the work. The chance of social loafing in student work groups increases as the size of the group increases (Shepperd & Taylor, 1999).

Interestingly, the opposite of social loafing occurs when the task is complex and difficult (Bond & Titus, 1983; Geen, 1989). Remember the previous discussion of choking under pressure? This happens when you perform a difficult task and your individual performance can be evaluated. In a group setting, such as the student work group, if your individual performance cannot be evaluated, there is less pressure for you to do well, and thus less anxiety or physiological arousal (Latané, Williams, & Harkens, 1979). This puts you in a relaxed state in which you can perform your best, if you choose (Zajonc, 1965). If the task is a difficult one, many people feel motivated and believe that their group needs their input to do well on a challenging project (Jackson & Williams, 1985). Given what you learned about social loafing, what advice would you give a new professor about how to design group projects? If you suggested that individuals' efforts should not be evaluated, to prevent the anxiety of choking under pressure, but that the task must be challenging, you have a good understanding of the concepts discussed in this section. Alternatively, you can suggest that individuals' efforts should be evaluated, but the task should be easy so as to facilitate performance. Good luck trying to convince your professor to only assign easy projects.

**Table 12.2** summarizes the types of social influence you have learned about in this chapter.

**Table 12.2 Types of Social Influence**

Type of Social Influence	Description
Conformity	Changing your behavior to go along with the group even if you do not agree with the group
Compliance	Going along with a request or demand
Normative social influence	Conformity to a group norm to fit in, feel good, and be accepted by the group
Informational social influence	Conformity to a group norm prompted by the belief that the group is competent and has the correct information
Obedience	Changing your behavior to please an authority figure or to avoid aversive consequences
Groupthink	Group members modify their opinions to match what they believe is the group consensus
Group polarization	Strengthening of the original group attitude after discussing views within a group
Social facilitation	Improved performance when an audience is watching versus when the individual performs the behavior alone
Social loafing	Exertion of less effort by a person working in a group because individual performance cannot be evaluated separately from the group, thus causing performance decline on easy tasks

## 12.5 Prejudice and Discrimination

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define and distinguish among prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination
- Provide examples of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination
- Explain why prejudice and discrimination exist

Human conflict can result in crime, war, and mass murder, such as genocide. Prejudice and discrimination often are root causes of human conflict, which explains how strangers come to hate one another to the extreme of causing others harm. Prejudice and discrimination affect everyone. In this section we will examine the definitions of prejudice and discrimination, examples of these concepts, and causes of these biases.



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Figure 12.22** Prejudice and discrimination occur across the globe. (a) A 1939 sign in German-occupied Poland warns “No Entrance for Poles!” (b) An African-American male drinks from a designated “colored” water fountain in Oklahoma in 1939 during the era of racial segregation as a practice of discrimination. (c) A member of the Westboro Baptist Church, widely identified as a hate group, engages in discrimination based on religion and sexual orientation. (credit b: modification of work by United States Farm Security Administration; credit c: modification of work by “JCWilmore”/Wikimedia Commons)

### UNDERSTANDING PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

As we discussed in the opening story of Trayvon Martin, humans are very diverse and although we share many similarities, we also have many differences. The social groups we belong to help form our identities (Tajfel, 1974). These differences may be difficult for some people to reconcile, which may lead to prejudice toward people who are different. **Prejudice** is a negative attitude and feeling toward an individual based solely on one’s membership in a particular social group (Allport, 1954; Brown, 2010). Prejudice is common against people who are members of an unfamiliar cultural group. Thus, certain types of education, contact, interactions, and building relationships with members of different cultural groups can reduce the tendency toward prejudice. In fact, simply imagining interacting with members of different cultural groups might affect prejudice. Indeed, when experimental participants were asked to imagine themselves positively interacting with someone from a different group, this led to an increased positive attitude toward the other group and an increase in positive traits associated with the other group. Furthermore, imagined social interaction can reduce anxiety associated with inter-group interactions (Crisp & Turner, 2009). What are some examples of social groups that you belong to that contribute to your identity? Social groups can include gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, religion, sexual orientation, profession, and many more. And, as is true for social roles, you can simultaneously be a member of more than one social group. An example of prejudice is having a negative attitude toward people who are not born in the United States. Although people holding this prejudiced attitude do not know all people who were not born in the United States, they dislike them due to their status as foreigners.

Can you think of a prejudiced attitude you have held toward a group of people? How did your prejudice

develop? Prejudice often begins in the form of a **stereotype**—that is, a specific belief or assumption about individuals based solely on their membership in a group, regardless of their individual characteristics. Stereotypes become overgeneralized and applied to all members of a group. For example, someone holding prejudiced attitudes toward older adults, may believe that older adults are slow and incompetent (Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2005; Nelson, 2004). We cannot possibly know each individual person of advanced age to know that all older adults are slow and incompetent. Therefore, this negative belief is overgeneralized to all members of the group, even though many of the individual group members may in fact be spry and intelligent.

Another example of a well-known stereotype involves beliefs about racial differences among athletes. As Hodge, Burden, Robinson, and Bennett (2008) point out, Black male athletes are often believed to be more athletic, yet less intelligent, than their White male counterparts. These beliefs persist despite a number of high profile examples to the contrary. Sadly, such beliefs often influence how these athletes are treated by others and how they view themselves and their own capabilities. Whether or not you agree with a stereotype, stereotypes are generally well-known within in a given culture (Devine, 1989).

Sometimes people will act on their prejudiced attitudes toward a group of people, and this behavior is known as discrimination. **Discrimination** is negative action toward an individual as a result of one's membership in a particular group (Allport, 1954; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). As a result of holding negative beliefs (stereotypes) and negative attitudes (prejudice) about a particular group, people often treat the target of prejudice poorly, such as excluding older adults from their circle of friends. **Table 12.3** summarizes the characteristics of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Have you ever been the target of discrimination? If so, how did this negative treatment make you feel?

**Table 12.3 Connecting Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination**

Item	Function	Connection	Example
Stereotype	Cognitive; thoughts about people	Overgeneralized beliefs about people may lead to prejudice.	"Yankees fans are arrogant and obnoxious."
Prejudice	Affective; feelings about people, both positive and negative	Feelings may influence treatment of others, leading to discrimination.	"I hate Yankees fans; they make me angry."
Discrimination	Behavior; positive or negative treatment of others	Holding stereotypes and harboring prejudice may lead to excluding, avoiding, and biased treatment of group members.	"I would never hire nor become friends with a person if I knew he or she were a Yankees fan."

So far, we've discussed stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination as negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors because these are typically the most problematic. However, it is important to also point out that people can hold positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward individuals based on group membership; for example, they would show preferential treatment for people who are like themselves—that is, who share the same gender, race, or favorite sports team.

## LINK TO LEARNING



This [video](http://openstaxcollege.org/l/racismexp) (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/racismexp>) demonstrates the concepts of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. In the video, a social experiment is conducted in a park where three people try to steal a bike out in the open. The race and gender of the thief is varied: a White male teenager, a Black male teenager, and a White female. Does anyone try to stop them? The treatment of the teenagers in the video demonstrates the concept of racism.

## TYPES OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

When we meet strangers we automatically process three pieces of information about them: their race, gender, and age (Ito & Urland, 2003). Why are these aspects of an unfamiliar person so important? Why don't we instead notice whether their eyes are friendly, whether they are smiling, their height, the type of clothes they are wearing? Although these secondary characteristics are important in forming a first impression of a stranger, the social categories of race, gender, and age provide a wealth of information about an individual. This information, however, often is based on stereotypes. We may have different expectations of strangers depending on their race, gender, and age. What stereotypes and prejudices do you hold about people who are from a race, gender, and age group different from your own?

### Racism

**Racism** is prejudice and discrimination against an individual based solely on one's membership in a specific racial group (such as toward African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, European Americans). What are some stereotypes of various racial or ethnic groups? Research suggests cultural stereotypes for Asian Americans include cold, sly, and intelligent; for Latinos, cold and unintelligent; for European Americans, cold and intelligent; and for African Americans, aggressive, athletic, and more likely to be law breakers (Devine & Elliot, 1995; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000; Dixon & Linz, 2000).

Racism exists for many racial and ethnic groups. For example, Blacks are significantly more likely to have their vehicles searched during traffic stops than Whites, particularly when Blacks are driving in predominately White neighborhoods, (a phenomenon often termed "DWB," or "driving while Black.") (Rojek, Rosenfeld, & Decker, 2012)

Mexican Americans and other Latino groups also are targets of racism from the police and other members of the community. For example, when purchasing items with a personal check, Latino shoppers are more likely than White shoppers to be asked to show formal identification (Dovidio et al., 2010).

In one case of alleged harassment by the police, several East Haven, Connecticut, police officers were arrested on federal charges due to reportedly continued harassment and brutalization of Latinos. When the accusations came out, the mayor of East Haven was asked, "What are you doing for the Latino community today?" The Mayor responded, "I might have tacos when I go home, I'm not quite sure yet" ("East Haven Mayor," 2012) This statement undermines the important issue of racial profiling and police harassment of Latinos, while belittling Latino culture by emphasizing an interest in a food product stereotypically associated with Latinos.

Racism is prevalent toward many other groups in the United States including Native Americans, Arab Americans, Jewish Americans, and Asian Americans. Have you witnessed racism toward any of these racial or ethnic groups? Are you aware of racism in your community?

One reason modern forms of racism, and prejudice in general, are hard to detect is related to the dual attitudes model (Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). Humans have two forms of attitudes: explicit

attitudes, which are conscious and controllable, and implicit attitudes, which are unconscious and uncontrollable (Devine, 1989; Olson & Fazio, 2003). Because holding egalitarian views is socially desirable (Plant & Devine, 1998), most people do not show extreme racial bias or other prejudices on measures of their explicit attitudes. However, measures of implicit attitudes often show evidence of mild to strong racial bias or other prejudices (Greenwald, McGee, & Schwartz, 1998; Olson & Fazio, 2003).

## Sexism

**Sexism** is prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based on their sex. Typically, sexism takes the form of men holding biases against women, but either sex can show sexism toward their own or their opposite sex. Like racism, sexism may be subtle and difficult to detect. Common forms of sexism in modern society include gender role expectations, such as expecting women to be the caretakers of the household. Sexism also includes people's expectations for how members of a gender group should behave. For example, women are expected to be friendly, passive, and nurturing, and when women behave in an unfriendly, assertive, or neglectful manner they often are disliked for violating their gender role (Rudman, 1998). Research by Laurie Rudman (1998) finds that when female job applicants self-promote, they are likely to be viewed as competent, but they may be disliked and are less likely to be hired because they violated gender expectations for modesty. Sexism can exist on a societal level such as in hiring, employment opportunities, and education. Women are less likely to be hired or promoted in male-dominated professions such as engineering, aviation, and construction (**Figure 12.23**) (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 2010; Ceci & Williams, 2011). Have you ever experienced or witnessed sexism? Think about your family members' jobs or careers. Why do you think there are differences in the jobs women and men have, such as more women nurses but more male surgeons (Betz, 2008)?



**Figure 12.23** Women now have many jobs previously closed to them, though they still face challenges in male-dominated occupations. (credit: "Alex"/Flickr)

## Ageism

People often form judgments and hold expectations about people based on their age. These judgments and expectations can lead to **ageism**, or prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their age. Typically, ageism occurs against older adults, but ageism also can occur toward younger adults. Think of expectations you hold for older adults. How could someone's expectations influence the feelings they hold toward individuals from older age groups? Ageism is widespread in U.S. culture (Nosek, 2005), and a common ageist attitude toward older adults is that they are incompetent, physically weak, and slow (Greenberg, Schimel, & Martens, 2002) and some people consider older adults less attractive. Some cultures, however, including some Asian, Latino, and African American cultures, both outside and within the United States afford older adults respect and honor.

Ageism can also occur toward younger adults. What expectations do you hold toward younger people? Does society expect younger adults to be immature and irresponsible? How might these two forms of ageism affect a younger and older adult who are applying for a sales clerk position?

## Homophobia

Another form of prejudice is **homophobia**: prejudice and discrimination of individuals based solely on their sexual orientation. Like ageism, homophobia is a widespread prejudice in U.S. society that is tolerated by many people (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Nosek, 2005). Negative feelings often result in discrimination, such as the exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people from social groups and the avoidance of LGBT neighbors and co-workers. This discrimination also extends to employers deliberately declining to hire qualified LGBT job applicants. Have you experienced or witnessed homophobia? If so, what stereotypes, prejudiced attitudes, and discrimination were evident?

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#### Research into Homophobia

Some people are quite passionate in their hatred for nonheterosexuals in our society. In some cases, people have been tortured and/or murdered simply because they were not heterosexual. This passionate response has led some researchers to question what motives might exist for homophobic people. Adams, Wright, & Lohr (1996) conducted a study investigating this issue and their results were quite an eye-opener.

In this experiment, male college students were given a scale that assessed how homophobic they were; those with extreme scores were recruited to participate in the experiment. In the end, 64 men agreed to participate and were split into 2 groups: homophobic men and nonhomophobic men. Both groups of men were fitted with a penile plethysmograph, an instrument that measures changes in blood flow to the penis and serves as an objective measurement of sexual arousal.

All men were shown segments of sexually explicit videos. One of these videos involved a sexual interaction between a man and a woman (heterosexual clip). One video displayed two females engaged in a sexual interaction (homosexual female clip), and the final video displayed two men engaged in a sexual interaction (homosexual male clip). Changes in penile tumescence were recorded during all three clips, and a subjective measurement of sexual arousal was also obtained. While both groups of men became sexually aroused to the heterosexual and female homosexual video clips, only those men who were identified as homophobic showed sexual arousal to the homosexual male video clip. While all men reported that their erections indicated arousal for the heterosexual and female homosexual clips, the homophobic men indicated that they were not sexually aroused (despite their erections) to the male homosexual clips. Adams et al. (1996) suggest that these findings may indicate that homophobia is related to homosexual arousal that the homophobic individuals either deny or are unaware.

## WHY DO PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION EXIST?

Prejudice and discrimination persist in society due to social learning and conformity to social norms. Children learn prejudiced attitudes and beliefs from society: their parents, teachers, friends, the media, and other sources of socialization, such as Facebook (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). If certain types of prejudice and discrimination are acceptable in a society, there may be normative pressures to conform and share those prejudiced beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, public and private schools are still somewhat segregated by social class. Historically, only children from wealthy families could afford to attend private schools, whereas children from middle- and low-income families typically attended public schools. If a child from a low-income family received a merit scholarship to attend a private school, how might the child be treated by classmates? Can you recall a time when you held prejudiced attitudes or beliefs or acted in a discriminatory manner because your group of friends expected you to?

## STEREOTYPES AND SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

When we hold a stereotype about a person, we have expectations that he or she will fulfill that stereotype. A **self-fulfilling prophecy** is an expectation held by a person that alters his or her behavior in a way

that tends to make it true. When we hold stereotypes about a person, we tend to treat the person according to our expectations. This treatment can influence the person to act according to our stereotypic expectations, thus confirming our stereotypic beliefs. Research by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that disadvantaged students whose teachers expected them to perform well had higher grades than disadvantaged students whose teachers expected them to do poorly.

Consider this example of cause and effect in a self-fulfilling prophecy: If an employer expects an openly gay male job applicant to be incompetent, the potential employer might treat the applicant negatively during the interview by engaging in less conversation, making little eye contact, and generally behaving coldly toward the applicant (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). In turn, the job applicant will perceive that the potential employer dislikes him, and he will respond by giving shorter responses to interview questions, making less eye contact, and generally disengaging from the interview. After the interview, the employer will reflect on the applicant's behavior, which seemed cold and distant, and the employer will conclude, based on the applicant's poor performance during the interview, that the applicant was in fact incompetent. Thus, the employer's stereotype—gay men are incompetent and do not make good employees—is reinforced. Do you think this job applicant is likely to be hired? Treating individuals according to stereotypic beliefs can lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Another dynamic that can reinforce stereotypes is confirmation bias. When interacting with the target of our prejudice, we tend to pay attention to information that is consistent with our stereotypic expectations and ignore information that is inconsistent with our expectations. In this process, known as **confirmation bias**, we seek out information that supports our stereotypes and ignore information that is inconsistent with our stereotypes (Wason & Johnson-Laird, 1972). In the job interview example, the employer may not have noticed that the job applicant was friendly and engaging, and that he provided competent responses to the interview questions in the beginning of the interview. Instead, the employer focused on the job applicant's performance in the later part of the interview, after the applicant changed his demeanor and behavior to match the interviewer's negative treatment.

Have you ever fallen prey to the self-fulfilling prophecy or confirmation bias, either as the source or target of such bias? How might we stop the cycle of the self-fulfilling prophecy? Social class stereotypes of individuals tend to arise when information about the individual is ambiguous. If information is unambiguous, stereotypes do not tend to arise (Baron et al., 1995).

## IN-GROUPS AND OUT-GROUPS

As discussed previously in this section, we all belong to a gender, race, age, and social economic group. These groups provide a powerful source of our identity and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These groups serve as our in-groups. An **in-group** is a group that we identify with or see ourselves as belonging to. A group that we don't belong to, or an **out-group**, is a group that we view as fundamentally different from us. For example, if you are female, your gender in-group includes all females, and your gender out-group includes all males (**Figure 12.24**). People often view gender groups as being fundamentally different from each other in personality traits, characteristics, social roles, and interests. Because we often feel a strong sense of belonging and emotional connection to our in-groups, we develop in-group bias: a preference for our own group over other groups. This **in-group bias** can result in prejudice and discrimination because the out-group is perceived as different and is less preferred than our in-group.



**Figure 12.24** These children are very young, but they are already aware of their gender in-group and out-group.  
(credit: modification of work by Simone Ramella)

Despite the group dynamics that seem only to push groups toward conflict, there are forces that promote reconciliation between groups: the expression of empathy, of acknowledgment of past suffering on both sides, and the halt of destructive behaviors.

One function of prejudice is to help us feel good about ourselves and maintain a positive self-concept. This need to feel good about ourselves extends to our in-groups: We want to feel good and protect our in-groups. We seek to resolve threats individually and at the in-group level. This often happens by blaming an out-group for the problem. **Scapegoating** is the act of blaming an out-group when the in-group experiences frustration or is blocked from obtaining a goal (Allport, 1954).

## 12.6 Aggression

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define aggression
  - Define cyberbullying
  - Describe the bystander effect
- 

Throughout this chapter we have discussed how people interact and influence one another's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in both positive and negative ways. People can work together to achieve great things, such as helping each other in emergencies: recall the heroism displayed during the 9/11 terrorist attacks. People also can do great harm to one another, such as conforming to group norms that are immoral and obeying authority to the point of murder: consider the mass conformity of Nazis during WWII. In this section we will discuss a negative side of human behavior—aggression.

### AGGRESSION

Humans engage in **aggression** when they seek to cause harm or pain to another person. Aggression takes two forms depending on one's motives: hostile or instrumental. **Hostile aggression** is motivated by feelings of anger with intent to cause pain; a fight in a bar with a stranger is an example of hostile aggression. In contrast, **instrumental aggression** is motivated by achieving a goal and does not necessarily involve intent to cause pain (Berkowitz, 1993); a contract killer who murders for hire displays instrumental aggression.

There are many different theories as to why aggression exists. Some researchers argue that aggression serves an evolutionary function (Buss, 2004). Men are more likely than women to show aggression (Wilson & Daly, 1985). From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, human male aggression, like that in nonhuman primates, likely serves to display dominance over other males, both to protect a mate

and to perpetuate the male's genes (**Figure 12.25**). Sexual jealousy is part of male aggression; males endeavor to make sure their mates are not copulating with other males, thus ensuring their own paternity of the female's offspring. Although aggression provides an obvious evolutionary advantage for men, women also engage in aggression. Women typically display instrumental forms of aggression, with their aggression serving as a means to an end (Dodge & Schwartz, 1997). For example, women may express their aggression covertly, for example, by communication that impairs the social standing of another person. Another theory that explains one of the functions of human aggression is frustration aggression theory (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). This theory states that when humans are prevented from achieving an important goal, they become frustrated and aggressive.



**Figure 12.25** Human males and nonhuman male primates endeavor to gain and display dominance over other males, as demonstrated in the behavior of these monkeys. (credit: "Arcadiuš"/Flickr)

## Bullying

A modern form of aggression is bullying. As you learn in your study of child development, socializing and playing with other children is beneficial for children's psychological development. However, as you may have experienced as a child, not all play behavior has positive outcomes. Some children are aggressive and want to play roughly. Other children are selfish and do not want to share toys. One form of negative social interactions among children that has become a national concern is bullying. **Bullying** is repeated negative treatment of another person, often an adolescent, over time (Olweus, 1993). A one-time incident in which one child hits another child on the playground would not be considered bullying: Bullying is repeated behavior. The negative treatment typical in bullying is the attempt to inflict harm, injury, or humiliation, and bullying can include physical or verbal attacks. However, bullying doesn't have to be physical or verbal, it can be psychological. Research finds gender differences in how girls and boys bully others (American Psychological Association, 2010; Olweus, 1993). Boys tend to engage in direct, physical aggression such as physically harming others. Girls tend to engage in indirect, social forms of aggression such as spreading rumors, ignoring, or socially isolating others. Based on what you have learned about child development and social roles, why do you think boys and girls display different types of bullying behavior?

Bullying involves three parties: the bully, the victim, and witnesses or bystanders. The act of bullying involves an imbalance of power with the bully holding more power—physically, emotionally, and/or socially over the victim. The experience of bullying can be positive for the bully, who may enjoy a boost to self-esteem. However, there are several negative consequences of bullying for the victim, and also for the bystanders. How do you think bullying negatively impacts adolescents? Being the victim of bullying is associated with decreased mental health, including experiencing anxiety and depression (APA, 2010). Victims of bullying may underperform in schoolwork (Bowen, 2011). Bullying also can result in the victim committing suicide (APA, 2010). How might bullying negatively affect witnesses?

Although there is not one single personality profile for who becomes a bully and who becomes a victim of bullying (APA, 2010), researchers have identified some patterns in children who are at a greater risk of being bullied (Olweus, 1993):

- Children who are emotionally reactive are at a greater risk for being bullied. Bullies may be attracted to children who get upset easily because the bully can quickly get an emotional reaction

from them.

- Children who are different from others are likely to be targeted for bullying. Children who are overweight, cognitively impaired, or racially or ethnically different from their peer group may be at higher risk.
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teens are at very high risk of being bullied and hurt due to their sexual orientation.

## Cyberbullying

With the rapid growth of technology, and widely available mobile technology and social networking media, a new form of bullying has emerged: cyberbullying (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). **Cyberbullying**, like bullying, is repeated behavior that is intended to cause psychological or emotional harm to another person. What is unique about cyberbullying is that it is typically covert, concealed, done in private, and the bully can remain anonymous. This anonymity gives the bully power, and the victim may feel helpless, unable to escape the harassment, and unable to retaliate (Spears, Slee, Owens, & Johnson, 2009).

Cyberbullying can take many forms, including harassing a victim by spreading rumors, creating a website defaming the victim, and ignoring, insulting, laughing at, or teasing the victim (Spears et al., 2009). In cyberbullying, it is more common for girls to be the bullies and victims because cyberbullying is nonphysical and is a less direct form of bullying (**Figure 12.26**) (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). Interestingly, girls who become cyberbullies often have been the victims of cyberbullying at one time (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). The effects of cyberbullying are just as harmful as traditional bullying and include the victim feeling frustration, anger, sadness, helplessness, powerlessness, and fear. Victims will also experience lower self-esteem (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Spears et al., 2009). Furthermore, recent research suggests that both cyberbullying victims and perpetrators are more likely to experience suicidal ideation, and they are more likely to attempt suicide than individuals who have no experience with cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). What features of technology make cyberbullying easier and perhaps more accessible to young adults? What can parents, teachers, and social networking websites, like Facebook, do to prevent cyberbullying?



**Figure 12.26** Because cyberbullying is not physical in nature, cyberbullies and their victims are most often female; however, there is much evidence that male homosexuals are frequently victims of cyberbullying as well (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011). (credit: Steven Depolo)

## THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

The discussion of bullying highlights the problem of witnesses not intervening to help a victim. This is a common occurrence, as the following well-publicized event demonstrates. In 1964, in Queens, New York, a 19-year-old woman named Kitty Genovese was attacked by a person with a knife near the back entrance to her apartment building and again in the hallway inside her apartment building. When the attack occurred, she screamed for help numerous times and eventually died from her stab wounds. This story became famous because reportedly numerous residents in the apartment building heard her cries for help and did nothing—neither helping her nor summoning the police—though these facts have been disputed.

Based on this case, researchers Latané and Darley (1968) described a phenomenon called the bystander effect. The **bystander effect** is a phenomenon in which a witness or bystander does not volunteer to help a victim or person in distress. Instead, they just watch what is happening. Social psychologists hold that we make these decisions based on the social situation, not our own personality variables. Why do you think the bystanders didn't help Genovese? What are the benefits to helping her? What are the risks? It is very likely you listed more costs than benefits to helping. In this situation, bystanders likely feared for their own lives—if they went to her aid the attacker might harm them. However, how difficult would it have been to make a phone call to the police from the safety of their apartments? Why do you think no one helped in any way? Social psychologists claim that diffusion of responsibility is the likely explanation. **Diffusion of responsibility** is the tendency for no one in a group to help because the responsibility to help is spread throughout the group (Bandura, 1999). Because there were many witnesses to the attack on Genovese, as evidenced by the number of lit apartment windows in the building, individuals assumed someone else must have already called the police. The responsibility to call the police was diffused across the number of witnesses to the crime. Have you ever passed an accident on the freeway and assumed that a victim or certainly another motorist has already reported the accident? In general, the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely any one person will help.

## 12.7 Prosocial Behavior

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### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe altruism
  - Describe conditions that influence the formation of relationships
  - Identify what attracts people to each other
  - Describe the triangular theory of love
  - Explain social exchange theory in relationships
- 

You've learned about many of the negative behaviors of social psychology, but the field also studies many positive social interactions and behaviors. What makes people like each other? With whom are we friends? Whom do we date? Researchers have documented several features of the situation that influence whether we form relationships with others. There are also universal traits that humans find attractive in others. In this section we discuss conditions that make forming relationships more likely, what we look for in friendships and romantic relationships, the different types of love, and a theory explaining how our relationships are formed, maintained, and terminated.

### PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND ALTRUISM

Do you voluntarily help others? Voluntary behavior with the intent to help other people is called **prosocial behavior**. Why do people help other people? Is personal benefit such as feeling good about oneself the only reason people help one another? Research suggests there are many other reasons. **Altruism** is people's desire to help others even if the costs outweigh the benefits of helping. In fact, people acting in altruistic ways may disregard the personal costs associated with helping (**Figure 12.27**). For example, news accounts of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York reported an employee in the first tower helped his co-workers make it to the exit stairwell. After helping a co-worker to safety he went back in the burning building to help additional co-workers. In this case the costs of helping were great, and the hero lost his life in the destruction (Stewart, 2002).



**Figure 12.27** The events of 9/11 unleashed an enormous show of altruism and heroism on the parts of first responders and many ordinary people. (credit: Don Halasy)

Some researchers suggest that altruism operates on empathy. **Empathy** is the capacity to understand another person's perspective, to feel what he or she feels. An empathetic person makes an emotional connection with others and feels compelled to help (Batson, 1991). Other researchers argue that altruism is a form of selfless helping that is not motivated by benefits or feeling good about oneself. Certainly, after helping, people feel good about themselves, but some researchers argue that this is a consequence of altruism, not a cause. Other researchers argue that helping is always self-serving because our egos are involved, and we receive benefits from helping (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg 1997). It is challenging to determine experimentally the true motivation for helping, whether it is largely self-serving (egoism) or selfless (altruism). Thus, a debate on whether pure altruism exists continues.

### LINK TO LEARNING



See this excerpt from the popular TV series **Friends** episode (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/friendsclip>) for a discussion of the egoism versus altruism debate.

## FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

What do you think is the single most influential factor in determining with whom you become friends and whom you form romantic relationships? You might be surprised to learn that the answer is simple: the people with whom you have the most contact. This most important factor is proximity. You are more likely to be friends with people you have regular contact with. For example, there are decades of research that shows that you are more likely to become friends with people who live in your dorm, your apartment building, or your immediate neighborhood than with people who live farther away (Festinger, Schachler, & Back, 1950). It is simply easier to form relationships with people you see often because you have the opportunity to get to know them.

Similarity is another factor that influences who we form relationships with. We are more likely to become friends or lovers with someone who is similar to us in background, attitudes, and lifestyle. In fact, there is no evidence that opposites attract. Rather, we are attracted to people who are most like us (**Figure 12.28**)

(McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Why do you think we are attracted to people who are similar to us? Sharing things in common will certainly make it easy to get along with others and form connections. When you and another person share similar music taste, hobbies, food preferences, and so on, deciding what to do with your time together might be easy. **Homophily** is the tendency for people to form social networks, including friendships, marriage, business relationships, and many other types of relationships, with others who are similar (McPherson et al., 2001).



**Figure 12.28** People tend to be attracted to similar people. Many couples share a cultural background. This can be quite obvious in a ceremony such as a wedding, and more subtle (but no less significant) in the day-to-day workings of a relationship. (credit: modification of work by Shiraz Chanawala)

But, homophily limits our exposure to diversity (McPherson et al., 2001). By forming relationships only with people who are similar to us, we will have homogenous groups and will not be exposed to different points of view. In other words, because we are likely to spend time with those who are most like ourselves, we will have limited exposure to those who are different than ourselves, including people of different races, ethnicities, social-economic status, and life situations.

Once we form relationships with people, we desire reciprocity. **Reciprocity** is the give and take in relationships. We contribute to relationships, but we expect to receive benefits as well. That is, we want our relationships to be a two way street. We are more likely to like and engage with people who like us back. Self-disclosure is part of the two way street. **Self-disclosure** is the sharing of personal information (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). We form more intimate connections with people with whom we disclose important information about ourselves. Indeed, self-disclosure is a characteristic of healthy intimate relationships, as long as the information disclosed is consistent with our own views (Cozby, 1973).

## ATTRACTION

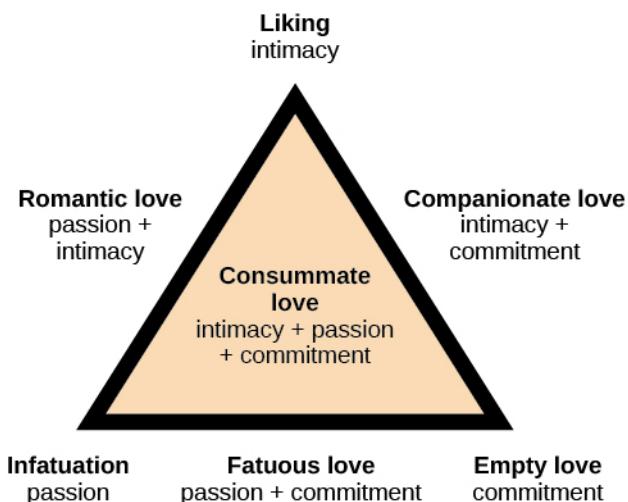
We have discussed how proximity and similarity lead to the formation of relationships, and that reciprocity and self-disclosure are important for relationship maintenance. But, what features of a person do we find attractive? We don't form relationships with everyone that lives or works near us, so how is it that we decide which specific individuals we will select as friends and lovers?

Researchers have documented several characteristics in men and women that humans find attractive. First we look for friends and lovers who are physically attractive. People differ in what they consider attractive, and attractiveness is culturally influenced. Research, however, suggests that some universally attractive features in women include large eyes, high cheekbones, a narrow jaw line, a slender build (Buss, 1989), and a lower waist-to-hip ratio (Singh, 1993). For men, attractive traits include being tall, having broad shoulders, and a narrow waist (Buss, 1989). Both men and women with high levels of facial and body symmetry are generally considered more attractive than asymmetric individuals (Fink, Neave, Manning, & Grammer, 2006; Penton-Voak et al., 2001; Rikowski & Grammer, 1999). Social traits that people find attractive in potential female mates include warmth, affection, and social skills; in males, the attractive traits include achievement, leadership qualities, and job skills (Regan & Berscheid, 1997).

Although humans want mates who are physically attractive, this does not mean that we look for the most attractive person possible. In fact, this observation has led some to propose what is known as the matching hypothesis which asserts that people tend to pick someone they view as their equal in physical attractiveness and social desirability (Taylor, Fiore, Mendelsohn, & Cheshire, 2011). For example, you and most people you know likely would say that a very attractive movie star is out of your league. So, even if you had proximity to that person, you likely would not ask them out on a date because you believe you likely would be rejected. People weigh a potential partner's attractiveness against the likelihood of success with that person. If you think you are particularly unattractive (even if you are not), you likely will seek partners that are fairly unattractive (that is, unattractive in physical appearance or in behavior).

## STERNBERG'S TRIANGULAR THEORY OF LOVE

We typically love the people with whom we form relationships, but the type of love we have for our family, friends, and lovers differs. Robert Sternberg (1986) proposed that there are three components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment. These three components form a triangle that defines multiple types of love: this is known as Sternberg's **triangular theory of love** (Figure 12.29). Intimacy is the sharing of details and intimate thoughts and emotions. Passion is the physical attraction—the flame in the fire. Commitment is standing by the person—the “in sickness and health” part of the relationship.



**Figure 12.29** According to Sternberg's triangular theory of love, seven types of love can be described from combinations of three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. (credit: modification of work by "Lnesa"/Wikimedia Commons)

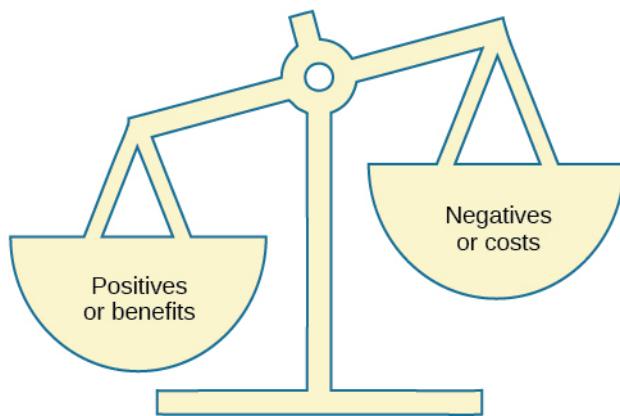
Sternberg (1986) states that a healthy relationship will have all three components of love—intimacy, passion, and commitment—which is described as **consummate love** (Figure 12.30). However, different aspects of love might be more prevalent at different life stages. Other forms of love include liking, which is defined as having intimacy but no passion or commitment. Infatuation is the presence of passion without intimacy or commitment. Empty love is having commitment without intimacy or passion. **Companionate love**, which is characteristic of close friendships and family relationships, consists of intimacy and commitment but no passion. **Romantic love** is defined by having passion and intimacy, but no commitment. Finally, fatuous love is defined by having passion and commitment, but no intimacy, such as a long term sexual love affair. Can you describe other examples of relationships that fit these different types of love?



**Figure 12.30** According to Sternberg, consummate love describes a healthy relationship containing intimacy, passion, and commitment. (credit: Kerry Ceszyk)

## SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

We have discussed why we form relationships, what attracts us to others, and different types of love. But what determines whether we are satisfied with and stay in a relationship? One theory that provides an explanation is social exchange theory. According to **social exchange theory**, we act as naïve economists in keeping a tally of the ratio of costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship with others ([Figure 12.31](#)) (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).



**Figure 12.31** Acting like naïve economists, people may keep track of the costs and benefits of maintaining a relationship. Typically, only those relationships in which the benefits outweigh the costs will be maintained.

People are motivated to maximize the benefits of social exchanges, or relationships, and minimize the costs. People prefer to have more benefits than costs, or to have nearly equal costs and benefits, but most people are dissatisfied if their social exchanges create more costs than benefits. Let's discuss an example. If you have ever decided to commit to a romantic relationship, you probably considered the advantages and disadvantages of your decision. What are the benefits of being in a committed romantic relationship? You may have considered having companionship, intimacy, and passion, but also being comfortable with a person you know well. What are the costs of being in a committed romantic relationship? You may think that over time boredom from being with only one person may set in; moreover, it may be expensive to share activities such as attending movies and going to dinner. However, the benefits of dating your romantic partner presumably outweigh the costs, or you wouldn't continue the relationship.

## Key Terms

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**actor-observer bias** phenomenon of explaining other people's behaviors as due to internal factors and our own behaviors as due to situational forces

**ageism** prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their age

**aggression** seeking to cause harm or pain to another person

**altruism** humans' desire to help others even if the costs outweigh the benefits of helping

**Asch effect** group majority influences an individual's judgment, even when that judgment is inaccurate

**attitude** evaluations of or feelings toward a person, idea, or object that are typically positive or negative

**attribution** explanation for the behavior of other people

**bullying** a person, often an adolescent, being treated negatively repeatedly and over time

**bystander effect** situation in which a witness or bystander does not volunteer to help a victim or person in distress

**central route persuasion** logic-driven arguments using data and facts to convince people of an argument's worthiness

**cognitive dissonance** psychological discomfort that arises from a conflict in a person's behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs that runs counter to one's positive self-perception

**collectivist culture** culture that focuses on communal relationships with others such as family, friends, and community

**companionate love** type of love consisting of intimacy and commitment, but not passion; associated with close friendships and family relationships

**confederate** person who works for a researcher and is aware of the experiment, but who acts as a participant; used to manipulate social situations as part of the research design

**confirmation bias** seeking out information that supports our stereotypes while ignoring information that is inconsistent with our stereotypes

**conformity** when individuals change their behavior to go along with the group even if they do not agree with the group

**consummate love** type of love occurring when intimacy, passion, and commitment are all present

**cyberbullying** repeated behavior that is intended to cause psychological or emotional harm to another person and that takes place online

**diffusion of responsibility** tendency for no one in a group to help because the responsibility to help is spread throughout the group

**discrimination** negative actions toward individuals as a result of their membership in a particular group

**dispositionism** describes a perspective common to personality psychologists, which asserts that our behavior is determined by internal factors, such as personality traits and temperament

**empathy** capacity to understand another person's perspective—to feel what he or she feels

**foot-in-the-door technique** persuasion of one person by another person, encouraging a person to agree to a small favor, or to buy a small item, only to later request a larger favor or purchase of a larger item

**fundamental attribution error** tendency to overemphasize internal factors as attributions for behavior and underestimate the power of the situation

**group polarization** strengthening of the original group attitude after discussing views within the group

**groupthink** group members modify their opinions to match what they believe is the group consensus

**homophily** tendency for people to form social networks, including friendships, marriage, business relationships, and many other types of relationships, with others who are similar

**homophobia** prejudice and discrimination against individuals based solely on their sexual orientation

**hostile aggression** aggression motivated by feelings of anger with intent to cause pain

**in-group** group that we identify with or see ourselves as belonging to

**in-group bias** preference for our own group over other groups

**individualistic culture** culture that focuses on individual achievement and autonomy

**informational social influence** conformity to a group norm prompted by the belief that the group is competent and has the correct information

**instrumental aggression** aggression motivated by achieving a goal and does not necessarily involve intent to cause pain

**internal factor** internal attribute of a person, such as personality traits or temperament

**just-world hypothesis** ideology common in the United States that people get the outcomes they deserve

**normative social influence** conformity to a group norm to fit in, feel good, and be accepted by the group

**obedience** change of behavior to please an authority figure or to avoid aversive consequences

**out-group** group that we don't belong to—one that we view as fundamentally different from us

**peripheral route persuasion** one person persuades another person; an indirect route that relies on association of peripheral cues (such as positive emotions and celebrity endorsement) to associate positivity with a message

**persuasion** process of changing our attitude toward something based on some form of communication

**prejudice** negative attitudes and feelings toward individuals based solely on their membership in a particular group

**prosocial behavior** voluntary behavior with the intent to help other people

**racism** prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their race

**reciprocity** give and take in relationships

**romantic love** type of love consisting of intimacy and passion, but no commitment

**scapegoating** act of blaming an out-group when the in-group experiences frustration or is blocked from obtaining a goal

**script** person's knowledge about the sequence of events in a specific setting

**self-disclosure** sharing personal information in relationships

**self-fulfilling prophecy** treating stereotyped group members according to our biased expectations only to have this treatment influence the individual to act according to our stereotypic expectations, thus confirming our stereotypic beliefs

**self-serving bias** tendency for individuals to take credit by making dispositional or internal attributions for positive outcomes and situational or external attributions for negative outcomes

**sexism** prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based on their sex

**situationism** describes a perspective that behavior and actions are determined by the immediate environment and surroundings; a view promoted by social psychologists

**social exchange theory** humans act as naïve economists in keeping a tally of the ratio of costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship, with the goal to maximize benefits and minimize costs

**social facilitation** improved performance when an audience is watching versus when the individual performs the behavior alone

**social loafing** exertion of less effort by a person working in a group because individual performance cannot be evaluated separately from the group, thus causing performance decline on easy tasks

**social norm** group's expectations regarding what is appropriate and acceptable for the thoughts and behavior of its members

**social psychology** field of psychology that examines how people impact or affect each other, with particular focus on the power of the situation

**social role** socially defined pattern of behavior that is expected of a person in a given setting or group

**stanford prison experiment** Stanford University conducted an experiment in a mock prison that demonstrated the power of social roles, social norms, and scripts

**stereotype** specific beliefs or assumptions about individuals based solely on their membership in a group, regardless of their individual characteristics

**triangular theory of love** model of love based on three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment; several types of love exist, depending on the presence or absence of each of these components

## **Summary**

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### **12.1 What Is Social Psychology?**

Social psychology is the subfield of psychology that studies the power of the situation to influence individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Psychologists categorize the causes of human behavior as those due to internal factors, such as personality, or those due to external factors, such as cultural and other social influences. Behavior is better explained, however, by using both approaches. Lay people tend to over-rely on dispositional explanations for behavior and ignore the power of situational influences, a perspective called the fundamental attribution error. People from individualistic cultures are more likely to display this bias versus people from collectivistic cultures. Our explanations for our own and others' behaviors can be biased due to not having enough information about others' motivations for behaviors and by providing explanations that bolster our self-esteem.

## 12.2 Self-presentation

Human behavior is largely influenced by our social roles, norms, and scripts. In order to know how to act in a given situation, we have shared cultural knowledge of how to behave depending on our role in society. Social norms dictate the behavior that is appropriate or inappropriate for each role. Each social role has scripts that help humans learn the sequence of appropriate behaviors in a given setting. The famous Stanford prison experiment is an example of how the power of the situation can dictate the social roles, norms, and scripts we follow in a given situation, even if this behavior is contrary to our typical behavior.

## 12.3 Attitudes and Persuasion

Attitudes are our evaluations or feelings toward a person, idea, or object and typically are positive or negative. Our attitudes and beliefs are influenced not only by external forces, but also by internal influences that we control. An internal form of attitude change is cognitive dissonance or the tension we experience when our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are in conflict. In order to reduce dissonance, individuals can change their behavior, attitudes, or cognitions, or add a new cognition. External forces of persuasion include advertising; the features of advertising that influence our behaviors include the source, message, and audience. There are two primary routes to persuasion. The central route to persuasion uses facts and information to persuade potential consumers. The peripheral route uses positive association with cues such as beauty, fame, and positive emotions.

## 12.4 Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience

The power of the situation can lead people to conform, or go along with the group, even in the face of inaccurate information. Conformity to group norms is driven by two motivations, the desire to fit in and be liked and the desire to be accurate and gain information from the group. Authority figures also have influence over our behaviors, and many people become obedient and follow orders even if the orders are contrary to their personal values. Conformity to group pressures can also result in groupthink, or the faulty decision-making process that results from cohesive group members trying to maintain group harmony. Group situations can improve human behavior through facilitating performance on easy tasks, but inhibiting performance on difficult tasks. The presence of others can also lead to social loafing when individual efforts cannot be evaluated.

## 12.5 Prejudice and Discrimination

As diverse individuals, humans can experience conflict when interacting with people who are different from each other. Prejudice, or negative feelings and evaluations, is common when people are from a different social group (i.e., out-group). Negative attitudes toward out-groups can lead to discrimination. Prejudice and discrimination against others can be based on gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, or a variety of other social identities. In-group's who feel threatened may blame the out-groups for their plight, thus using the out-group as a scapegoat for their frustration.

## 12.6 Aggression

Aggression is seeking to cause another person harm or pain. Hostile aggression is motivated by feelings of anger with intent to cause pain, and instrumental aggression is motivated by achieving a goal and does not necessarily involve intent to cause pain. Bullying is an international public health concern that largely affects the adolescent population. Bullying is repeated behaviors that are intended to inflict harm on the victim and can take the form of physical, psychological, emotional, or social abuse. Bullying has negative mental health consequences for youth including suicide. Cyberbullying is a newer form of bullying that takes place in an online environment where bullies can remain anonymous and victims are helpless to address the harassment. Despite the social norm of helping others in need, when there are many bystanders witnessing an emergency, diffusion of responsibility will lead to a lower likelihood of any one person helping.

## 12.7 Prosocial Behavior

Altruism is a pure form of helping others out of empathy, which can be contrasted with egoistic motivations for helping. Forming relationships with others is a necessity for social beings. We typically

form relationships with people who are close to us in proximity and people with whom we share similarities. We expect reciprocity and self-disclosure in our relationships. We also want to form relationships with people who are physically attractive, though standards for attractiveness vary by culture and gender. There are many types of love that are determined by various combinations of intimacy, passion, and commitment; consummate love, which is the ideal form of love, contains all three components. When determining satisfaction and whether to maintain a relationship, individuals often use a social exchange approach and weigh the costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship.

## Review Questions

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1. As a field, social psychology focuses on \_\_\_\_\_ in predicting human behavior.
  - a. personality traits
  - b. genetic predispositions
  - c. biological forces
  - d. situational factors
2. Making internal attributions for your successes and making external attributions for your failures is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. actor-observer bias
  - b. fundamental attribution error
  - c. self-serving bias
  - d. just-world hypothesis
3. Collectivistic cultures are to \_\_\_\_\_ as individualistic cultures are to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. dispositional; situational
  - b. situational; dispositional
  - c. autonomy; group harmony
  - d. just-world hypothesis; self-serving bias
4. According to the actor-observer bias, we have more information about \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. situational influences on behavior
  - b. influences on our own behavior
  - c. influences on others' behavior
  - d. dispositional influences on behavior
5. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is a set of group expectations for appropriate thoughts and behaviors of its members.
  - a. social role
  - b. social norm
  - c. script
  - d. attribution
6. On his first day of soccer practice, Jose suits up in a t-shirt, shorts, and cleats and runs out to the field to join his teammates. Jose's behavior is reflective of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. a script
  - b. social influence
  - c. good athletic behavior
  - d. normative behavior
7. When it comes to buying clothes, teenagers often follow social norms; this is likely motivated by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. following parents' rules
  - b. saving money
  - c. fitting in
  - d. looking good
8. In the Stanford prison experiment, even the lead researcher succumbed to his role as a prison supervisor. This is an example of the power of \_\_\_\_\_ influencing behavior.
  - a. scripts
  - b. social norms
  - c. conformity
  - d. social roles
9. Attitudes describe our \_\_\_\_\_ of people, objects, and ideas.
  - a. treatment
  - b. evaluations
  - c. cognitions
  - d. knowledge
10. Cognitive dissonance causes discomfort because it disrupts our sense of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. dependency
  - b. unpredictability
  - c. consistency
  - d. power

11. In order for the central route to persuasion to be effective, the audience must be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. analytical; motivated  
b. attentive; happy  
c. intelligent; unemotional  
d. gullible; distracted
12. Examples of cues used in peripheral route persuasion include all of the following *except* \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. celebrity endorsement  
b. positive emotions  
c. attractive models  
d. factual information
13. In the Asch experiment, participants conformed due to \_\_\_\_\_ social influence.  
a. informational  
b. normative  
c. inspirational  
d. persuasive
14. Under what conditions will informational social influence be more likely?  
a. when individuals want to fit in  
b. when the answer is unclear  
c. when the group has expertise  
d. both b and c
15. Social loafing occurs when \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. individual performance cannot be evaluated  
b. the task is easy  
c. both a and b  
d. none of the above
16. If group members modify their opinions to align with a perceived group consensus, then \_\_\_\_\_ has occurred.  
a. group cohesion  
b. social facilitation  
c. groupthink  
d. social loafing
17. Prejudice is to \_\_\_\_\_ as discrimination is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. feelings; behavior  
b. thoughts; feelings  
c. feelings; thoughts  
d. behavior; feelings
18. Which of the following is *not* a type of prejudice?  
a. homophobia  
b. racism  
c. sexism  
d. individualism
19. \_\_\_\_\_ occurs when the out-group is blamed for the in-group's frustration.  
a. stereotyping  
b. in-group bias  
c. scapegoating  
d. ageism
20. When we seek out information that supports our stereotypes we are engaged in \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. scapegoating  
b. confirmation bias  
c. self-fulfilling prophecy  
d. in-group bias
21. Typically, bullying from boys is to \_\_\_\_\_ as bullying from girls is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. emotional harm; physical harm  
b. physical harm; emotional harm  
c. psychological harm; physical harm  
d. social exclusion; verbal taunting
22. Which of the following adolescents is least likely to be targeted for bullying?  
a. a child with a physical disability  
b. a transgender adolescent  
c. an emotionally sensitive boy  
d. the captain of the football team
23. The bystander effect likely occurs due to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. desensitization to violence  
b. people not noticing the emergency  
c. diffusion of responsibility  
d. emotional insensitivity
24. Altruism is a form of prosocial behavior that is motivated by \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. feeling good about oneself  
b. selfless helping of others  
c. earning a reward  
d. showing bravery to bystanders

25. After moving to a new apartment building, research suggests that Sam will be most likely to become friends with \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. his next door neighbor  
b. someone who lives three floors up in the apartment building  
c. someone from across the street  
d. his new postal delivery person
26. What trait do both men and women tend to look for in a romantic partner?  
a. sense of humor  
b. social skills  
c. leadership potential  
d. physical attractiveness
27. According to the triangular theory of love, what type of love is defined by passion and intimacy but no commitment?  
a. consummate love  
b. empty love  
c. romantic love  
d. liking
28. According to social exchange theory, humans want to maximize the \_\_\_\_\_ and minimize the \_\_\_\_\_ in relationships.  
a. intimacy; commitment  
b. benefits; costs  
c. costs; benefits  
d. passion; intimacy

### Critical Thinking Questions

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29. Compare and contrast situational influences and dispositional influences and give an example of each. Explain how situational influences and dispositional influences might explain inappropriate behavior.
30. Provide an example of how people from individualistic and collectivistic cultures would differ in explaining why they won an important sporting event.
31. Why didn't the "good" guards in the Stanford prison experiment object to other guards' abusive behavior? Were the student prisoners simply weak people? Why didn't they object to being abused?
32. Describe how social roles, social norms, and scripts were evident in the Stanford prison experiment. How can this experiment be applied to everyday life? Are there any more recent examples where people started fulfilling a role and became abusive?
33. Give an example (one *not* used in class or your text) of cognitive dissonance and how an individual might resolve this.
34. Imagine that you work for an advertising agency, and you've been tasked with developing an advertising campaign to increase sales of Bliss Soda. How would you develop an advertisement for this product that uses a central route of persuasion? How would you develop an ad using a peripheral route of persuasion?
35. Describe how seeking outside opinions can prevent groupthink.
36. Compare and contrast social loafing and social facilitation.
37. Some people seem more willing to openly display prejudice regarding sexual orientation than prejudice regarding race and gender. Speculate on why this might be.
38. When people blame a scapegoat, how do you think they choose evidence to support the blame?
39. Compare and contrast hostile and instrumental aggression.

40. What evidence discussed in the previous section suggests that cyberbullying is difficult to detect and prevent?
41. Describe what influences whether relationships will be formed.
42. The evolutionary theory argues that humans are motivated to perpetuate their genes and reproduce. Using an evolutionary perspective, describe traits in men and women that humans find attractive.

### Personal Application Questions

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43. Provide a personal example of an experience in which your behavior was influenced by the power of the situation.
44. Think of an example in the media of a sports figure—player or coach—who gives a self-serving attribution for winning or losing. Examples might include accusing the referee of incorrect calls, in the case of losing, or citing their own hard work and talent, in the case of winning.
45. Try attending a religious service very different from your own and see how you feel and behave without knowing the appropriate script. Or, try attending an important, personal event that you have never attended before, such as a bar mitzvah (a coming-of-age ritual in Jewish culture), a quinceañera (in some Latin American cultures a party is given to a girl who is turning 15 years old), a wedding, a funeral, or a sporting event new to you, such as horse racing or bull riding. Observe and record your feelings and behaviors in this unfamiliar setting for which you lack the appropriate script. Do you silently observe the action, or do you ask another person for help interpreting the behaviors of people at the event? Describe in what ways your behavior would change if you were to attend a similar event in the future?
46. Name and describe at least three social roles you have adopted for yourself. Why did you adopt these roles? What are some roles that are expected of you, but that you try to resist?
47. Cognitive dissonance often arises after making an important decision, called post-decision dissonance (or in popular terms, buyer's remorse). Describe a recent decision you made that caused dissonance and describe how you resolved it.
48. Describe a time when you or someone you know used the foot-in-the-door technique to gain someone's compliance.
49. Conduct a conformity study the next time you are in an elevator. After you enter the elevator, stand with your back toward the door. See if others conform to your behavior. Watch this **video** (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/conformityexp>) for a candid camera demonstration of this phenomenon. Did your results turn out as expected?
50. Most students adamantly state that they would never have turned up the voltage in the Milgram experiment. Do you think you would have refused to shock the learner? Looking at your own past behavior, what evidence suggests that you would go along with the order to increase the voltage?
51. Give an example when you felt that someone was prejudiced against you. What do you think caused this attitude? Did this person display any discrimination behaviors and, if so, how?
52. Give an example when you felt prejudiced against someone else. How did you discriminate against them? Why do you think you did this?

**53.** Have you ever experienced or witnessed bullying or cyberbullying? How did it make you feel? What did you do about it? After reading this section would you have done anything differently?

**54.** The next time you see someone needing help, observe your surroundings. Look to see if the bystander effect is in action and take measures to make sure the person gets help. If you aren't able to help, notify an adult or authority figure that can.

**55.** Think about your recent friendships and romantic relationship(s). What factors do you think influenced the development of these relationships? What attracted you to becoming friends or romantic partners?

**56.** Have you ever used a social exchange theory approach to determine how satisfied you were in a relationship, either a friendship or romantic relationship? Have you ever had the costs outweigh the benefits of a relationship? If so, how did you address this imbalance?