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# Chapter 16:

# Social Psychology

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# Lecture Overview

- Our Thoughts About Others
- Our Feelings About Others
- Our Actions Toward Others
- Applying Social Psychology to Social Problems



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# Introductory Definition

- **Social Psychology** (study of how other people influence our thoughts, feelings, and actions)



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# Our Thoughts About Others

- **Attribution** (an explanation for the cause of behaviors or events)
  - To determine the cause we first decide whether the behavior comes from an:
    - **internal (dispositional)** cause, such as personal characteristics, OR
    - **external (situational)** cause, such as situational demands.
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# Our Thoughts About Others: Mistaken Attributions

1. **Fundamental Attribution Error:** misjudging causes of others' behavior and attributing to *internal* (dispositional) vs. *external* (situational) ones
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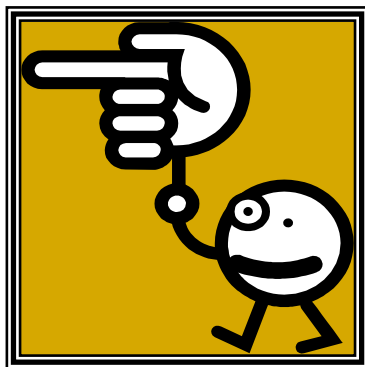
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# Our Thoughts About Others: Mistaken Attributions



## 2. Self-Serving Bias:

- taking credit for our successes, AND



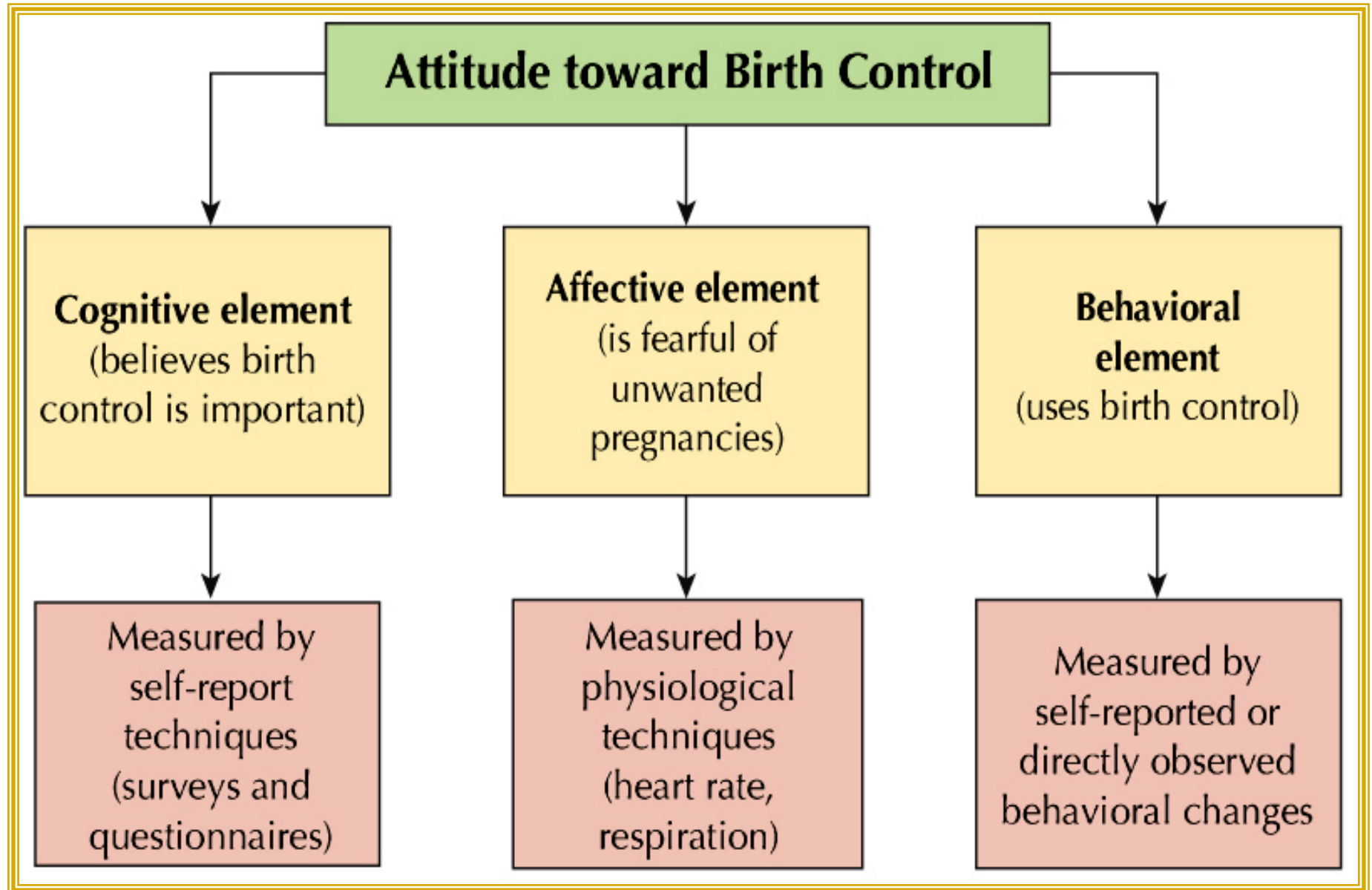
- externalizing our failures
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# Our Thoughts About Others: Attitudes

- **Attitude** (learned predisposition to respond cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally to a particular object)

## E.g. Attitude

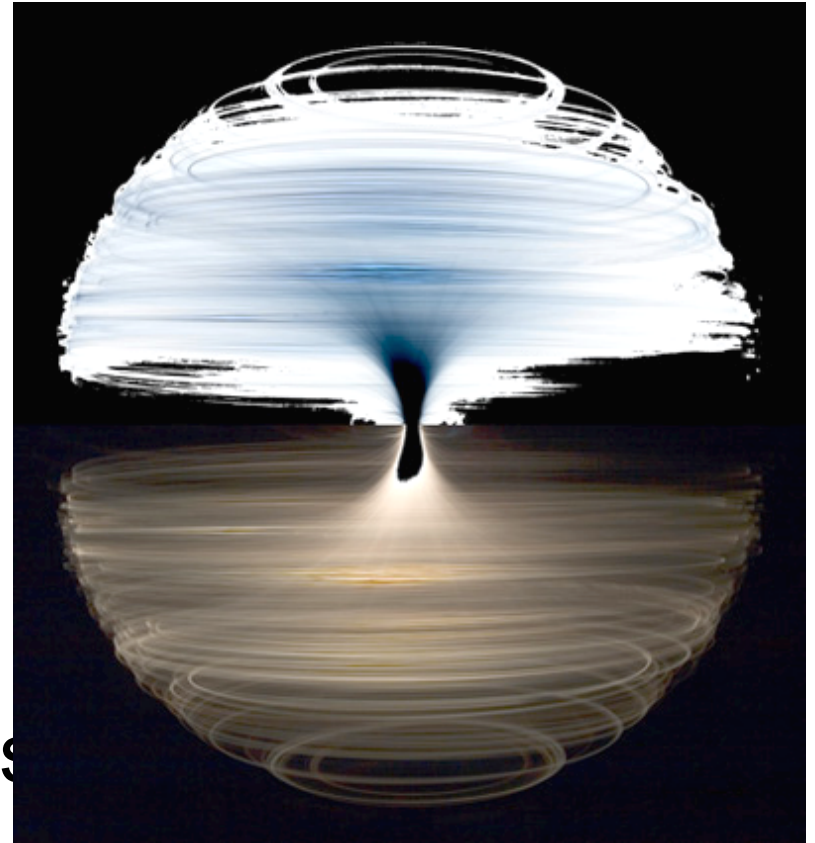




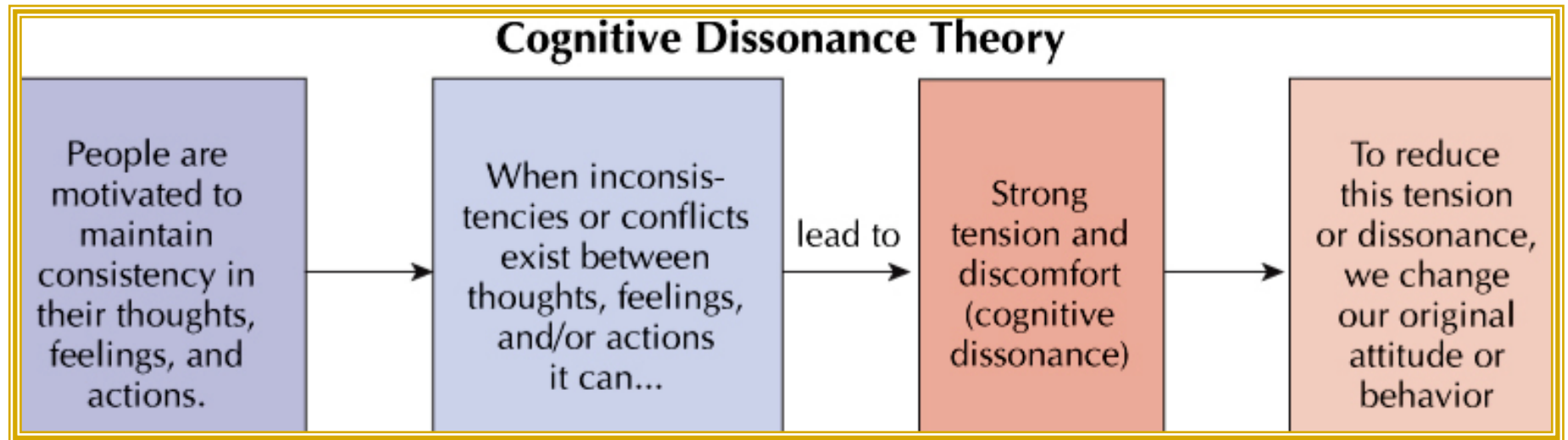
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# Our Thoughts About Others: Cognitive Dissonance

- **Cognitive Dissonance:**  
feeling of discomfort  
created from a  
discrepancy between  
an attitude and  
behavior or between  
two competing attitudes



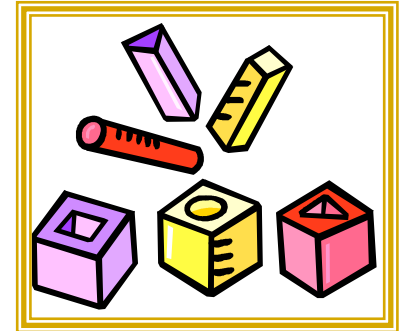
# Our Thoughts About Others: Cognitive Dissonance (Continued)



# Our Thoughts About Others:

## Cognitive Dissonance (Continued)

- Festinger and Carlsmith's Cognitive Dissonance Study: Participants given very boring tasks to complete, and then paid either \$1 or \$20 to tell next participant the task was "very enjoyable" and "fun."



- Result? Those paid \$1 felt more cognitive dissonance, therefore, they changed their attitude more about the boring tasks.



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# Our Feelings About Others: Prejudice and Discrimination

- **Prejudice**

(learned, generally negative, attitude toward members of a group)

- **Discrimination**

(negative behaviors directed at members of a group)

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## Our Feelings About Others: Prejudice and Discrimination (Cont.)

- Three components of prejudice:
    1. **Cognitive** (**stereotype**--set of beliefs about the characteristics of people in a group generalized to all group members)
    2. **Affective** (feelings associated with objects of prejudice)
    3. **Behavioral** (**discrimination**--negative behaviors directed at members of a group)
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# Our Feelings About Others:

## Sources of Prejudice and Discrimination

1. *Learned* response
  2. Mental shortcut
    - **in-group favoritism** (in-group viewed more positively than out-group)
    - **out-group homogeneity effect** (out-group judged as less diverse than in-group)
  3. Economic and political competition
  4. Displaced aggression
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# Our Feelings About Others: Interpersonal Attraction

- **Interpersonal Attraction**  
(positive feelings toward another)
- **Three Key Factors:**
  - **Physical Attractiveness**
  - **Proximity** (geographic closeness)
  - **Similarity** (need complementarity vs. need compatibility)



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# Our Feelings About Others: Interpersonal Attraction

## (Liking and Loving)

- **Liking** is a favorable evaluation of another.



- **Loving** can be defined in terms of caring, attachment, and intimacy.
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# Our Feelings About Others: Interpersonal Attraction (Liking and Loving)

- Sample items from Rubin's liking and loving test:

## *Love Scale*

1. I feel that I can confide in \_\_\_\_\_ about virtually everything.
2. I would do almost anything for \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If I could never be with \_\_\_\_\_, I would feel miserable.

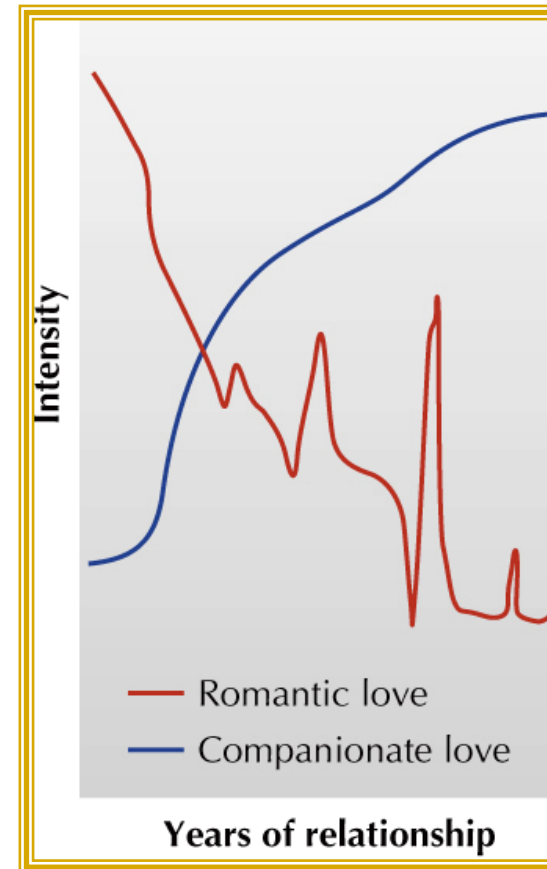
## *Liking Scale*

1. I think that \_\_\_\_\_ is unusually well adjusted.
2. I would highly recommend \_\_\_\_\_ for a responsible job.
3. In my opinion, \_\_\_\_\_ is an exceptionally mature person.

# Our Feelings About Others:

## Interpersonal Attraction (Continued)

- **Romantic Love**  
(erotic attraction with future expectations)
- **Companionate Love**  
(lasting attraction based on trust, caring, tolerance, and friendship)



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# Foot-In-The-Door Phenomenon

the tendency for people who agree to a small request to agree later with a larger request

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# Foot-In-The-Door Phenomenon

Freedman & Fraser (1966):

- Researchers posed as safe driving volunteers.
  - Asked some Californians to place a big ugly sign “Drive Carefully” in their front yards.
  - Only 17% agreed
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## Freedman & Fraser (1966)

- Then asked some homeowners to agree to a small request: Display a 3-inch high “Be a Safe Driver” sign in their yard.
  - Practically all agreed
  - 2 weeks later asked same homeowners to put the big ugly sign “Drive Carefully” in their yards.
  - 76% agreed
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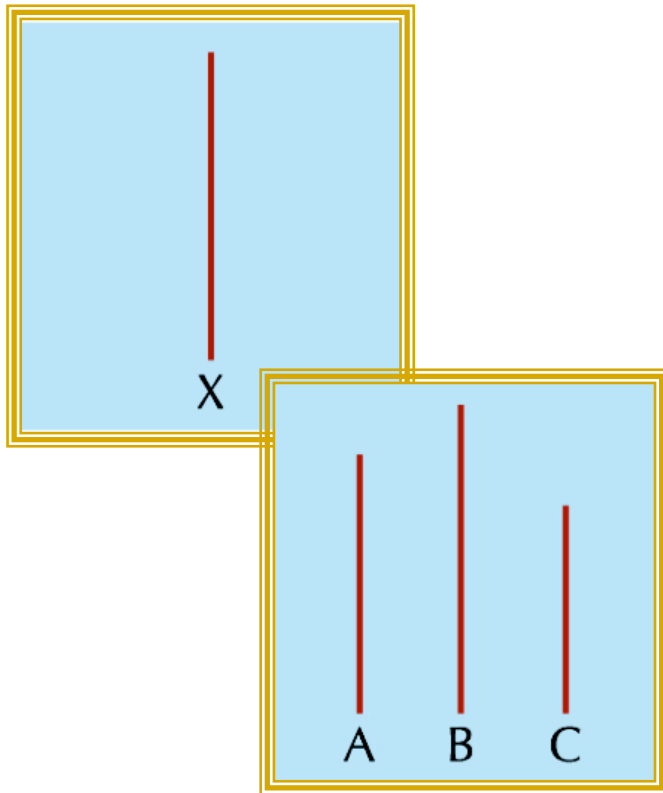
# Our Actions Toward Others:

## Social Influence

- **Conformity** (changing behavior because of real or imagined group pressure)
- **Obedience** (following direct commands, usually from an authority figure)



# Our Actions Toward Others: Conformity



## Asch's Conformity Study:

- Participants were asked to select the line closest in length to X.
- When confederates gave obviously wrong answers (A or C), more than 1/3 conformed and agreed with the incorrect choices.

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# Our Actions Toward Others: Conformity (Continued)

## Why do we conform?

- **Normative Social Influence**  
(need for approval and acceptance)
  - **Informational Social Influence**  
(need for information and direction)
  - **Reference Groups** (people we conform to because we like and admire them and want to be like them)
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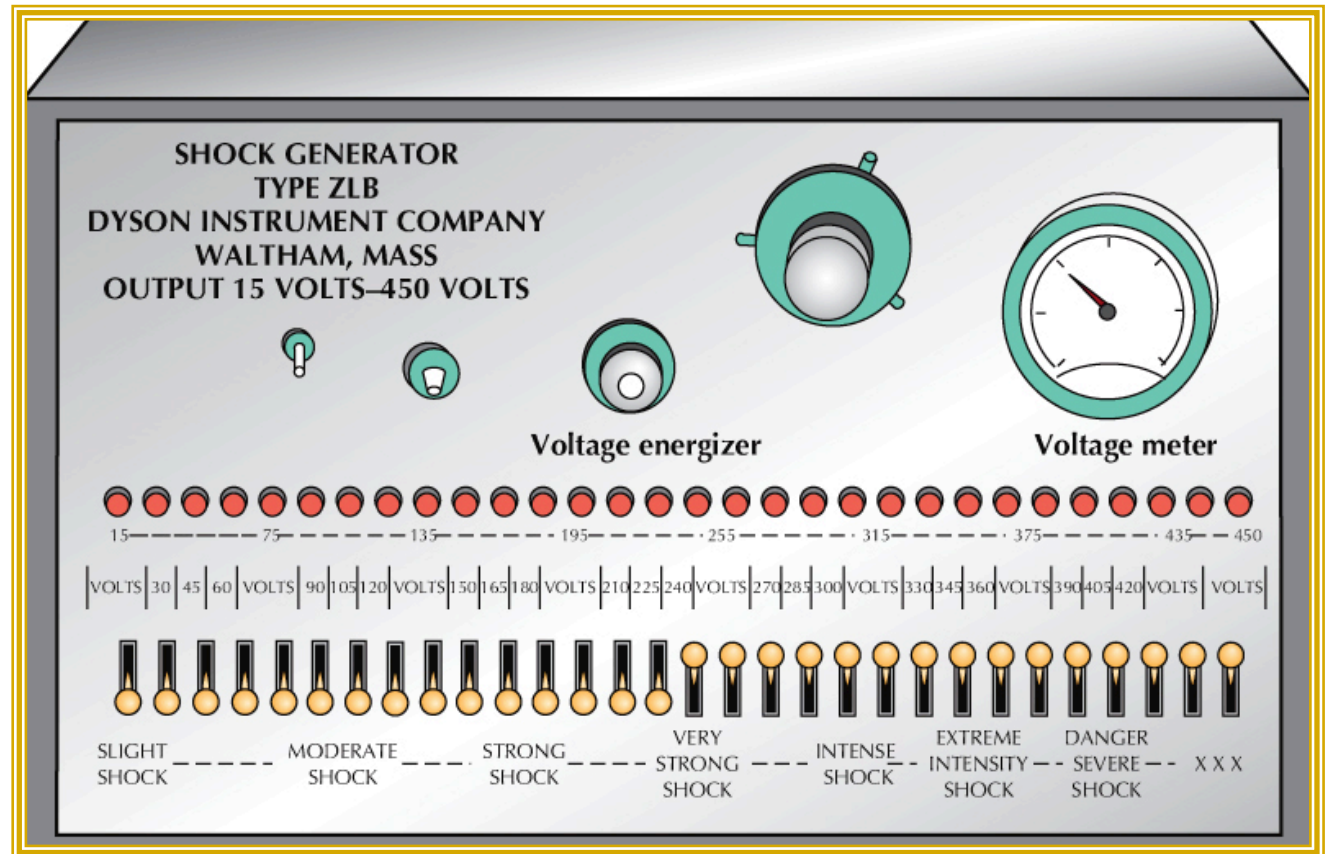
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# Our Actions Toward Others: Obedience

- **Milgram's obedience study:** Participants serving as “teachers” are ordered to continue shocking someone with a known heart condition who is begging to be released.
  - **Result?** 65% of “teachers” delivered highest level of shock (450 volts) to the “learner.”
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# Our Actions Toward Others: Obedience

## Milgram's “Shock Generator”



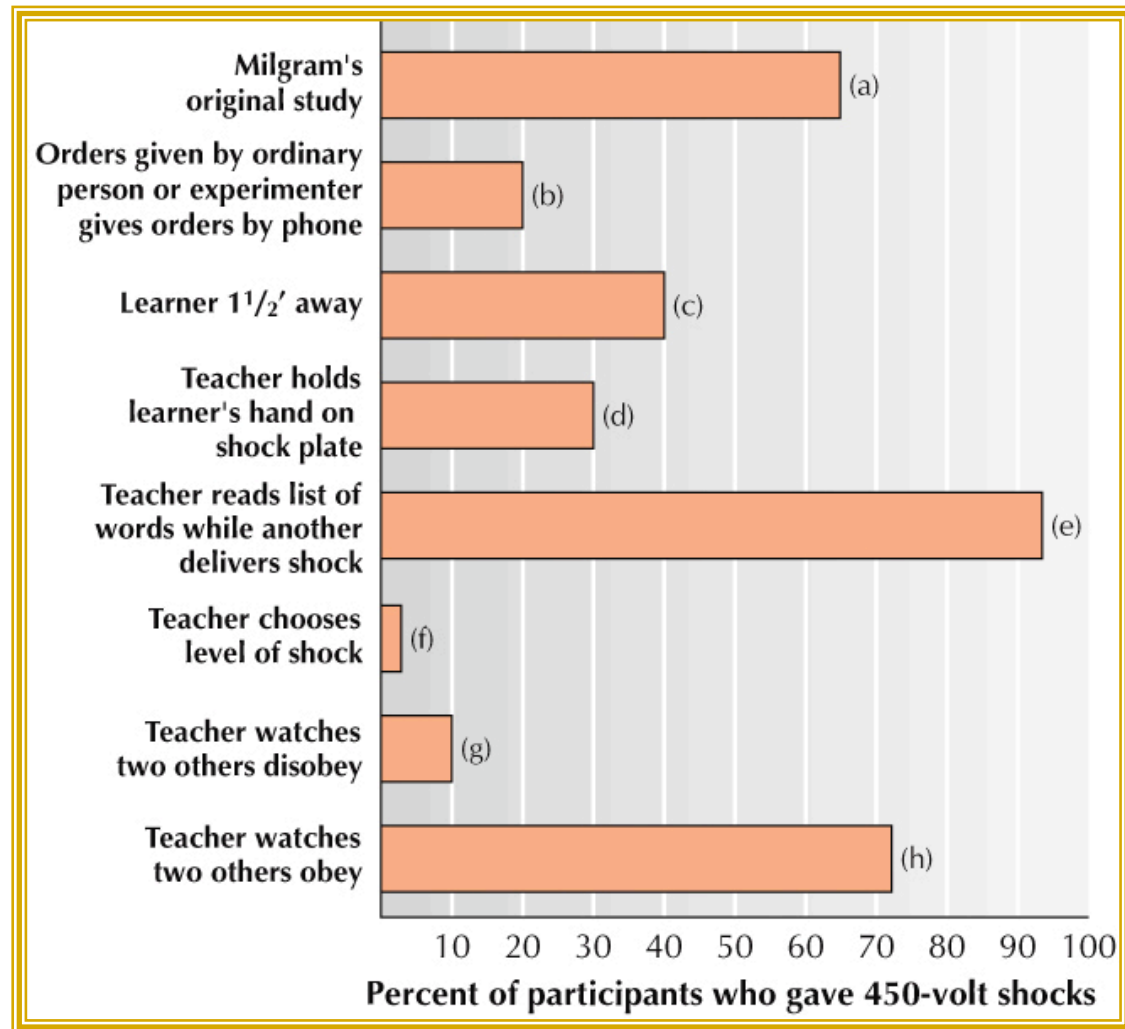
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# Our Actions Toward Others: Obedience

## Four Major Factors Affecting Obedience:

1. Legitimacy and closeness of the authority figure
  2. Remoteness of the victim
  3. Assignment of responsibility
  4. Modeling/imitation
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# Our Actions Toward Others: Obedience



# Our Actions Toward Others: Group Processes

- Group membership involves:

- Roles

(set of behavioral patterns connected with particular social positions)

- Deindividuation

(reduced self-consciousness, inhibition, and personal responsibility in a situation that fosters anonymity)



# Group Processes: “Power of the Situation”

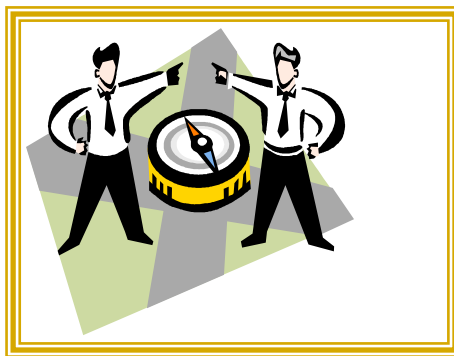
## Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Study:

- Students were randomly assigned as “prisoners” or “guards.”
- Original study scheduled to last for 2 weeks but terminated after 6 days due to alarming psychological changes in both “prisoners” and “guards.”



# Group Processes: Problems with Decision Making

- **Group polarization** (group movement toward either a riskier or more conservative decision; result depends on the members' initial dominant tendency)



- **Groupthink** (faulty decision making occurring when a highly cohesive group seeks agreement and avoids inconsistent information)



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# Our Actions Toward Others: Group Processes (Continued)

## Symptoms of Groupthink:

- Illusion of invulnerability
  - Belief in the morality of the group
  - Collective rationalizations
  - Stereotypes of out-groups
  - Self-censorship
  - Illusion of unanimity
  - Direct pressure on dissenters
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# Our Actions Toward Others: Aggression

- **Aggression**  
(any behavior  
intended to  
harm someone)



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# Our Actions Toward Others: Aggression (Continued)

- **Biological Factors in Aggression:** instincts, genes, brain and nervous system, hormones and neurotransmitters, substance abuse, and other mental disorders



# Our Actions Toward Others: Aggression (Continued)

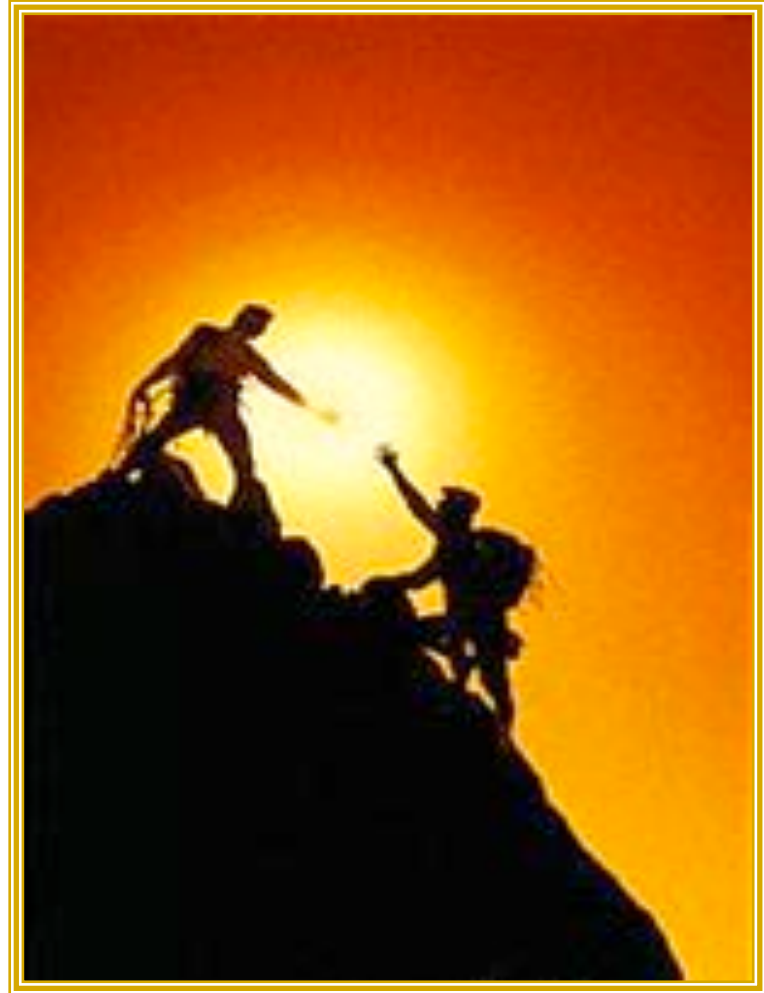
- **Psychosocial Factors  
in Aggression:**

- Aversive stimuli
- Culture and learning
- Violent media/  
video games



# Our Actions Toward Others: Altruism

- **Altruism**  
(actions designed to help others with no obvious benefit to the helper)



# Our Actions Toward Others: Altruism

- Why do we help?

- **Egoistic Model**  
(helping motivated by anticipated gain)



- **Empathy-Altruism Model**  
(helping motivated by empathy)



# Our Actions Toward Others: Altruism

## Why Don't We Help?

- **Diffusion of Responsibility** (dilution, or *diffusion*, of personal responsibility)
- **Ambiguous Situation** (unclear what help is needed)





# Our Actions Toward Others: Altruism

## ■ How Do We Increase Helping?

- Assign responsibility
- Reduce ambiguity
- Increase societal rewards

