Key Question Chapter Outline

How Does the Social Situation Affect Our Behavior?

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Social Psychology: The State of the Art

A Personal Endnote

CORE CONCEPTS

We usually adapt our behavior to the demands of the social situation, and in ambiguous situations we take our cues from the behavior of others in that setting.

The judgments we make about others depend not only on their behavior but also on our interpretation of their actions within a social context.

The power of the situation can help us understand violence and terrorism, but a broader understanding requires multiple perspectives that go beyond the boundaries of traditional psychology.

Psychology in Your Life

On Being "Shoe" at Yale

How college students dress may be a matter of their "taste," but it may also be a matter of unconscious social influence to dress like the "in crowd" dresses.

Loving Relationships

The end of a relationship can be difficult for everyone. Social psychologists have begun to study what it takes to keep people caring about each other.

Multiple Perspectives on Terrorism

A field experiment on groups of Boy Scouts holds lessons for dealing with conflict in the Middle East.

USING PSYCHOLOGY TO LEARN PSYCHOLOGY:
Psychology: Persuasion in the Classroom

Chapter

14

Social Psychology

ON A SUMMER SUNDAY in California, a siren shattered the serenity of college student Tommy Whitlow's morning. A police car screeched to a halt in front of his home. Within minutes, Tommy was charged with a felony, informed of his constitutional rights, frisked, and handcuffed. After he was booked and fingerprinted at the city jail, Tommy was blindfolded and transported to the Stanford County Prison, where he was stripped and issued a smock-type uniform with an I.D. number on the front and back. Tommy became "Prisoner 647." Eight other college students were also arrested and assigned numbers during that mass arrest by the local police.

The prison guards were anonymous in their khaki military uniforms, reflector sunglasses, and nameless identity as "Mr. Correctional Officer," but with symbols of power shown off in their big night sticks, whistles, and handcuffs. To them, the powerless prisoners were nothing more than their worthless numbers.

The guards insisted that prisoners obey all of their many arbitrary rules without question or hesitation. Failure to do so led to losses of privileges. At first, privileges included opportunities to read, write, or talk to other inmates. Later, the slightest protest resulted in the loss of "privileges" of eating, sleeping, washing, or having visitors during visiting nights. Failure to obey rules also resulted in a variety of unpleasant tasks

● Scenes from the Stanford prison experiment.

such as endless push-ups, jumping jacks, and number count-offs that lasted for hours on end. Each day saw an escalation of the level of hostile abuse by the guards against their prisoners: making them clean toilets with bare hands, do push-ups while a guard stepped on the prisoner's back, spend long hours naked in solitary confinement, and finally engage in degrading forms of sexual humiliation. "Prisoner 647" encountered some guards whose behavior toward him and the other prisoners was sadistic, taking apparent pleasure in cruelty; others were just tough and abusive, but none of the few "good" guards ever challenged the extremely demeaning actions of the "perpetrators of evil."

Less than 36 hours after the mass arrest, "Prisoner 8412," the ringleader of an aborted prisoner rebellion that morning, had to be released because of an extreme stress reaction of screaming, crying, rage, and depression. On successive days, three more prisoners developed similar stress-related symptoms. A fifth prisoner developed a psychosomatic rash all over his body when the parole board rejected his appeal, and he too was released from the Stanford County Jail.

At night, "Prisoner 647" tried to remember what Tommy Whitlow had been like before he became a prisoner. He also tried to imagine his tormentors before they became guards. He reminded himself that he was a college student who had answered a newspaper ad and agreed to be a subject in a two-week psychological experiment on prison life. He had thought it would be fun to do something unusual, and he could always use some extra money.

Everyone in the prison, guard and prisoner alike, had been selected from a large pool of student volunteers. On the basis of extensive psychological tests and interviews, the volunteers had been judged as law-abiding, emotionally stable, physically healthy, and "normal-average" on all psychological measures. In this mock prison experiment, assignment of participants to the independent variable treatment of "guard" or "prisoner" roles had been determined by random assignment. Thus, in the beginning there were no systematic differences between the "ordinary" college males who were in the two different conditions. By the end of the study, there were no similarities between these two alien groups. The prisoners lived in the jail around the clock, and the guards worked standard eight-hour shifts.

As guards, students who had been pacifists and "nice guys" in their usual life settings behaved aggressively—sometimes even sadistically. As prisoners, psychologically stable students soon behaved pathologically, passively resigning themselves to their unexpected fate of learned helplessness. The power of the simulated prison situation had created a new social reality—a functionally real prison—in the minds of both the jailers and their captives. The situation became so powerfully disturbing that the researchers were forced to terminate the two-week study after only six days.

Although Tommy Whitlow said he wouldn't want to go through it again, he valued the personal experience because he learned so much about himself and about human nature. Fortunately, he and the other students were basically healthy, and extensive debriefing showed that they readily bounced back from the prison experience. Follow-ups over many years revealed no lasting negative effects on these students. The participants had all learned an important lesson: Never underestimate the power of a bad situation to overwhelm the personalities and good upbringing of even the best and brightest among us (Haney et al., 1973; Haney & Zimbardo, 1998; Zimbardo, 1973,

1975; Zimbardo et al., 1999; replicated in Australia by Lovibond et al., 1979). For detailed information about this study and its relationship to recent abuses of Iraqi prisoners by American military police guards, see *www.prisonexperiment.org.*

Suppose *you* had been a subject in the Stanford prison experiment. Would you have been a good guard—or a sadist? A model compliant prisoner—or a rebel? Could you have resisted the pressures and stresses of these circumstances? We'd all like to believe we would be good guards and heroic prisoners; we would never step across that line between good and evil. And, of course, we all believe that we would be able to keep things in perspective, knowing that it was "just an experiment," only role-playing and not real. But the best bet is that most of us would react the same way as these participants did. This disturbing study raises many questions about how well we really know ourselves, our inner dispositional qualities, and how much we appreciate the subtle powers of external forces on us, the situational qualities.

Scene at the Abu Ghraib prison.

Welcome to social psychology, the field that investigates how individuals affect each other. It may be a relief to hear that not all of social psychology brings such bad news about ourselves as does the Stanford prison experiment. This exciting field of psychology also explores the forces that bring people together for friendships and loving relationships. As you study **social psychology** in this chapter, you will learn how people's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, motives, and behavior are influenced by interactions with others. Social psychologists try to understand behavior within its *social context.* Defined broadly, the **social context** includes the real, imagined, or symbolic *presence of other people;* the *activities and interactions* that take place among people; the *settings* in which behavior occurs; and the *expectations* and social *norms* governing behavior in a given setting (Sherif, 1981).

Most of all, the Stanford prison experiment conducted by Philip Zimbardo (one of your authors) underscores the *power of social situations* to control human behavior. This is a major theme to emerge from social psychological research of the past 50 years. In the first part of this chapter, you will see how seemingly minor features of social settings can have a huge impact on what we think and how we feel and act. In these studies you will see how the situation can produce conformity to group standards—even when the group is clearly "wrong." Other studies will demonstrate how situational forces can lead many average people to blindly follow orders—even orders to harm others.

Yet, as powerful as the situation can be, psychologists know that it is not *objective reality* to which we respond. Rather, we respond to our *subjective interpretation* of the situation—to our perception—which can differ significantly from person to person. This, then, is the second great theme in social psychology: the construction of a *subjective social reality.* We must grasp this world of expectations and perceptions in order to understand the attractive forces at work in building friendships and romantic relationships, as well as the repulsive forces underlying prejudice and violence.

Our examination of prejudice will set the stage for a third theme that will combine the first two. We will see how social psychologists have experimented with altering the situation to change subjective social reality that, in turn, helps *to promote the human condition.* This, we will discover, has important implications for understanding violence and terrorism and for resolving conflicts among individuals, groups, and even nations. We begin now with the first of these three themes, the power of the situation.

Social psychology The branch of psychology that studies the effects of social variables and cognitions on individual behavior and social interactions.

Social context The combination of (a) people, (b) the activities and interactions among people, (c) the setting in which behavior occurs, and (d) the expectations and social norms governing behavior in that setting.

HOW DOES THE SOCIAL SITUATION AFFECT OUR BEHAVIOR?

Suppose that you find yourself in an interview, with the possibility of being hired for the job of your dreams. Afterward, the interview suggests that you go to lunch together in the company cafeteria. Will you order a sandwich, a salad, or a full-course meal? Will you leave the plastic tray under your plate as you eat? Will you put the tiny paper napkin in your lap? Will you shift your fork from your left hand to your right hand as you put the food you cut into your mouth? Even in this simple social situation, there are many social and cultural rules governing what is appropriate and acceptable behavior. If you are like most people in an unfamiliar situation such as this, you will take your cues from those around you.

Social psychologists believe that, even when the situation is a familiar one, such as a college classroom, the primary determinant of individual behavior is the social situation in which that behavior occurs. So powerful is the situation that it can sometimes dominate our personalities and override our past history of learning, values, and beliefs. We will see that the pressures of the situation can create powerful psychological effects, such as prejudice, blind obedience, and violence. Social roles, rules, how we are dressed, competition, or the mere presence of others can profoundly influence how we behave. Often, these subtle situational variables affect us in many ways even without our awareness. Our Core Concept emphasizes this point:

We usually adapt our behavior to the demands of the social situation, and in ambiguous situations we take our cues from the behavior of others in that setting.

In this section, we will review some research that explores this concept, called **situationism.** Situationism assumes that the environment, or the behavioral context, can have both subtle and forceful effects on people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Situationism is contrasted with *dispositionism,* the tendency to attribute behavior to internal factors, such as genes, traits, and character qualities. Here we will look particularly at the power of the situation to create conformity, obedience, and sometimes even the willingness to inflict harm on others.

Social Standards of Behavior

A job interview, such as the one described above, provides an example of a situational influence on your behavior as you try to do "what is right" in front of your prospective employer. You will also notice the power of the situation when you compare the way students talk to their friends versus their professors. Most people learn to size up their social circumstances and make their behavior conform to situational demands. The responses most people make depend heavily on two factors: the social roles they play and the social norms of the group. Let us look at both of these closely.

Social Roles Whether you are at a concert, in a department meeting, at a pizza parlor, or in a rock concert mosh pit, you will see that people operate by rules that depend on their *social roles.* You can see this more clearly by responding to the question: Who are you? Almost certainly you and other readers of this book are students or teachers of psychology—social roles that imply different sets of behaviors. (One, for example, takes exams; the other grades them.) It is

■ **Situationism** The view that environmental conditions influence people's behavior as much as or more than their personal dispositions do.

likely that you take on many other social roles in different parts of your life. Are you a part-time employee? Someone's child? A cyclist? A musician? A friend? A lover? A spammer? A **social role** is one of several socially defined patterns of behavior that are expected of persons in a given setting or group. The roles you assume may result from your interests, abilities, and goals—or they may be imposed on you by the group or by cultural, economic, or biological conditions beyond your control. In any case, social roles prescribe your behavior by making obvious what you should do, how you should do it, and when.

The situations in which you live and function also determine the roles that are available to you and the behaviors others expect of you. Being a college student, for example, is a social role that carries certain implicit assumptions about attending classes, studying, and handing in papers before deadline. In addition, the adoption of this role makes other roles less likely. Thus, your role as college student diminishes the chances that you will assume the role of homeless person, drug pusher, or witch doctor, for example. By the same token, because you have college experience, numerous other roles (such as manager, teacher, attorney, doctor, and politician) are available to you.

The Stanford prison experiment cast guards and prisoners in different social roles. Yet, just a week before, their roles (college students) were very similar. Chance, in the form of random assignment, had decided their new roles as guards or prisoners, and these roles created status and power differences that influenced everyone's behavior in that prison situation.

Remember that no one taught the participants to play their roles. Each student called upon *scripts* about those roles. A **script** involves a person's knowledge about the sequence of events and actions that are expected of a particular social role. So, if an individual understands the role of "guard" as someone who uses coercive rules to limit the freedom of "prisoners," then that person is likely to use a script derived from that schema to become an authoritarian guard under conditions such as the Stanford prison experiment. In fact, many students in the guard role were surprised at how easy it was for them to enjoy controlling and dominating other people, just as did guards whom they read about or saw in films.

In trying to understand what happened in the Stanford prison experiment, we should note that all the prisoners and guards were male. Would it have made any difference if women had been in the roles of prisoner and guard? We will never know because the unanticipated negative impact of the experiment on both the guards and prisoners would make it unethical to do the experiment again. The possibility of gender differences, however, is raised by this fact: The experiment was called off after a graduate student, Christina Maslach, visited the "prison" and was shocked by what she saw. Immediately she conferred with Dr. Zimbardo, whom she implored to end the study. After some intense discussion, he agreed to do so. (Drs. Maslach and Zimbardo were later married and have lived happily ever after.)

Social Norms In addition to specific social roles, groups develop many "unwritten rules" for the ways that members should act. These expectations, called **social norms,** dictate socially appropriate attitudes and behaviors. Social norms can be broad guidelines, such as ideas about which political or religious attitudes are considered acceptable. Social norms can also be quite specific, embodying standards of conduct such as being quiet in the library or shining your shoes for a job interview. Norms can guide conversation, as when they restrict discussion of sensitive or taboo subjects in the presence of certain company. And norms can define dress codes, whether requiring uniforms or business suits or prohibiting shorts and tank tops. In the Stanford

■ **Social role** One of several socially defined patterns of behavior that are expected of persons in a given setting or group.
■ **Script** A cluster of knowledge about the sequences of events and actions expected to occur in a particular setting.
■ **Social norms** A group's expectations regarding what is appropriate and acceptable for its members' attitudes and behaviors.

"GOSH, ACKERMAN, DIDN'T ANYONE IN PERSONNEL TELL YOU ABOUT OUR CORPORATE CULTURE?"

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 7

Schemas are cognitive structures that integrate knowledge and expectations about a topic or concept.

● Social norms can define rigid dress codes for group members.

prison experiment, the guards quickly developed norms for abusive behavior. That norm was not already present in the situation, it was an *emergent norm*, one that emerged out of the transactions between guards and prisoners in that situation. Some norms exist in unwritten rules that are built into various situations, such as when teachers are lecturing, students are expected to listen and not talk simultaneously. However, what about the norms governing your behavior in elevators? We bet you always face the front of the elevator and either stop talking to a friend or talk lower when others are there as well. Why? Where are those rules written? How did you learn them? What will happen the next time when you enter an elevator filled with other people and *you face the rear?* Try that little experiment and see how others react.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 6

Bandura demonstrated that we acquire many social behaviors through *observational learning.*

When a person joins a new group, such as a work group or a group of friends, there is always an adjustment period during which the individual tries to discover how best to fit in. Adjustment to a group typically involves discovering its social norms. Individuals experience this adjustment in two ways: by first noticing the *uniformities and regularities* in certain behaviors, and then by observing the *negative consequences* when someone violates a social norm. For example, a new student in your school who carries books and notes in an attaché case will be seen as "out of it" if backpacks are in, and vice versa in other schools.

Social Norms Influence Students' Political Views Social scientist Theodore Newcomb wanted to know if the political views of faculty can influence those of their students. The college: Vermont's Bennington College. The time: the 1930s. The students: from wealthy, conservative homes with decidedly conservative values. The faculty: young, dynamic, and liberal. Bennington's campus culture had a prevailing norm of political and economic liberalism. Social psychologist Theodore Newcomb wondered: Which forces most shape the attitudes of these students, their family's or their faculty's? His data showed that the norms of the campus won the war of influence against the norms of the family. In most women, their initial conservative attitude was transformed as they progressed through their college years, so that by their senior year they had clearly converted to liberal thinking and causes (Newcomb, 1943). But was that shift in attitudes enduring?

Twenty years later, the social influence of the Bennington experience was still evident. Women who had graduated as liberals were still liberals; the minority who had resisted the prevailing liberal norm had remained conservative. This was accomplished in part by marrying their "own kind" politically. Most of the women had married husbands with values similar to their own—either liberal or conservative—and created supportive new home environments that sustained those different ideologies. The liberal Bennington allegiance was evident in the 1960 presidential election when 60% of the class Newcomb had investigated voted for liberal John Kennedy, rather than conservative Richard Nixon—in contrast to less than 30% support for Kennedy among graduates of comparable colleges at that time (Newcomb et al., 1967).

Campus culture is not the only source of norms and group pressure, of course. One's workplace, neighborhood, religious group, and family all communicate standards for behavior—and threaten sanctions (such as firing, social rejection, or excommunication) for violating those norms. But a college or university environment can have a powerful impact on young people. This is especially true if they have had narrow life experiences and have not previously encountered attitudes radically different from their own. For example, new college students commonly adopt classmates' political opinions, as in the Bennington study, and also frequently take on religious beliefs of classmates, as well as attitudes about sex and alcohol (see Prentice & Miller, 1993; Schroeder & Prentice, 1995).

Conformity

How powerful are these social pressures? We can see the effects of social pressure in people's moods, clothing styles, and leisure activities (Totterdell, 2000; Totterdell et al., 1998). This tendency to mimic other people is called the *chameleon effect* (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). A personal example of the effects of pervasive social pressures in a college environment on the way students dress can be seen in the study outlined in the "Psychology in Your Life" feature at the end of this section.

We have seen how social pressure in political attitudes influenced Bennington College students. But can social influence be strong enough to make people follow a group norm that is clearly and objectively wrong? Could the power of that situation prove stronger than the evidence of your own eyes?

The Asch Effect Solomon Asch (1940, 1956) set out to answer just such questions by having a group of his confederates challenge the perception of individual students by making them think that their eyes were deceiving them. In Asch's study, male college students were told they would be participating in a study of visual perception. They were shown cards with three lines of differing lengths and asked to indicate which of the three lines was the same length as a separate, standard line (see Figure 14.1). The problem was simple: The lines were different enough so that mistakes were rare when volunteers responded alone. But when those same individuals were put in a group of other students who had been coached to give wrong answers, well, everything changed.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 4
Asch made us realize that *perceptual interpretation* involves the social situation.

Here's how the experiment worked. On the first three trials, everyone agreed on the correct answer. But the first person to respond on the fourth trial reported an obviously incorrect judgment, reporting as equal two lines that were clearly different. So did the next person, and so on, until all members of the group but the remaining one (the only real subject in the experiment) had unanimously agreed on an erroneous judgment. That person then had to decide whether to go along with everyone else's view of the situation and conform or remain independent, standing by the objective evidence of his own eyes. This group pressure was imposed on 12 of the 18 trials.

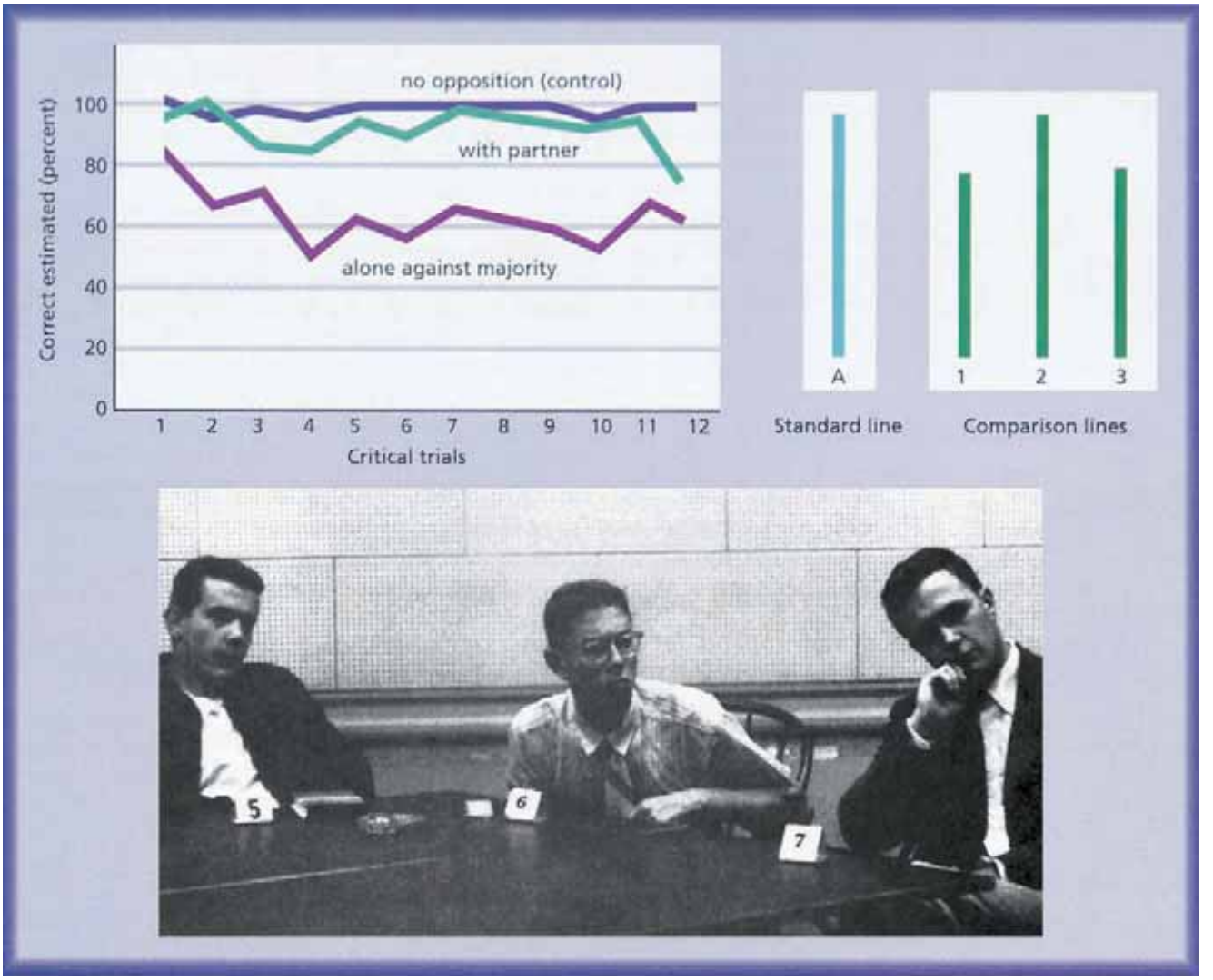
What did he and other participants in his position finally do? As you might expect, nearly everyone showed signs of disbelief and discomfort when faced with a majority who saw the world so differently from the way they did. But despite their distress, the group pressure usually prevailed. Three-quarters of those subjected to group pressure conformed to the false judgment of the group one or more times, while only one-fourth remained completely independent on all trials. In various related studies, between 50 and 80% conformed with the majority's false estimate at least once; a third yielded to the majority's wrong judgments on half or more of the critical trials.

Social psychologists call this the **Asch effect:** the influence of a group majority on the judgments of an individual. The Asch effect has become the classic illustration of **conformity**—the tendency for people to adopt the behavior and opinions presented by other group members. Even though individuals were judging matters of fact, not merely personal opinions, most caved in to conformity pressures.

At the same time, we should recognize that the Asch effect, powerful as it is, still does not make everyone conform. Conformity researchers do regularly find "independents," individuals who are bothered and even dismayed to find themselves in disagreement with the majority, but who nonetheless stand their ground and "call 'em as they see 'em"—even to the point of deliberately giving a wrong answer when the group gives a correct one (Friend et al., 1990). As we will see in a host of other studies in this chapter, more often than not

■ **Asch effect** A form of conformity in which a group majority influences individual judgments.

■ **Conformity** The tendency for people to adopt the behaviors, attitudes, and opinions of other members of a group.



● **FIGURE 14.1** Conformity in the Asch Experiments

In this photo from Asch's study, the naive individual, number 6, displays obvious concern about the majority's erroneous judgment. At top right, you see a typical stimulus array. At top left, the graph illustrates conformity across 12 critical trials, when individuals were grouped with a unanimous majority or had the support of a single dissenting partner. (A lower percentage of correct estimates indicates a greater degree of conformity with the group's false judgment.)

the majority conforms, complies, and gives up personal standards for group standards. However, this situational power faces one challenge, that of *individual heroic defiance*. *Heroes* are people who are able to resist situational forces that overwhelm their peers and remain true to their personal values. They are the "whistle blowers" who challenge corrupt or immoral systems by not going along with the company norm. Sherron Watkins (Schwartz & Watkins, 2003), a vice president at Enron Corporation, did that when she exposed the illegal transactions of Enron, and Army Reservist Joe Darby exposed the horrendous abuses of prisoners by his buddies at Iraq's Abu Ghraib Prison. But these "heroes" are often despised by their former colleagues and made to pay a high price for not being a silent "team player." Darby, for example, had to go into hiding under protective custody for many months because of death threats against him by soldiers in his battalion for humiliating them by exposing the photos of sadistic abuse of prisoners.

Group Characteristics That Produce Conformity In further experiments, Asch identified three factors that influence whether a person will yield to group pressure: (1) *the size of the majority*, (2) *the presence of a partner who dis-*

sented from the majority, and (3) *the size of the discrepancy* between the correct answer and the majority's position. He found that individuals tended to conform with a unanimous majority of as few as three people, but not if they faced only one or two. However, even in a large group, giving the person one ally who dissented from the majority opinion sharply reduced conformity (as shown in Figure 14.1). With such a "partner," nearly all subjects resisted the pressures to conform. Remarkably, however, some individuals continued to yield to the group even with a partner present. All who yielded underestimated the influence of the social pressure and the frequency of their conformity; a few even claimed that they really had seen the lines as the majority had claimed and so were not conforming, only reporting accurately what they were seeing (Asch, 1955, 1956).

Numerous studies have revealed additional factors that influence conformity. (These experiments have included both females and males.) Specifically, a person is more likely to conform under the following circumstances:

- When a judgment task is difficult or ambiguous (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Lott & Lott, 1961; Saltzstein & Sandberg, 1979).
- When the group members are perceived as especially competent.
- When responses are given publicly rather than privately.
- When the group majority is unanimous—but once that unanimity is broken, the rate of conformity drops dramatically (Allen & Levine, 1969; Morris & Miller, 1975).

So now imagine you are about to vote openly in a group, as is common in clubs or on boards of directors. You will probably conform to the group majority if (a) the issue being decided is complex or confusing, (b) others in the group seem to know what they are talking about, (c) you must vote by raising your hand instead of casting an anonymous ballot, (d) the entire group casting their votes before you all vote in a certain way, and especially if (e) the leader votes first.

Sharron Watkins, an executive at Enron, realized that illegal activities were taking place and exposed the mess publicly; she is a heroic whistle blower.

Groupthink Groups can also be pressured to conform. This important social psychological process that encourages conformity in the thinking and decision making of individuals when they are in groups, such as committees, has been termed "groupthink" by psychologist Irving Janis (1972; Janis & Mann, 1977). In *groupthink*, members of the group attempt to conform their opinions to what each believes to be the consensus of the group. This conformity bias leads the group to take actions that each member might normally consider unwise. Seven conditions likely to promote groupthink are

- Isolation of the group
- High group cohesiveness
- Directive leadership
- Lack of norms requiring methodical procedures
- Homogeneity of members' social background and ideology
- High stress from external threats with low hope of a better solution than that of the group leader

This concept was first developed to help understand bad decisions made by the U.S. government regarding the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Vietnam War, and the invasion of Cuba's Bay of Pigs. Later, others have cited groupthink as a factor that contributed to the faulty decisions in the space shuttle disasters, the bankruptcy of Enron Corporation, and, more recently, the 2003 decision to wage war against Iraq (see Schwartz & Wald, 2003). The U.S.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 7

Our judgments are often affected by personal *biases*.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 10

Most personality theories focus on internal processes, while social psychology now emphasizes the external situation.

Senate Intelligence Committee investigating the justifications for the Iraq War cited groupthink as one of the processes involved in that decision. It is interesting to note the use of this social psychological concept in an official report of that government committee:

> The Intelligence Community (IC) has long struggled with the need for analysts to overcome analytic biases . . . . This bias that pervaded both the IC's analytic and collection communities represents 'group think,' a term coined by psychologist Irving Janis in the 1970's to describe a process in which a group can make bad or irrational decisions as each member of the group attempts to conform their opinions to what they believe to be the consensus of the group. IC personnel involved in the Iraq WMD issue demonstrated several aspects of groupthink: examining few alternatives, selective gathering of information, pressure to conform within the group or withhold criticism, and collective rationalization. (U.S. Senate, 2004, p. 4)

Obedience to Authority

So far, we have seen how groups influence individuals. But the arrow of influence also points the other way: Certain individuals, such as leaders and authorities, can command the obedience of groups—or even large masses of people. The ultimate demonstration of this effect was seen in the World War II era, with the emergence of Adolf Hitler in Germany and Benito Mussolini in Italy. These dictators transformed the rational citizens of whole nations into mindlessly loyal followers of a fascist ideology bent on world conquest.

Modern social psychology had its origins in this wartime crucible of fear and prejudice. It was natural, then, that many of the early social psychologists focused on the personalities of people drawn into fascist groups. Specifically, they looked for an *authoritarian personality* behind the fascist group mentality (Adorno et al., 1950). But that dispositional analysis failed to recognize the social, economic, historical, and political realities operating on those populations at that time. To clarify this point, let us reflect for a moment on some more recent examples of unquestioning obedience to authority.

In 1978, a group of American citizens left California to relocate their Protestant religious order, called "Peoples Temple," in the South American jungle of Guyana. There, following the orders of their charismatic leader, the Reverend Jim Jones, over 900 members of the Peoples Temple willingly administered lethal doses of cyanide to hundreds of their children, then to their parents, and then to themselves. Then, in 1993, 100 members of a religious sect in Waco, Texas, joined their leader, David Koresh, in defying federal agents who had surrounded their compound. After a standoff of several weeks, the Branch Davidians set fire to their quarters rather than surrender. In the resulting conflagration, scores of men, women, and children perished. Four years later, the college-bred members of another group calling itself "Heaven's Gate" followed their leader's command to commit mass suicide in order to achieve a "higher plane" of being. And on September 11, 2001, followers of Osama bin Laden commandeered commercial airliners and piloted them into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. In addition to murdering thousands of people on those planes and working at those sites, they knowingly committed suicide. And even more recently, scores of suicide bombers, both men and women, have blown themselves apart as "revolutionary martyrs" in the Palestinian campaign against Israel. Were these people mentally deranged, stupid, and totally strange creatures—unlike us? Are there any conditions under which *you* would blindly obey an order from a person you love and respect (or fear) to

do such extreme deeds? Would you, for example, obey an authority figure who told you to electrocute a stranger? Of course, you are saying to yourself, "No way," "Not me," "I am not that kind of person." But think about what each of the people we have described above must have been thinking *before* they were caught up in their obedience trap—the same thing as you, probably.

After reading this chapter, you may be more likely to answer, "I hope not—but I have a better understanding of the social forces that can pressure ordinary people like me to commit horrible acts." And, your authors hope, your study of social psychology will make you more resistant to the forces that produce unquestioning obedience and conformity. We want you to be one of the thoughtful heroes and not one of the mindless majority.

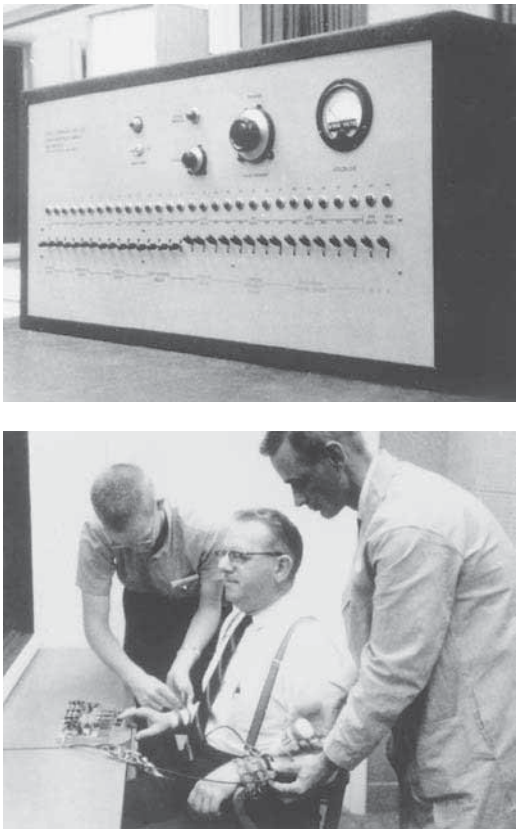
On that note, let us now turn to the most convincing demonstration of situational power ever created in the laboratory. In a dramatic experiment, social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1965, 1974) showed that a willingness of people to follow the orders of an authority, even potentially lethal ones, is not confined to a few extreme personalities or deranged individuals. This finding, along with certain ethical issues that the experiment raises, places Milgram's work at the center of one of the biggest controversies in psychology (Blass, 1996; Miller, 1986; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Let us begin with a look at the controversial methods Milgram used.

Milgram's Obedience Experiment The experiment was first conducted on Yale College students where Milgram was teaching at the time. After his initial surprising results, he advertised for more paid volunteers among ordinary citizens in several towns in Connecticut and conducted variations of his original paradigm on more than 1000 participants from a variety of backgrounds. The volunteers thought that they were participating in a scientific study of memory and learning. Specifically, they were led to believe that the research aimed to help improve learning and memory by punishing errors as soon as they were made, as well as rewarding correct responding. Cast in the role of "teacher," a volunteer subject was instructed to punish memory errors made by another person (actually a confederate of the experimenter) playing the role of "learner." To administer punishment, the teacher was told to throw a switch that would deliver an electric shock to the learner each time the learner made an error. Moreover, the teacher was told to increase the level of shock by a fixed amount for every new error. Overseeing the whole procedure was a white-coated experimenter. This authority figure presented the rules, arranged for the assignment of roles (by a rigged drawing of lots), and ordered the teachers to do their job whenever they hesitated or dissented.

The real question driving the experiment was this: How far would people go before they defied the authority figure by refusing to obey? The dependent variable was the teacher's response, measured by the highest shock level he was willing to deliver. The level of shock could be clearly seen on a "shock generator" that featured a row of 30 switches that apparently could deliver shocks in 30-volt steps from a weak start of 15 volts all the way up to 450 volts, marked on the generator as "XXX."

To make the situation realistic, Milgram gave each "teacher" a mild sample shock. This convinced them that the apparatus was actually delivering shocks and that they would be causing the "learner" increasing pain and suffering each time they flipped a switch. Except for this demonstration shock, however, no shocks were actually administered: You will remember that the learner was actually a part of the experimental team.

The part of the learner was played by a pleasant, mild-mannered man about 50 years old. He mentioned having a "heart condition" but said he was willing to go along with the procedure. The experimenter obliged by strapping



● Milgram's obedience experiment. Top, generator; bottom, the "learner" being strapped into his electrified chair. Experts incorrectly predicted the behavior of the "teachers" because they failed to consider the influence of the special situation created in the experiment. Although many of the participants in Milgram's study dissented verbally, the majority obeyed.

him into an "electric chair" in an adjacent room. As the learner, his task was to memorize pairs of words and then choose the correct response for each stimulus word from a multiple-choice listing. Following the experimental script, the learner soon began making mistakes.

At 75 volts, the script called for the learner to moan and grunt; at 150 volts he would demand to be released from the experiment. At 180 volts he would cry out that he could not stand the pain any longer. The plan then called for the learner's protests to increase with increasing shock levels. For any teachers still delivering punishment at the 300-volt level, the learner would shout that he would no longer take part in the experiment and must be freed. As you might imagine, this situation was stressful. If the teacher hesitated or protested about delivering the required shock at any level, the experimenter interrupted, stating that the experiment "must continue," demanding that the teacher "please continue." Most volunteers dissented often; when they asked who would be responsible for the consequences, the authority figure said he would assume full responsibility. But when the shock level rose to 375 volts, the "learner" screamed out, and there was a thud and then silence. Virtually all of the participants stopped shocking but then continued when the authority reminded them that failure to respond was an error that also had to be punished. The experiment ended only when the shock level reached the 450-volt maximum—or when the "teacher" refused to obey.

The Shocking Results Suppose for a moment that you were the "teacher." Ask yourself the following questions:

- How far up the shock scale would you go?
- At which level would you refuse to continue?

In Milgram's experiment, nearly two-thirds delivered the maximum 450 volts to the learner. Most of those who refused to give the maximum shock obeyed until reaching about 300 volts. And no one who got within five switches of the end refused to go all the way. By then their resistance was broken; they had resolved their own conflicts and just tried to get it over with as quickly as possible. Most verbally dissented but behaviorally obeyed the white-coated authority. These same results were found with the Yale College students as with the many ordinary citizens from all walks of life.

These were not sadistic people who obeyed happily. They dissented verbally, even though they continued to deliver shocks. One person complained to the unwavering experimenter, "He can't stand it! I'm not going to kill that man in there! You hear him hollering? He's hollering . . . Who is going to take the responsibility if anything happens to that gentleman?" Clearly upset, this individual added, "You mean I've got to keep going up with that scale? No sir, I'm not going to kill that man!" (Milgram, 1965, p. 67). But the shocks continued. When the learner simply stopped responding to the questions, some teachers called out to him, urging him to get the answer right so they would not have to continue shocking him. All the while they protested loudly to the experimenter, but the experimenter responded with stern commands: "You have no other choice, you *must* go on." Even when there was only silence from the learner's room, the teacher was ordered to keep shocking him more and more strongly, all the way up to the button that was marked "Danger: Severe Shock XXX (450 volts)." Most people obeyed.

Of course, no shocks were ever delivered to the learner. The "victim" of the "shocks" was an accomplished actor who congenially chatted with his "teacher" after the experiment and assured him he was fine and had never felt any shocks. All of his comments during the study had been tape recorded to standardize the procedure across the many trials and variations of the study. Moreover, the powerful authority figure in the white lab coat was not a "real" authority—not Milgram himself, but a hired actor. And for all the "teachers" knew, once the learner fell silent he might have been unconscious or dead—but in any case his memory could not be improved by further shocks. Nevertheless, hundreds of people, young and old, educated or not, mindlessly obeyed and continued doing as ordered even though it would have made no sense had they thought rationally about what they were doing.

This Chinese man risked his life by defying authority. Would you have done the same?

The controversy about Milgram's research concerns the ethics of deception and the potentially disturbing effects on those in the role of teacher.

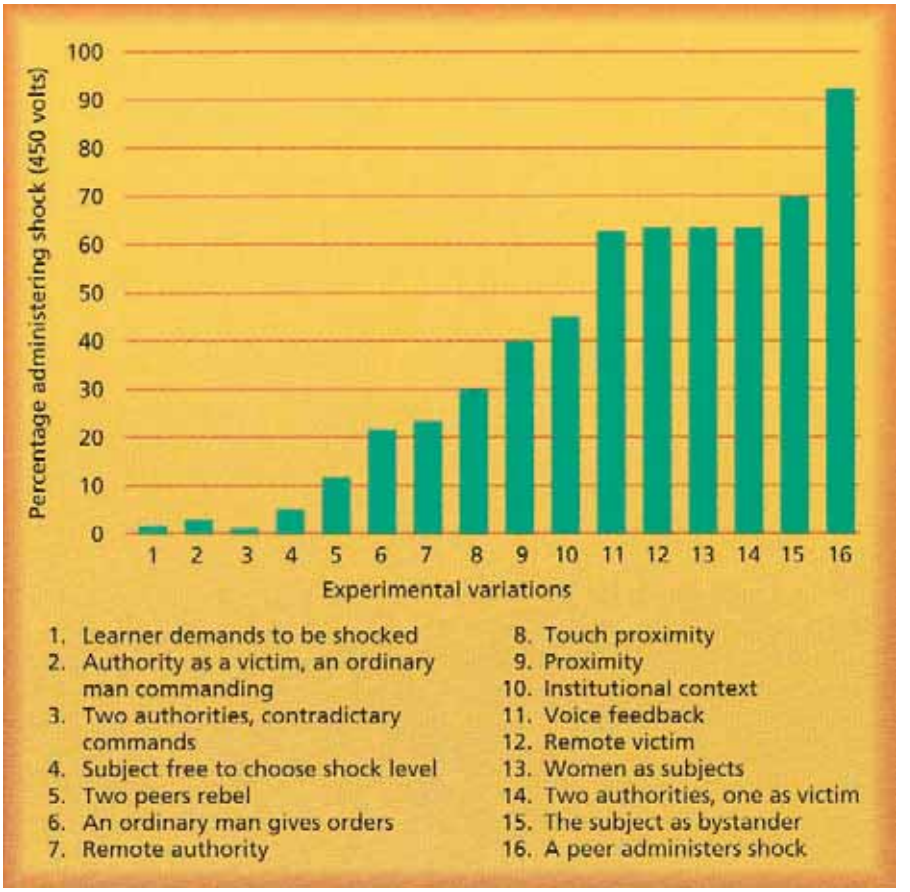
Why Do We Obey Authority? From the many variations Milgram conducted on his original study, we can conclude that people tended to be obedient under the following conditions (Milgram, 1965, 1974; Rosenhan, 1969):

- *When a peer modeled obedience* by complying with the authority figure's commands
- *When the victim was remote from the "teacher"* and could not be seen or heard
- *When the "teacher" was under direct surveillance of the authority figure* so that he was aware of the authority figure's presence
- *When a participant acted as an intermediary bystander,* merely "assisting" the one who was delivering the shock, rather than actually throwing the switches
- *When the authority figure had higher relative status,* as when the participant was a student and the experimenter was billed as "professor" or "doctor"

What are the lessons to be learned? If you carefully review these conditions (Figure 14.2), you can see that the obedience effect results from *situational* variables and not *personality* variables. In fact, personality tests administered to the subjects did *not* reveal any traits that differentiated those who obeyed from those who refused, nor did they identify any psychological disturbance or abnormality in the obedient punishers. These findings enable us to rule out personality as a variable in obedient behavior. And what about gender? Milgram later found that women were just as obedient as men (Milgram, 1974).

Like the Stanford prison study, obedience research challenges the myth that evil lurks in the minds of evil people—that the bad "they" differ from the good "us" who would never do such things. The purpose in recounting these findings is not to debase human nature or to excuse evil deeds but to make it clear that even normal, well-meaning individuals can give in to strong situational and social influences to behave wrongly when they know very well how they should behave. In a sense, this reflects one view of "evil" as knowing better but doing worse.

Before moving on to our next major issue, there is an important matter for us to add. Although you should remember the Milgram effect as "two-thirds



● **FIGURE 14.2** Obedience in Milgram's Experiments

The graph shows a profile of weak or strong obedience effects across situational variations of Milgram's study of obedience to authority. (*Source:* From THE OBEDIENCE EXPERIMENTS: A Case Study of Controversy in the Social Sciences by A. G. Miller. Copyright © 1986 by Praeger Publishers, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., Westport, CT.)

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 9

Moral judgments depend not only on the situation but also on one's stage of *moral development.*

went all the way," in the many variations he conducted obedience went all the way up to 90% if the teacher first observed others going all the way, although it dropped to only 10% when the teacher saw peers refusing to go all the way. The other take-home message from these experiments is that social models can have an enormous impact on how you behave and that you should be aware that you are a social model for others. And just to make you more aware when such influence may be at work, in Table 14.1 we have listed some general tactics of influence that can get good people to do harmful deeds (Zimbardo, 2004b).

TABLE 14.1 Getting Good People to Do Bad Things

- Provide people with an ideology to justify beliefs for actions.
- Make people take a small first step toward a harmful act with a minor, trivial action, and then gradually increase those small actions.
- Make those in charge seem like a "just authority."
- Slowly transform a once compassionate leader into a dictatorial figure.
- Provide people with vague and ever-changing rules.
- Relabel the situation's actors and their actions to legitimize the ideology.
- Provide people with social models of compliance.
- Allow verbal dissent but only if people continue to comply behaviorally with orders.
- Encourage dehumanizing the victim.
- Make exiting the situation difficult.

The Bystander Problem: The Evil of Inaction

Harm doesn't always come from a hurtful act. It can also come from *inaction* when someone needs help. We can illustrate this fact with a news event that stunned the nation and then inspired some vital psychological research. In Queens, New York, 38 ordinary citizens watched for more than half an hour as a man with a knife stalked and killed Kitty Genovese in three separate attacks. Twice the sound of the bystanders' voices and the sudden glow of their bedroom lights interrupted the assailant and frightened him. Each time, however, he returned and stabbed her again. Not a single person telephoned the police during the assault! Only one witness called the police—after the woman was finally raped and murdered (*New York Times,* March 13, 1964, as cited in Darley & Latané, 1968). The newspaper and TV accounts of this gruesome story played up the angle of bystander "apathy," the callous indifference of New Yorkers, and a bewildered nation.

Why didn't bystanders help? Was it something in the *person* (again the dispositional analysis: New Yorkers being "callous" types), or was it something in the *situation* (something outside of any of the individuals)? Come let us see again how social psychology is done.

Kitty Genovese was murdered in her neighborhood while 38 of her neighbors watched. Why didn't somebody help? The answer is not what most people think.

Contrived Emergencies Soon after hearing of Kitty Genovese's murder and the analysis in the press, social psychologists Bibb Latané and John Darley began a series of studies on the bystander intervention problem. These studies all ingeniously created laboratory analogues of the difficulties faced by bystanders in real emergency situations. In one such experiment, a college student, placed alone in a room with an intercom, was led to believe that he was communicating with one or more students in adjacent rooms. During a discussion about personal problems, this individual heard what sounded like another student having a seizure and gasping for help. During the "seizure" the bystander couldn't talk to the other students or find out what, if anything, they were doing about the emergency. The dependent variable was the speed with which he reported the emergency to the experimenter. The independent variable was the number of people he believed were in the discussion group with him.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 2

The *independent variable* refers to the various stimulus conditions for different groups in an experiment.

It turned out that the speed of response by those in this situation depended on the number of bystanders they thought were present. The more other people they believed to be listening in on the situation in other rooms, the *slower* they were to report the seizure, if they did so at all. As you can see in Figure 14.3, all those in a two-person situation intervened within 160 seconds, but only 60% of those who believed they were part of a large group ever informed the experimenter that another student was seriously ill (Latané & Darley, 1968).

Was it the person or the situation? Personality tests showed no significant relationship between particular personality characteristics of the participants and their speed or likelihood of intervening. The best predictor of bystander intervention was the situational variable of *group size*. By way of explanation, Darley and Latané proposed that the likelihood of intervention *decreases* as the group *increases* in size, because each person assumes that others will help, so he or she does not have to make that commitment. Individuals who perceive themselves as part of a large group of potential interveners experience a **diffusion of responsibility:** a dilution or weakening of each group member's obligation to help, to become personally involved. You may have experienced moments of diffused responsibility if you have driven past a disabled car beside a busy highway because "surely someone else" would stop and help.

Diffusion of responsibility
Dilution or weakening of each group member's obligation to act when responsibility is perceived to be shared with all group members.

Another factor was undoubtedly also at work: conformity. As you will remember from our Core Concept and from Asch's studies of conformity, when people don't know what to do, they take their cues from others. The same thing

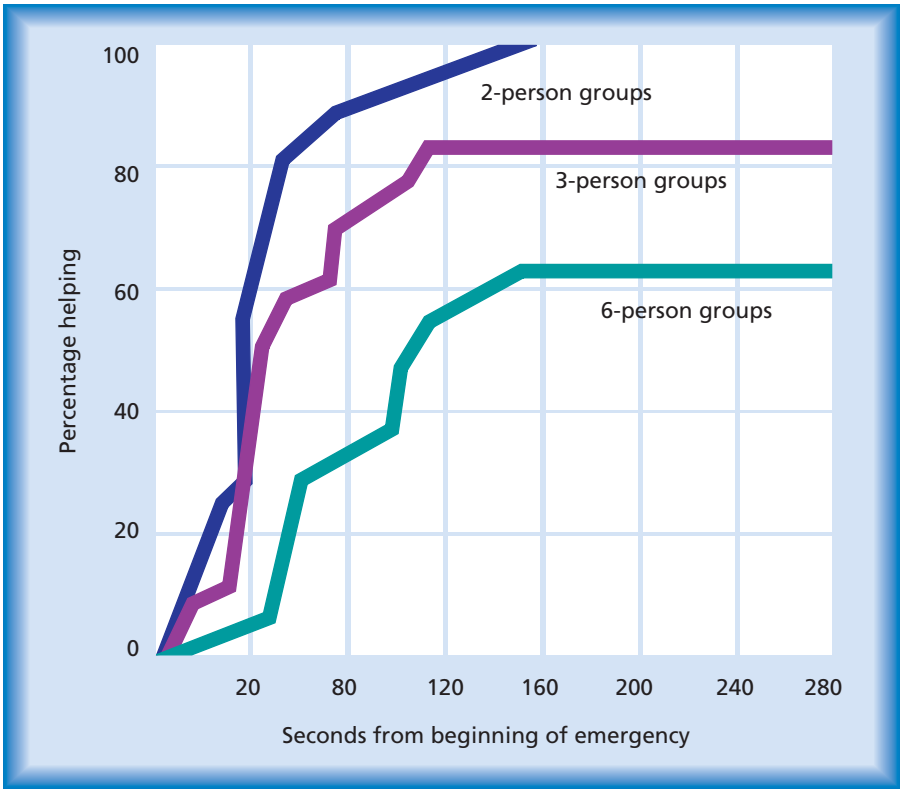


FIGURE 14.3 Bystander Intervention in an Emergency

The more people present in a crisis, the less likely it is that any one bystander will intervene. As this summary of research findings shows, bystanders act most quickly in two-person groupings. (*Source:* From "Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibilities," by S. M. Darley and B. Latané, *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology,* 1968, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 377–384. Copyright © 1968 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted by permission of the American Psychological Association.)

occurred in the bystander studies, where subjects who failed to intervene were observing and conforming to the behavior of other people who were doing nothing.

Does Training Encourage Helping? Two studies suggest that the bystander problem can be countered with appropriate training. Ted Huston and his colleagues (1981) found no personality traits that distinguished people who had helped in actual emergency situations from those who had not. But they did find that helpers more often had had some medical, police, first-aid, or CPR training in dealing with emergency situations. And another study shows that even a psychology class lecture on the bystander problem can help (Beaman et al., 1978). Students had an opportunity to help a "victim" slumped in a doorway while walking by with a nonresponsive confederate of the experimenter. Those who had attended a lecture on bystander intervention were twice as likely to stop and attempt to help as those who had not received the lecture on helping. Education apparently makes some difference.

Need help? Ask for it! To demonstrate the positive effects of situational power, social psychologist Tom Moriarity (1975) arranged two fascinating experiments. In the first study, New Yorkers watched as a thief snatched a woman's suitcase in a restaurant when she left her table. In the second, they watched a thief grab a portable radio from a beach blanket when the owner left it for a few minutes. What did these onlookers do? Some did nothing, letting the thief go on his merry way. But others did intervene. What were the conditions under which some helped and others did not?

In each experiment, the would-be theft victim (the experimenter's accomplice) had first asked the soon-to-be observer of the crime either "Do you have the time?" or "Will you please keep an eye on my bag (radio) while I'm gone?"

DO IT YOURSELF! What Makes a Samaritan Good or Bad?

Now that you know something about bystander intervention, let's see how good you are at picking the crucial variable out of a bystander situation inspired by the biblical tale of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:30–37). In the biblical account, several important people are too busy to help a stranger in distress. He is finally assisted by an outsider, a Samaritan, who takes the time to offer aid. Could the failure of the distressed individual's countrymen to help be due to character flaws or personal dispositions? Or was it determined by the situation?

Social psychologists decided to put students at the Princeton Theological Seminary into a similar situation. It was made all the more ironic because they thought that they were being evaluated on the quality of the sermons they were about to deliver on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Let's see what happened when these seminarians were given an opportunity to help someone in distress.

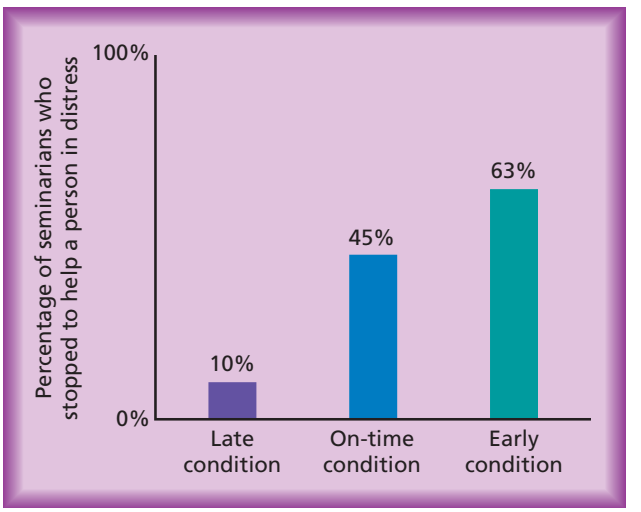
With sermon in hand, each was directed to a nearby building where the sermon was to be recorded. But as the student walked down an alley between the two buildings, he came upon a man slumped in a doorway, in obvious need of help. The student now had the chance to practice what he was about to preach. What would you guess was the crucial variable that predicted how likely a seminarian—ready to preach about the Good Samaritan—was to help a person in distress? Choose one:

a. How religious the seminarian was (as rated by his classmates)
b. How "neurotic" the seminarian was (as rated on the "Big Five" personality traits)
c. How much of a hurry the seminarian was in
d. How old the seminarian was

All of the dispositional variables (personal characteristics) of the seminarians were controlled by random assignment of subjects to three different conditions. Thus, we know that personality was not the determining factor. Rather, it was a situational variable: time. Before the seminarians left the briefing room to have their sermons recorded in a nearby building, each was told how much time he had to get to the studio. Some were assigned to a late condition, in which they had to hurry to make the next session; others to an on-time condition, in which they would make the next session just on time; and a third group to an early condition, in which they had a few spare minutes before they would be recorded.

What were the results? Of those who were in a hurry, only 10% helped. Ninety percent failed to act as Good Samaritans! If they were on time, 45% helped the stranger. The greatest bystander intervention came from 63% of those who were not in any time bind.

Remarkably, the manipulation of time urgency made those in the "late" condition six times less likely to help than those in the "early" condition. While fulfilling their obligation to hurry, these individuals appeared to have a single-minded purpose that blinded them to other events around them. Again, it was the power of the situation.



Results of the "Good Samaritan" Study

Even with a sermon on the Good Samaritan in hand, seminary students who were in a hurry didn't usually stop to help (Darley & Batson, 1973).

The first interaction elicited no personal responsibility, and almost all of the bystanders stood by idly as the theft unfolded. However, of those who had agreed to watch the victim's property, almost every bystander intervened. They called for help, and some even tackled the runaway thief on the beach.

The encouraging message is that we can often convert apathy to action and transform callousness to kindness just by asking for it. The mere act of requesting a favor forges a special human bond that involves other people in ways that materially change the situation. It makes them feel responsible to you, and thereby responsible for what happens in your shared social world. You can use this knowledge to increase your chances of getting aid from would-be helpers in several ways (Schroeder et al., 1995):

- *Ask for help.* Let others know you need it rather than assuming they realize your need or know what is required.
- *Reduce the ambiguity* of the situation by clearly explaining the problem and what should be done: "She's fainted! Call an ambulance right away," or "Someone broke into my house—call the police and give them this address!"

- *Identify specific individuals* so they do not diffuse responsibility with others present: "You, in the red shirt: Call 911!" or "Will the person in the blue Toyota please call for a tow truck right away?"

None of these tactics guarantees the safety of your person or possessions, of course. (Kitty Genovese did call for help.) Nevertheless they probably represent your best hope if you find yourself, alone in a crowd, facing a real emergency.

PSYCHOLOGY IN YOUR LIFE: ON BEING "SHOE" AT YALE[1]

When I (PGZ) arrived at Yale University to start my graduate career in the mid-1950s, I was dressed in all my south Bronx splendor—blue suede shoes, peg pants, big rolled collar (Billy Eckstein model), and other cool clothes. A month or two later, I was wearing chino pants, button-down shirt, and loafers. I was not fully aware of the subtle social pressures to change my "taste" in apparel but knew that I felt more "in" in those weird Yalie clothes than I had in my good old Bronx duds. But as a budding psychologist, I used my personal case study to motivate me to find out more about that unwritten dress code, one that everyone around the campus at that time was following as if a Marine drill instructor were ordering our total mindless compliance.

Interviews with seniors revealed that indeed there was a powerful dress code that the "in group" formulated regularly in order to distinguish them from the mass of "out group" pretenders. Every single item of clothing could be identified by those in the know as socially appropriate at that time for real Yale men to wear (it was all male at that time). I was informed that the underlying concept was being "shoe." (Yale men of that era and earlier could be identified as wearing white buck shoes.) To be "shoe" was to be in, to be cool, to be with it, to be right on, and so forth. Not only was every bit of clothing indexed as to its degree of shoeness, but so was everything else in that universe. Tennis, golf, and crew were shoe, basketball was not. Asking questions in lecture classes was not shoe; tailgating before football games was shoe, but only if done with the right style, or panache. Of equal interest to me was the fact that shoe ratings changed periodically to keep outsiders from being mistaken as really true blue shoe. One year the Yale Senior ring was shoe to wear, the next year it might be un-shoe; or handmade bow ties would become un-shoe and clip-on bow ties would vault from low-shoe to high-shoe rating.

My team of informants helped me to form an index of the shoe strengths of every conceivable item of clothing that a Yale student might wear that year. With the help of my introductory psychology students, we went into the dormitories and found out what students from each college class actually had in their wardrobes. We then multiplied each of those items of clothing by their Shoe Index and averaged those ratings across each class from frosh to senior. Next, we separated out students' shoe scores by whether they had come from prep schools or public high schools.

Three major significant results were obvious from our graphs of the quantification of Shoeness at Yale:

1. Student wardrobes become ever more shoe as they progress from lowly frosh up to high-powered seniors.
2. Preppy frosh were much more shoe than their classmates from public high schools.

[1]Zimbardo, P. G. (2004a). *On being "shoe" at Yale: A study in institutional conformity.* In preparation, Stanford University.

3. Over the four years, the gap between prep schoolers and high schoolers diminished, so that by senior year they were almost equally shoe.

When Yale became co-ed in the next decade, this kind of shoeness became less apparent, went undergound, and now may exist only in very modified forms. But let this be a lesson to you whatever school you are in: Much of what you think is the You in Your Taste, is really the Them in social conformity pressures subtly imposed on you to be like Them and liked by Them.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. **RECALL:** The Stanford prison experiment illustrates the power of _____ to influence people's behavior.
   - **a.** personality
   - **b.** heredity
   - **c.** childhood experiences
   - **d.** the situation
   - **e.** habituation

2. **RECALL:** Which of the following would be a social role?
   - **a.** prisoner
   - **b.** student
   - **c.** professor
   - **d.** all of the above
   - **e.** none of the above

3. **RECALL:** In the Asch studies, which of the following produced a decrease in conformity?
   - **a.** The task was seen as difficult or ambiguous.
   - **b.** The subject had to respond publicly, rather than privately.
   - **c.** The majority was not unanimous in its judgment.
   - **d.** The group was very large.
   - **e.** The group was very small.

4. **RECALL:** In Milgram's original study, about what proportion of the teachers gave the maximum shock?
   - **a.** about two-thirds
   - **b.** about 10%
   - **c.** about 3%
   - **d.** nearly all
   - **e.** about 50%

5. **APPLICATION:** In an emergency situation, you would have the best chance of getting help from a
   - **a.** lone bystander.
   - **b.** large group of people.
   - **c.** group of people who are friends of each other.
   - **d.** group of six people.
   - **e.** group of strangers.

6. **UNDERSTANDING THE CORE CONCEPT:** Which of the following best illustrates people in ambiguous situations taking their cues from others?
   - **a.** those who obeyed Milgram
   - **b.** those who disobeyed Milgram
   - **c.** helpers who have had CPR training
   - **d.** the experimenter in the Latané & Darley study of bystander intervention
   - **e.** the majority of participants who expressed false judgments in the Asch experiments

ANSWERS: 1. d 2. d 3. c 4. a 5. a 6. e

CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL REALITY: WHAT INFLUENCES OUR JUDGMENTS OF OTHERS?

KEY QUESTION

Powerful as a social situation is, it doesn't account for everything that people do. For example, it does not account for the individual differences we see in people's choices of friends and romantic partners, nor does it account for their prejudices. To explain the patterns we find in social interaction, we must also look at cognitive processes. In the language of social psychology, we need to understand how we construct our **social reality**—our subjective interpretations of other people and of our relationships. Thus, the social reality that we construct determines whom we find attractive, whom we find threatening, whom we seek out, and whom we avoid. This, then, leads us to the second lesson of social psychology, captured in our next Core Concept:

■ **Social reality** An individual's subjective interpretation of other people and of relationships with them.

CORE CONCEPT

The judgments we make about others depend not only on their behavior but also on our interpretation of their actions within a social context.

We will illustrate how these cognitive factors operate by analyzing how they affect our attitudes toward other people. Let's start out on the positive end of the scale by asking a simple question: What makes people like each other? That is, what produces *interpersonal attraction?* Then we will move to the opposite end of the scale with a look at the negative feelings that often underlie *prejudice.*

Interpersonal Attraction

It is no surprise that we are attracted to people who have something to offer us (Brehm et al., 2002; Simpson & Harris, 1994). We tend to like those who give us gifts, agree with us, act friendly toward us, share our interests, entertain us, and help us in times of need—unless, of course, we suspect that their behavior is self-serving. Although we don't necessarily mind giving something back in the form of a social exchange, we shrink from relationships that merely take from us and offer nothing in return. In the best of relationships, as in a friendship, partnership, marriage, or business relationship, both parties receive rewards. You might consider whether this is true in your own relationships as we look at the *reward theory of attraction* next.

Reward Theory: We (Usually) Prefer Rewarding Relationships Most good relationships can be seen as an exchange of benefits (Batson, 1987; Clark et al., 1989). The benefits could be some combination of money and material possessions. Or the exchange might involve something intangible like praise, status, information, sex, or emotional support.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 6

Social learning involves expectations of rewards and punishments learned through social interaction and the observation of others.

Social psychologist Elliot Aronson (2004) summarizes this in a **reward theory of attraction,** which says that attraction is a form of social learning. By looking at the social costs and benefits, claims Aronson, we can usually understand why people are attracted to each other. In brief, reward theory says that we like best those who give us maximum rewards at minimum cost. After we look at the evidence, we think you will agree that this theory explains (almost) everything about interpersonal attraction.

Social psychologists have found four especially powerful sources of reward that predict interpersonal attraction: *proximity, similarity, self-disclosure,* and *physical attractiveness.* Most of us choose our friends, associates, and lovers because they offer some combination of these factors at a relatively low social cost.

Proximity An old saying advises, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Another contradicts with "Out of sight, out of mind." Which one is correct? Studies show that frequent sightings best predict our closest relationships and the people we see most often are the people who live and work nearest us (Simpson & Harris, 1994). In college dormitories, residents more often become close friends with the person who lives in the next room than they do with the person who lives two doors down (Priest & Sawyer, 1967). Residents of apartments make more friendships among people who live on the same floor than among those who live on other floors (Nahemow & Lawton, 1975). Those who live in neighborhoods more often become friends with the occupants of the house next door than with people living two houses away (Festinger et al., 1950). This **principle of proximity** (nearness) also accounts for the fact that many people end up married to the boy or girl next door (Ineichen, 1979). And it correctly predicts that people at work will make more friends among those with whom they have the most contact (Segal, 1974).

■ **Reward theory of attraction** A social-learning view that says we like best those who give us maximum rewards at minimum cost.

■ **Principle of proximity** The notion that people at work will make more friends among those who are nearby–with whom they have the most contact. Proximity means "nearness."

Although you don't have to like your neighbors, the proximity rule says that when two individuals are equally attractive, you are more likely to make friends with the nearest one: The rewards are equal, but the cost is less in time and inconvenience (Gilbertson et al., 1998). Apparently, another old saying,

that familiarity breeds contempt, should be revised in light of social psychological research: In fact, familiarity more often breeds friendship. Increased contact, itself, often increases peoples' liking for each other (Bornstein, 1989).

The principle of proximity predicts that coworkers are likely to become friends.

Similarity People usually find it more rewarding to strike up a friendship with someone who shares their attitudes, interests, values, and experiences than to bother with people who are disagreeable or merely different (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992; Kelley et al., 1983; Simpson & Harris, 1994). If two people have just discovered that they share tastes in music, politics, and attitudes toward education, they will probably hit it off because they have, in effect, exchanged compliments that reward each other for their tastes and attitudes (Byrne, 1969). The **similarity principle** also explains why teenagers are most likely to make friends among those who share their political and religious views, educational aspirations, and attitudes toward music, alcohol, and drugs (Kandel, 1978). Likewise, similarity accounts for the fact that most people find marriage partners of the same age, race, social status, attitudes, and values (Brehm, 1992; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992). In general, similarity, like proximity, makes the heart grow fonder.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 4

The Gestalt principle of *similarity* refers to perceptual grouping of objects that share common features.

Self-Disclosure Good friends and lovers share intimate details about themselves (Sternberg, 1998). This practice not only allows people to know each other more deeply but also sends signals of trust. It is as if I say, "Here is a piece of information that I want you to know about me, and I trust you not to hurt me with it." Friends and lovers usually find such exchanges highly rewarding. When you observe people exchanging confidences and details about their lives, you can predict that they are becoming more and more attracted to each other. Given that sharing personal disclosures comes after a sense of trust has been created in a relationship, it both takes time to reach this level of intimacy and is an index of the trust that the disclosing person has in the other.

Physical Attractiveness Yet another old saying tells us that beauty is only skin deep. Nevertheless, people usually find it more rewarding to associate with people they consider physically attractive than with those they consider plain or homely (Patzer, 1985). Fair or not, good looks are a real social asset. Potential employers, for example, prefer good-looking job candidates to plainer applicants (Cash & Janda, 1984). Looks also affect people's judgments of children. Attractive children are judged as happier and more competent than their peers (Dion, 1986; Eagly et al., 1991; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Even babies judge people by their appearances. We know this because babies gaze longer at pictures of normal faces than at those of distorted faces (Langlois et al., 1987).

Most people are repelled by the idea that they might make judgments based only on looks. Indeed, when asked what they look for in a dating partner, college students rank physical attractiveness last. But what people *say* does not match what they *do*—at least as far as their first impressions go. Across many studies, involving a variety of characteristics, including intelligence, sincerity, masculinity, femininity, and independence, physical attractiveness overwhelmed everything else as the best predictor of how well a person would be liked after a first meeting (Aronson, 1999; Feingold, 1990; Langlois et al., 1998; Tesser & Brodie, 1971).

Other research shows that the principle of attractiveness applies equally to same-sex and opposite-sex relationships (Maruyama & Miller, 1975). Gender

Similarity principle The notion that people are attracted to those who are most similar to themselves.

differences do exist, however. Both males and females are strongly influenced by physical attractiveness, but men seem to be more influenced by looks than are women (Cash & Killcullen, 1985; Feingold, 1990; Folkes, 1982; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986).

These findings may come as bad news for the majority of us, who consider ourselves rather average-looking at best. But we can take some comfort in a study that suggests that people actually consider a composite of "average" features to be the most attractive. Investigators fed images of many students' faces into a computer program that manipulated the facial features to be more or less of an average combination of all features from the many different student portraits. Surprisingly, they found that people usually liked best the images having features closest to the average size and shape (Langlois & Roggman, 1990; Langlois et al., 1994; Rhodes et al., 1999).

Now some bad news for exceptionally attractive readers: While we usually associate positive qualities with attractive individuals (Calvert, 1988), extreme attractiveness can also be a liability. Although physically attractive people are seen as more poised, interesting, sociable, independent, exciting, sexual, intelligent, well-adjusted, and successful, they are also perceived as more vain and materialistic (Brigham, 1980; Cash & Duncan, 1984; Hassebrauck, 1988; Moore et al., 1987). A "double standard" also comes into play. For example, the public favors good-looking male politicians but disparages their attractive female counterparts (Sigelman et al., 1986). It is also double trouble to be shy and handsome or beautiful because others mistakenly interpret such people's reserved demeanor as signaling that they are cold and indifferent or feel superior.

These effects of physical attractiveness hint that reward, as powerful as it is, does not account for everything. We will see this more clearly below, as we explore some important exceptions to the reward theory of attraction.

Exceptions to the Reward Theory of Attraction Although the rules of proximity, similarity, self-disclosure, and physical attractiveness may explain a great deal about interpersonal attraction, a casual look around reveals lots of relationships that don't seem especially rewarding. Why, for example, might a woman be attracted to a man who abuses her? Why would a person want to join an organization that requires a difficult or degrading initiation ritual? Such relationships pose most interesting puzzles (Aronson, 2004). Could some people actually feel *more* attraction when they find that another person has *less* to offer them? Let's try to uncover the principles of social cognition operating behind some interesting exceptions to a reward theory of attraction.

Expectations and the Influence of Self-Esteem We have seen that reward theory predicts our attraction to smart, good-looking, nearby, self-disclosing, like-minded, and powerful people. Yet you have probably observed that most people end up with friends and mates whom you would judge to be of about their same level of attractiveness—the so-called **matching hypothesis** (Feingold, 1988; Harvey & Pauwels, 1999). How does this happen? Is our selection of associates the result of a sort of bargaining for the best we can get in the interpersonal marketplace?

Yes, says **expectancy-value theory.** People usually decide whether to pursue a relationship by weighing the value they see in another person (including such qualities as physical attractiveness, wit, interests, and intelligence) against their expectation of success in the relationship (Will the other person be attracted to me?). Most of us don't waste too much time on interpersonal causes we think are lost. Rather, we initiate relationships with the most attractive people we think will probably like us in return. In this sense, expectancy-value theory is not so much a competitor of reward theory as a refinement of it.

■ **Matching hypothesis** The prediction that most people will find friends and mates that are perceived to be of about their same level of attractiveness.

■ **Expectancy-value theory** A theory in social psychology that people decide whether to pursue a relationship by weighing the potential value of the relationship against their expectation of success in establishing the relationship.

One noteworthy exception to this argument involves people who suffer from low self-esteem. Sadly, people with low opinions of themselves tend to establish relationships with people who share their views, often with people who devalue them. Such individuals generally feel a stronger commitment to a relationship when their partner thinks poorly of them than when the partner thinks well of them (Swann et al., 1992).

Those individuals who appear to be extremely competent can also be losers in the expectancy-value game. Why? Most of us keep such people at a distance, probably because we fear that they will be quick to reject our approaches. But if you happen to be one of these stunningly superior people, do not despair: Social psychologists have found hope! When highly competent individuals commit minor blunders—spilling a drink or dropping a sheaf of papers—other people actually like them better, probably because blunders bring them down to everyone else's level and "normalize" them (Aronson et al., 1966, 1970). Don't count on this, however, unless you are so awesomely competent as to be unapproachable. The latté-in-the-lap trick only makes most of us look like klutzes whom people like less.

Cognitive dissonance theory predicts that these recruits will increase their loyalty to the Marine Corps as a result of their basic training ordeal.

Attraction and Self-Justification *Semper fidelis,* says the Marine Corps motto: "Always faithful." Considering the discomforting experiences that people must go through to become Marines (grueling physical conditioning, loss of sleep, lack of privacy, being yelled at, suffering punishment for small infractions of rules), it may seem remarkable that recruits routinely develop so much loyalty to their organization. Obviously, some powerfully attractive and interesting forces are at work.

Cognitive dissonance theory offers a compelling explanation for the mental adjustments that occur in people who voluntarily undergo unpleasant experiences (Festinger, 1957). The theory says that when people voluntarily act in ways that produce discomfort or otherwise clash with their attitudes and values, they develop a highly motivating mental state called **cognitive dissonance.** A Republican politician who makes a public statement agreeing with a Democratic opponent is likely to feel cognitive dissonance. The same holds true for people who find themselves acting in ways that cause them to experience physical discomfort. Thus, our Marine recruits may feel cognitive dissonance when they find that they have volunteered for an experience that is far more punishing than they had imagined. And what is the psychological result?

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 8

Social psychologists view *cognitive dissonance* as a powerful psychological motive.

According to cognitive dissonance theory, people are motivated to avoid the uncomfortable state of dissonance. If they find themselves experiencing cognitive dissonance, they attempt to reduce it in ways that are predictable, even if not always entirely logical. The two main ways of reducing dissonance are to change either one's behavior or one's cognitions. So, in civilian life, if the boss is abusive, you might avoid dissonance by simply finding another job. But in the case of a Marine recruit, changing jobs is not an option: It is too late to turn back once basic training has started. A recruit experiencing cognitive dissonance therefore is motivated to adjust his or her thinking. Most likely the recruit will resolve the dissonance by rationalizing the experience ("It's tough, but it builds character!") and by developing a stronger loyalty to the organization ("Being a member of such an elite group is worth all the suffering!").

Cognitive dissonance A highly motivating state in which people have conflicting cognitions, especially when their voluntary actions conflict with their attitudes.

In general, cognitive dissonance theory says that *when people's cognitions and actions are in conflict (a state of dissonance) they often reduce the conflict by changing their thinking to fit their behavior.* Why? People don't like to see themselves as being foolish or inconsistent. So, to explain their own behavior to themselves, people are motivated to change their attitudes. Otherwise, it would threaten their self-esteem.

One qualification on this theory has recently come to light. Studies show that in Japan, and perhaps in other parts of Asia, people have a lesser need to maintain high self-esteem than do North Americans (Bower, 1997a; Heine et al., 1999). As a result, cognitive dissonance was found to have less power to change attitudes among Japanese. Apparently, cognitive dissonance is yet another psychological process that operates differently in collectivist and individualistic cultures.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 9

Collectivist cultures socialize people to put the needs of the group before the desires of the individual.

The Explanatory Power of Dissonance Despite cultural variations, cognitive dissonance theory explains many things that people do to justify their behavior and thereby avoid dissonance. For example, it explains why smokers so often rationalize their habit. It explains why people who have put their efforts into a project, whether it be volunteering for the Red Cross or writing a letter of recommendation, become more committed to the cause as time goes on—in order to justify their effort. It also explains why, if you have just decided to buy a Chevrolet, you will attend to new information supporting your choice (such as Chevrolet commercials on TV), but you will tend to ignore dissonance-producing information (such as a Chevy broken down alongside the freeway).

Cognitive dissonance theory also helps us understand certain puzzling social relationships, such as a woman who is attracted to a man who abuses her. Her dissonance might be summed up in this thought: "Why am I staying with someone who hurts me?" Her powerful drive for self-justification may make her reduce the dissonance by focusing on his good points and minimizing the abuse. And, if she has low self-esteem, she may also tell herself that she deserved his abuse. To put the matter in more general terms: *Cognitive dissonance theory predicts that people are attracted to those for whom they have agreed to suffer.* A general reward theory, by contrast, would never have predicted that outcome.

To sum up our discussion on interpersonal attraction: You usually will not go far wrong if you use a reward theory to understand why people are attracted to each other. People initiate social relationships because they expect some sort of benefit. It may be an outright reward, such as money or status or sex, or it may be an avoidance of some feared consequence, such as pain. But social psychology also shows that a simple reward theory cannot, by itself, account for all the subtlety of human social interaction. A more sophisticated and useful understanding of attraction must take into account such cognitive factors as expectations, self-esteem, and cognitive dissonance. That is, a complete theory must take into account the ways that we *interpret* our social environment. This notion of interpretation also underlies other judgments that we make about people, as we shall see next in our discussion of *attributions.*

Making Cognitive Attributions

We are always trying to explain to ourselves why people do what they do. Suppose you are riding on a bus when a middle-aged woman with an armload of packages gets on. In the process of finding a seat, she drops everything on the floor as the bus starts up. How do you explain her behavior? Do you think of her as the victim of circumstances, or is she a klutz, or is she eliciting sympathy so someone will give up a seat to her?

Social psychologists have found that we tend to attribute other people's actions and misfortunes to their personal traits, rather than to situational forces, such as the unpredictable lurching of the bus. This helps explain why we often hear attributions of laziness or low intelligence to the poor or homeless, rather than an externally imposed lack of opportunity (Furnham, 1982; Pandey et al., 1982; Zucker & Weiner, 1993). It also helps us understand why most commentators on the Kitty Genovese murder attributed the inaction of the bystanders to defects in character of those who did not help, rather than to social influences on them.

● If this observer attributes the other man's blunder to clumsiness or carelessness, he commits the fundamental attribution error. This is more likely in Western cultures, such as those of Canada and the United States, than in Eastern cultures, such as those of China and Japan.

On the other side of the attributional coin, we find that people use the same process to explain each other's successes. Thus we may ascribe the success of a favorite singer, athlete, or family member to personal traits, such as exceptional talent or intense motivation. In doing so, we tend to ignore the effects of situational forces, such as the influence of family, coaches, a marketing blitz, long practice, sacrifices, or just a "lucky break."

The Fundamental Attribution Error Psychologists refer to the **fundamental attribution error (FAE)** as the dual tendency to overemphasize personal traits (the rush to the dispositional) while minimizing situational influences. Despite its name, however, the fundamental attribution error is not as fundamental as psychologists at first thought. Cross-cultural research has suggested that it is more pervasive in individualistic cultures, as found in the United States or Canada, than in collectivist cultures, as found in Japan or China (Fletcher & Ward, 1988; Miller, 1984; Norenzayan & Nisbett, 2000; Triandis, 1996). Even within the United States, urban children are more susceptible to the fundamental attribution error than their country cousins (Lillard, 1999).

The FAE is not always an "error," of course. If the causes really are dispositional, the observer's guess is correct. So the FAE is best thought of as a *bias* rather than a mistake. However, the FAE is an error in the sense that an observer may overlook legitimate, situational explanations for another's actions. For example, if the car in front of you brakes suddenly so that you almost collide, your first impression may be that the other driver is at fault, a dispositional judgment. But what if the driver slowed down in order to avoid hitting a dog that ran into the road? Then the explanation for the near-accident would be situational, not dispositional. By reminding ourselves that circumstances may account for seemingly inexplicable actions, we are less likely to commit the FAE. As a general principle, your authors encourage you to practice *"attributional charity,"* which involves always trying to find a situational explanation for strange or unusual behavior of others before blaming them with dispositional explanations.

Biased Thinking About Yourself Oddly, you probably judge yourself by two different standards depending on whether you experience success or failure. When things go well, most people attribute their own success to internal factors, such as motivation, talent, or skill ("I am good at taking multiple-choice tests."). But when things go poorly, they attribute failure to external factors beyond their control ("The professor asked trick questions.") (Smith & Ellsworth, 1987). Psychologists have dubbed this tendency the **self-serving bias** (Bradley, 1978; Fletcher & Ward, 1988). Self-serving biases are probably rooted in the need for self-esteem, a preference for interpretations that save face and cast our actions in the best possible light (Epstein & Feist, 1988; Ickes

■ **Fundamental attribution error (FAE)** The tendency to emphasize internal causes and ignore external pressures. The FAE is more common in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.

■ **Self-serving bias** An attributional pattern in which one takes credit for success but denies responsibility for failure. (Compare with the *fundamental attribution error.*)

& Layden, 1978; Schlenker et al., 1990). Social pressures to excel as an individual make the self-serving bias, like the fundamental attribution error, more common in individualist cultures than in collectivist cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). In addition, we noted earlier that when trying to understand the behavior of others, we tend often to use dispositional explanations, finding things "in them" that might explain why they did this or that. However, when we are trying to figure out the reasons for *our own actions,* we tend to look to the situational factors acting on us, because we are more aware of them than in our judgments of others.

Prejudice and Discrimination

While our attributions can be positive or negative, prejudice, as social psychologists use the term, is always a negative judgment. Prejudice can make an employer discriminate against women (or men) for a management job. It can make a teacher expect poor work from a minority student. And in some places in the world, it can still lead to *genocide,* the systematic extermination of a group of people because of their racial or ethnic origins. We will define **prejudice** as negative attitudes, beliefs, and feelings toward an individual based solely on his or her membership in a particular group. Prejudice may be expressed as negative emotions (such as dislike or fear), negative attributions or stereotypes that justify the attitude, and/or the attempt to avoid, control, dominate, or eliminate those in the target group. Prejudiced attitudes serve as extreme biasing filters that influence the way others are perceived and treated. Thus, prejudice exerts a powerful force for selectively processing, organizing, and remembering pertinent information about particular people.

We should distinguish prejudice from discrimination, a related concept. While prejudice is an *attitude,* discrimination is a *behavior.* We will define **discrimination,** then, as a negative action taken against an individual as a result of his or her group membership. Racial profiling, for example, is often considered a discriminatory procedure because it singles out people based solely on racial features. But, while discrimination can arise from prejudice, we will see that this is not always the case.

Causes of Prejudice Prejudice can grow from many sources (Allport, 1954; Aronson, 2004). Some prejudices we acquire at an early age. Some are defensive reactions when we feel threatened. Some are the result of conformity to social customs. And some help us distinguish strangers (and possible foes) from friends (Whitley, 1999). An understanding of these sources of prejudice will provide us with the foundation necessary for thinking about possible "cures," ways to combat these antisocial reactions. Here, then, are five causes of prejudice that have been studied by social psychologists.

Dissimilarity and Social Distance If similarity breeds liking, then dissimilarity can breed disdain—and prejudice. If you wear baggy shorts, a baseball cap backwards, and a nose ring, it's a good bet that some middle-aged people from a traditional background will feel uncomfortable around you. They are likely to perceive you as a part of a social group that flaunts values and behaviors quite distinct from those of their own group. This perceived difference in appearance can easily become fertile ground for the growth of prejudice.

What psychological principles are at work? When you perceive someone to be unlike the people in your **in-group,** you mentally place that person at a greater **social distance** than members of your own group. You are then less likely to view that individual as a social equal (Turner & Oakes, 1989). This inequality easily translates into inferiority, making it easier for you to treat

- **Prejudice** A negative attitude toward an individual based solely on his or her membership in a particular group.
- **Discrimination** A negative action taken against an individual as a result of his or her group membership.
- **In-group** The group with which an individual identifies.
- **Social distance** The perceived difference or similarity between oneself and another person.

members of an **out-group** with contempt. Historically, more powerful groups have discriminated against out-groups by withholding privileges; sending members of out-groups to different schools; making them sit in the back of the bus; forcing them into low-wage jobs, jail, and ghettos; and otherwise treating them punitively.

Economic Competition A second cause of prejudice occurs in highly competitive situations, where one group wins economic benefits or jobs at the other group's expense, can easily fan the flames of prejudice. For example, in the Pacific Northwest, where competition over old-growth forests threatens jobs and wildlife habitat, prejudice sets timber workers and environmentalists against each other. Likewise, surveys have found, for example, prejudice against black Americans to be greatest among white groups poised at an economic level just above the black American average—precisely the ones who would feel their jobs most threatened by black Americans (Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971). It is often true that much prejudice exists not only down from those in privileged positions to those in minority positions but across minority groups, between recent immigrants from different countries, or when new immigrants threaten the financial security of established minorities.

● Schoolchildren in Nazi Germany (1930s and 1940s) read textbooks describing Jews as inferior to the "Aryan race." Illustrations in those books also depicted Jewish children excluded from schools.

Scapegoating To understand a third cause of prejudice, consider how the Hebrew priests of old performed a ritual that symbolically transferred the sins of the people to a goat—the scapegoat. The animal was then driven into the desert to carry its burden of guilt away from the community. The term *scapegoat* has been applied in modern times to an innocent person or group who receives blame when others feel threatened. On a large and horrifying scale, German Jews served as scapegoats for the Nazis in World War II. Hitler's propaganda program encouraged this by creating images of German Jews as totally different from the rest of the German population; such terrible images set them apart as the "faces of the enemy" (Keen, 1991). **Scapegoating** may also explain why the number of lynchings in the southern United States between 1882 and 1930 was related to the price of cotton. When cotton prices dropped, the number of lynchings increased, and when cotton prices rallied, the number of lynchings fell (Hovland & Sears, 1940). Scapegoating is most effective when the object of scorn is readily identifiable by skin color or some distinctive physical features, or propaganda can create such differences in the minds of the dominant group.

Conformity to Social Norms The source of discrimination and prejudice that is perhaps the most pervasive is an unthinking tendency to maintain conditions the way they are, even when those conditions involve unfair assumptions, prejudices, and customs (see Aronson, 2004). For example, in many offices it is the norm for secretaries to be female and executives to be male. Because of this norm, it may be difficult for a woman to break into the executive ranks. We may find the same process where the norm says that nurses and lab technicians should be females and that engineers and mathematicians should be males. When we see that most people in a given profession are of a particular gender or race, we assume that is the way of the world, the way the social order meant it to be, rather than considering the social and economic conditions that have made it that way. So when women note that most computer workers are males, they are likely to avoid taking computer science courses or going into such careers, which then become for "men only."

So we see, then, that discrimination itself can cause prejudice. To reinforce the point, imagine that you were the male executive who discriminated against

■ **Out-group** Those outside the group with which an individual identifies.
■ **Scapegoating** Blaming an innocent person or a group for one's own troubles.

a woman applying for an executive position. Or imagine that you were the white bus driver in the mid-20th-century South who routinely sent black passengers to a special section in the back of the bus. In either case, you would have had to justify your own behavior to yourself. And if you have just treated people as second-class citizens because of their gender or ethnicity, it will be difficult, perhaps impossible, for you to think of them as anything other than inferior beings (without having a severe attack of cognitive dissonance). In this way, your discriminatory behavior can cause or strengthen prejudices. Because we are rationalizing creatures as much as rational ones, we endlessly justify our decisions and behavior to make them appear reasonable by generating "good reasons" for our bad behaviors.

Media Stereotypes Our fifth cause of prejudice occurs when stereotyped images used to depict groups of people in film, in print, and on television reinforce prejudicial social norms. Such images are far from harmless, because people have learned many of their prejudices from the stereotypes they saw on TV and in books, movies, and magazines (Greenberg, 1986). On the other hand, images in the media can also change those norms. Until the Black Power movement gained media attention, Africans and African Americans were most often portrayed in movies and on TV as simple, slow, comic characters, perpetuating the "Sambo" image that many whites held. Fortunately, the most blatant racial stereotypes have disappeared from the national media in the past few decades. Media distortions still occur, of course, but they are more subtle. Prime time features three times as many male as female characters (Aronson, 1999). Most are shown in professional and managerial positions, even though two-thirds of the U.S. workforce is employed in blue-collar and service jobs. The proportion of nonwhites and older persons who appear on TV is also much smaller than in the general population. For viewers, the result is a biased picture of the world. This is where it becomes critical to have a variety of role models in the media that portray positions of influence and credibility to young people from those subgroups, such as woman and ethnic/racial minority members as TV news anchors.

Combating Prejudice During the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, educators believed that prejudice could be overcome through a gradual process of information campaigns and education. But experience provided no encouragement for this hope. In fact, these informational approaches are among the least effective tools for combating prejudice. The reason? Prejudiced people (like everyone else) usually avoid information that conflicts with their view of the world, so they never watched or listened to those messages. Even for those who want to change their prejudiced attitudes, erasing the strong emotions and motivational foundations associated with long-standing prejudices is difficult (Devine & Zuwerink, 1994). The process is even more difficult for those who cherish their prejudices because their sense of self-worth is based on perceiving others as less worthy.

So how can one attack the prejudices of people who do not want to listen to another viewpoint? Research in social psychology suggests several possibilities. Among them are the use of new role models, equal status contact, and (surprisingly) new legislation.

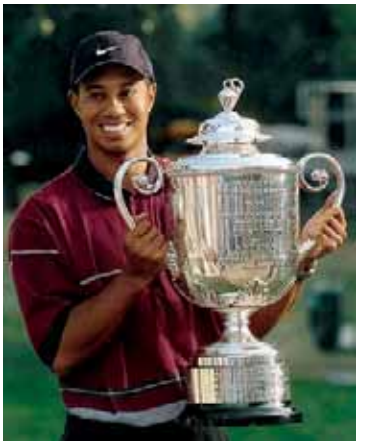
New Role Models Golfer Tiger Woods, Secretary of State Condaleeza Rice, and many others serve as role models in prestigious jobs and leadership positions where few of their race or gender have appeared before. These role models encourage people in these groups who might never have considered such careers. What we do not know much about, however, is the ability of role models to change the minds of people who are already prejudiced. Role models may serve better to prevent prejudice than to cure it.

Equal Status Contact Slave owners had always had plenty of contact with their slaves, but they always managed to hang on to their prejudices. Obviously, mere contact with people from an out-group is not enough to erase prejudices against them. Evidence, however, from integrated public housing (where the economic threat of lowered property values is not an issue) suggests that when people are placed together under conditions of equal status, where neither wields power over the other, the chances of developing understanding increase (Deutsch & Collins, 1951; Wilner et al., 1955). In an extensive review of all available literature, Tom Pettigrew (1998) found strong support for the power of equal-status contact to prevent and reduce prejudice among many different kinds of groups.

Legislation You can't legislate morality. Right? The evidence of several studies suggests, however, that the old cliché may be wrong. One of the most convincing of these studies was an experiment, done in the late 1940s, comparing the attitudes of white tenants toward black tenants in public housing projects. In one project, white and black occupants were assigned to different buildings; that is, the project was racially segregated. A second project mixed or integrated the two racial groups by assigning housing in the same buildings. Only in the racially integrated project did prejudicial attitudes sharply decrease (Deutsch & Collins, 1951). This result strongly suggests that rules requiring equal-status contact can diminish prejudice.

This notion is reinforced by a larger social "experiment" that was done under far less controlled conditions. During the past half-century, the United States has adopted laws abolishing racial discrimination. The consequences were sometimes violent, but prejudice and discrimination have gradually diminished. Evidence for this shift comes from polls showing that in the 1940s, fewer than 30% of white Americans favored desegregation. That percentage has steadily climbed to well above 90% today (Aronson, 2004).

Because these changes in public opinion were not part of a carefully controlled experiment, we cannot say that the data prove that legislation has caused people's prejudices to diminish. Nevertheless, we can argue that the increased number of white Americans favoring desegregation is exactly what one might predict from cognitive dissonance theory: When the law requires people to act in a less discriminatory fashion, people have to justify their new behavior by softening their prejudiced attitudes. From this vantage point, it appears that legislation can affect prejudiced attitudes, after all.



Golfer Tiger Woods is a role model in a sport that has traditionally had few representatives of minority groups.

Other Topics in Social Psychology

One of the most interesting components of social psychology involves group dynamics—the study of how groups form and interact. One of the ways in which we look at how groups work is by examining a phenomenon known as social facilitation.

Social facilitation occurs when an individual's performance improves because of being in a group. For example, research has shown that people who work in small groups in class learn more and are more productive than people who work alone. As part of a group, individuals can compare their thoughts and ideas with others in the group and those comparisons can be used to make improvements. Another component of group dynamics is **social loafing,** where one's productivity and learning decrease because one is in a group. This can occur because the group is too large and/or because people do not think that their contributions to the group will be valued.

Another negative aspect of group dynamics is **deindividuation,** the individual's loss of a sense of personal responsibility, as the group "assumes" responsibility for the behavior. This is seen, for example, in situations where

■ **Social facilitation** An increase in an individual's performance because of being in a group.
■ **Social loafing** A decrease in performance because of being in a group.
■ **Deindividuation** Occurs when group members lose their sense of personal identity and responsibility and the group "assumes" responsibility for their behavior.

fans storm the field at soccer games or loot and riot to protest or cheer victories. Actually, of course, each person in the group is fully responsible for her or his own behavior; the concept of deindividuation is simply a social psychology construct.

Given all that we have seen above (good and bad), why do people join groups? Our main reasons for joining a group involve accomplishing goals, enhancing self-esteem, developing social identity, and expanding our social network. Groups are generally characterized by three features: roles, norms, and cohesiveness. Roles are an expected set of behaviors for members of the group, norms are the rules of conduct within the group, and cohesiveness is the force that pulls group members together and forms bonds that last.

Even in the most cohesive of groups there can be differences of opinion. This is where **group polarization** comes into play. When members of a group have similar, though not identical, views about a particular subject, and discuss them, their opinions become more extreme and pronounced.

Groupthink occurs when members of the group are highly cohesive and strive for concurrence among the members. A number of factors can contribute to groupthink, including a highly controlling leader, stressful situations, and the need for decisions to be unanimous. The atrocities at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq are an example. To counteract groupthink, groups can consult outsiders (or bring in a new member), encourage the leader to be less controlling, encourage constructive criticism and research, and/or have one member take on the roll of being the "devil's advocate" and question consensus when it is reached.

Each person is unique and brings different experiences and ideas to each situation and to each group they participate in. When we talk about all of the good (and bad) aspects of group dynamics and social psychology, we have to look at the impact that group dynamics has on the individual.

PSYCHOLOGY IN YOUR LIFE: LOVING RELATIONSHIPS

We end this section on a more positive note. Although people often do terrible things to one another, the complexity and beauty of the human mind also enable people to be caring and loving. Liking and loving are essential for happiness (Kim & Hatfield, 2004). Further, the pleasure of attraction and love appear to be part of the very circuitry and chemistry of our brains (Bartels & Zeki, 2004).

How do we know when attraction becomes love? To a large extent, our culture tells us how. Each culture has certain common themes defining love—such as sexual arousal, attachment, concern for the other's welfare, and a willingness to make a commitment. But the idea of "love" can vary greatly from culture to culture (Aron & Aron, 1994; Beall & Sternberg, 1995; Berscheid, 1988; Fehr, 1988; Hatfield, 1988; Sprecher & McKinney, 1994; Sternberg, 1998).

There are also many kinds of love. The love that a parent has for a child differs from the love that longtime friends have for each other. Both differ from the commitment found, say, in a loving couple who have been married for 40 years. Yet, for many Americans, the term *love* brings to mind yet another form of attraction based on infatuation and sexual desire: **romantic love,** a temporary and highly emotional condition that generally fades after a few months (Hatfield et al., 1995; Hatfield & Rapson, 1993, 1998). But the American assumption that romantic love is the basis for a long-term intimate commitment is not universal. In many other cultures, marriage is seen as an economic bond or, perhaps, as a political relationship linking families.

- **Group polarization** When individuals in a group have similar, though not identical, views, their opinions become more extreme.
- **Groupthink** An excessive tendency to seek concurrence among group members.
- **Romantic love** A temporary and highly emotional condition based on infatuation and sexual desire.

Psychologist Robert Sternberg (1998) has proposed an interesting view in his **triangular theory of love.** He says that love can have three components: passion (erotic attraction), intimacy (sharing feelings and confidences), and commitment (dedication to putting this relationship first in one's life). Various forms of love can be understood in terms of different combinations of these three components. Thus, Sternberg suggests that

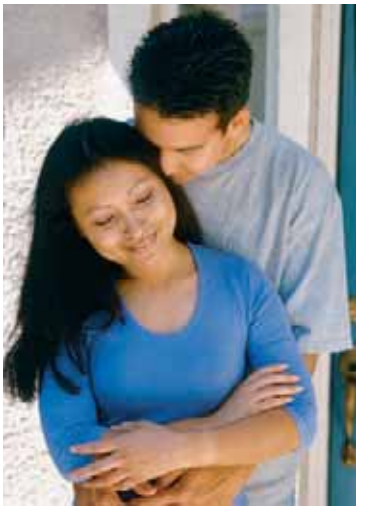
- *Romantic love* is high on passion and intimacy but low on commitment.
- Liking and friendship are characterized by intimacy but not by passion and commitment.
- *Infatuation* has a high level of passion, but it has not developed into intimacy or a committed relationship.
- *Complete love* (consummate love) involves all three: passion, intimacy, and commitment.

The need to understand what strengthens and weakens loving relationships in our own culture has acquired some urgency because of the "divorce epidemic" in the United States (Brehm, 1992; Harvey & Pauwels, 1999). If current rates hold, approximately half of all today's first marriages—and up to 60% of second marriages—will end in divorce. Much research stimulated by concern about high divorce rates has focused on the effects of divorce on children (Ahrons, 1994; Edwards, 1995).

In the past decade or so, however, research emphasis has shifted to the processes by which couples maintain loving relationships and the environments that challenge relationships (Berscheid, 1999; Brehm, 1992; Duck, 1992; Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). We now know, for example, that for a relationship to stay healthy and thrive, both partners must see it as rewarding and equitable. As we saw in our discussion of reward theory, both must, over the long run, feel that they are getting something out of the relationship, not just giving. What they get—the rewards of the relationship—can involve many things, including adventure, status, laughter, mental stimulation, and material goods, as well as nurturance, love, and social support.

In addition, for a relationship to thrive, communication between partners must be open, ongoing, and mutually validating (Gottman et al., 1998; Gottman & Silver, 1994; Harvey & Omarzu, 1997; Monaghan, 1999). Research shows that couples in lasting relationships have five times more positive interactions than negative ones—including exchanges of smiles, loving touches, laughter, and compliments (Gottman, 1994). Yet, because every relationship experiences an occasional communication breakdown, the partners must know how to deal with conflicts effectively. Conflicts must be faced early and resolved fairly and effectively. Ultimately, each partner must take responsibility for his or her own identity, self-esteem, and commitment to the relationship—rather than expecting the partner to engage in mind reading or self-sacrifice.

This has been the briefest sampling from the growing social psychology of relationships. Such research has practical applications. Teachers familiar with research findings can now inform their students about the basic principles of healthy relationships. Therapists apply these principles in advising clients on how to communicate with partners, negotiate the terms of their relationships, and resolve inevitable conflicts. More immediately, as you yourself learn about the factors that influence how you perceive and relate to others, you should gain a greater sense of self-control and well-being in your own intimate connections with others (Harvey, 1996; Harvey et al., 1990).



● Is it love? Social psychologists have been exploring the psychology of the human heart, collecting and interpreting data about how people fall in love and strengthen their bonds of intimacy. Most recently the emphasis has shifted to the factors that keep relationships together.

■ **Triangular theory of love**
A theory that describes various kinds of love in terms of three components: passion (erotic attraction), intimacy (sharing feelings and confidences), and commitment (dedication to putting this relationship first in one's life).

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. **RECALL:** According to Aronson, we can explain almost everything about interpersonal attraction with a theory of
   - **a.** love.
   - **b.** rewards.
   - **c.** genetics.
   - **d.** gender.
   - **e.** environmental influences.

2. **RECALL:** Which of the following does the research say is most important in predicting initial attraction?
   - **a.** physical attractiveness
   - **b.** money
   - **c.** personality
   - **d.** nurturing qualities
   - **e.** sense of humor

3. **RECALL:** Which theory of attraction best explains why people who are considered extremely competent are often not the people we are most attracted to?
   - **a.** reward theory
   - **b.** expectancy-value theory
   - **c.** cognitive dissonance theory
   - **d.** psychoanalytic theory
   - **e.** conformity theory

4. **APPLICATION:** According to cognitive dissonance theory, which of the following would be the best strategy for getting people to like you?
   - **a.** Give them presents.
   - **b.** Show interest in their interests.
   - **c.** Tell them that you like them.
   - **d.** Reward them for good behavior.
   - **e.** Persuade them to perform a difficult or unpleasant task for you.

5. **RECALL:** Prejudice is a(n) _____, while discrimination is a(n) _____.
   - **a.** behavior/attitude
   - **b.** instinct/choice
   - **c.** attitude/behavior
   - **d.** stimulus/response
   - **e.** choice/ethic

6. **RECALL:** The evidence suggests that one of the most effective techniques for eliminating racial prejudice has been
   - **a.** education.
   - **b.** threat and force.
   - **c.** legislation.
   - **d.** tax incentives.
   - **e.** choice.

7. **UNDERSTANDING THE CORE CONCEPT:** Reward theory, expectancy-value theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and attribution theory all tell us that we respond not just to situations but also to
   - **a.** our cognitive interpretations of them.
   - **b.** our social instincts.
   - **c.** the intensity of the stimuli.
   - **d.** our biological needs and drives.
   - **e.** our unconscious needs.

ANSWERS: 1.b 2.a 3.b 4.e 5.c 6.c 7.a

KEY QUESTION

WHAT ARE THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM?

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, raise questions for which there are no easy answers. In this section, however, we will see that social psychology's findings on the *power of the situation* offer a useful starting point for understanding why people commit violent acts. But, your authors will argue, putting together a complete picture of violence and terrorism requires the combined insights of many perspectives—and not just those from psychology. Issues of money, power, resources, and ancient grudges must be considered as well. Our Core Concept says:

CORE CONCEPT

The power of the situation can help us understand violence and terrorism, but a broader understanding requires multiple perspectives that go beyond the boundaries of traditional psychology.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 6

Aggression often results from *punishment* or the threat of punishment.

Before we plunge into these chilling waters, however, let us clarify two basic terms, **violence** and **aggression,** that have overlapping definitions. In the following discussion, we will use these terms interchangeably for any behavior that is intended to cause harm to others (whether or not harm actually results). A key component of this definition is *intent,* but it is also important to note that violence and aggression are social—or, perhaps more aptly, antisocial—phenomena.

■ **Violence and aggression** Terms that refer to behavior that is intended to cause harm.

The Social Psychology of Aggression and Violence

In this chapter we have seen repeatedly that the pressures of a social situation can make ordinary people commit horrible acts (Zimbardo, 2003). Social influence was at work in Milgram's obedience studies, where subjects obeyed orders to deliver apparently lethal shocks to a stranger. Likewise, the social situation provoked aggression in the Stanford prison study, where ordinary students acting as guards behaved with brutality toward fellow students in the role of prisoners. Still other research has shown that aggressive behavior can be induced by situations that create prejudice, conformity, frustration, threat, or wounded pride (Aronson, 2004; Baumeister et al., 1996). Now, let us take a detailed look at another important study that showed how aggression could arise out of intergroup conflict—again caused by the power of the situation.

The Robbers Cave: An Experiment in Conflict

The setting was a Boy Scout Camp known as the "Robbers Cave." There, the experimenters, Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues (1961) randomly assigned 11- and 12-year-old boys to two groups, dubbed the Eagles and the Rattlers. The experiment called for conditions similar to those at many other summer camps for boys: days filled with competitive games and activities. Competition, the experimenters hoped, would create conflict between the two groups.

Competition can promote aggressive behavior.

Initially, the Eagles and Rattlers were kept apart, allowing within-group activities to build group **cohesiveness** (solidarity, loyalty, and a sense of group membership). Later the experimenters brought the two groups together for competitions, such as tug-of-war and football. Prizes for the winners heightened the competitive atmosphere. The final straw was a "party" at which the experimenters arranged to have the Eagles arrive an hour early. Half the food was mouth-watering, and half was deliberately unappealing. As you might expect, when the Rattlers arrived they found that the Eagles had devoured the more desirable food. This led to name-calling and scuffling, which culminated in a food fight.

With a rancorous atmosphere well established, Sherif and his colleagues tried various tactics for promoting cooperation between the groups. Their initial attempts were, however, complete failures. In particular, it did not help merely to bring the Eagles and Rattlers together for social events, such as movies or eating in the same dining room. Such occasions just offered opportunities for more hostility.

What *did* help was to contrive situations in which the groups had to cooperate in order to serve their mutual interests. First, however, the experimenters called a halt to the competitive games. Then, they assembled the boys to inform them of a "problem" that had developed with the camp's vital water line. Both groups agreed to search the line for the trouble spot, which they did together—harmoniously. On another day, the experimenters arranged for the camp's truck to break down—which meant that it could not go to town for food. To get the truck running, the two groups had to work cooperatively by pulling it with the same rope previously used for the divisive tug-of-war game.

To serve its own needs, each group had to cooperate with the "enemy." And, as dissonance theory would predict, hostility changed to friendliness. The change in behavior led directly to a change in attitude. That is, the attitude change resulted from a need to justify the altered behavior.

It took several such crises to break down the hostile barriers between the two groups and to build a sense of **mutual interdependence,** a working

Cohesiveness Solidarity, loyalty, and a sense of group membership.

Mutual interdependence A shared sense that individuals or groups need each other in order to achieve common goals

relationship based on shared goals. But in the end, the groups actively sought opportunities to mingle with each other, and friendships developed between members of the Eagles and Rattlers. One group even used its own money to buy treats for members of the other group. (Do you see a parallel between this study and the ethnic conflicts in the Middle East?)

Fuel for Terrorism

The flammable combination of poverty, powerlessness, and hopelessness is the tinder that the September 11 attacks were intended to ignite, says Jonathan Lash, president of the World Resources Institute in Washington, D.C. (2001). Much of the world lives in poverty and hunger and sees no way out. Ethnic hatred and wars aggravate their plight. Moreover, the number of people living in these miserable conditions is increasing, as most of the world's population explosion is occurring in poorer countries. And to make matters more volatile, says Lash, a large proportion of these desperate people depend directly on resources that are rapidly being depleted: fisheries, forests, soils, and water resources. As a result, every day thousands flee their traditional homelands and stream into the largest and poorest cities. Most are young—a result of the high birth rates in the Third World. Lash warns that urban slums, filled with restless, jobless young men, are "tinderboxes of anger and despair; easy recruiting grounds for bin Laden or those who may come after him" (p. 1789). Consider this warning in light of Milgram's obedience studies: If ordinary, well-fed people can be induced to deliver apparently lethal shocks, how much easier it would be to persuade angry, hopeless young men and women to commit violent acts.

Thus, says Lash, removing the flint that sets off the spark is not sufficient; the Western world must also deal with the tinder. In other words, even if the terrorists' leaders are struck down and their resources captured, the anger and despair of the world's poor and desperate people will continue to pose a threat to the United States and other wealthy nations. As psychologists, we can understand this threat as a political restatement of the pain–aggression relationship that we saw in Chapter 6.

Understanding the tinderbox conditions that arise from poverty and despair and the tension between rich and poor nations, then, requires that we take economic and political perspectives. In addition, we must see that many of the conflicts that breed terrorism have historical roots. We cannot understand, for example, the tensions between Christianity and Islam without knowing about the 200-year-war that the Western world calls the Crusades (1095–1291) or the fall of the six-centuries-old Ottoman empire (1300–1922) at the end of World War I. Although such events may seem remote, they changed the trajectory of history, and their religious significance continues to fuel conflict in the Middle East today.

What We Can Do About Terrorism **Terrorism** is really about psychology. It typically involves a relatively small group of people who take dramatic, violent actions against a larger group with the intention of spreading fear among them and inducing anxiety and uncertainty about their government's ability to protect them. Terrorists do not want to conquer other nations' land, as in traditional wars, but to conquer the minds of their enemies by making them feel victimized and fearful. Your authors believe that taking multiple perspectives can provide important insights into the problems of aggression, violence, and terrorism. In this vein, please consider the following suggestions.

As citizens and critical thinkers, we need to call for better information from our politicians, educators, journalists, and others who may try to assign easy answers to complex problems. Meeting aggression with aggression may be necessary, but it is never sufficient. We should encourage our political repre-

Terrorism The use of violent, unpredictable acts by a small group against a larger group for political, economic, or religious goals.

sentatives to consider responses based on multiple perspectives. More specifically, we can support efforts to find common goals—in much the same way that Sherif and his colleagues reduced conflict among the Eagles and Rattlers.

Unfortunately, the easiest and most simplistic response is to demonize those who perpetrate evil deeds—but that is merely name-calling, and we should resist it. This tactic blinds us to the power of the situation to create aggression in ordinary people. More important, it prevents us from dealing with the situations that nurture violence. Labeling others as "evil," or "pathological" usually prevents any attempt to understand the reasons for their actions, instead making them into objects of scorn or disdain.

A related mistake is to think of violence and terrorism as "senseless." On the contrary, destructive deeds always make sense from the perpetrator's frame of reference. As Shakespeare's Hamlet said, there is "method" in madness: We must understand the method in the minds of potential terrorists, if we are to deter them.

Finally, as individuals and as a society, we must refuse to adopt the terrorists' devaluing of human life. If we act on the desire to destroy our enemy at any cost, we will have succumbed to the power of the situation. Moreover, we will have played into the hands of the ones we would destroy.

Kelman's Conflict Resolution Approach The hope that the psychology of cooperation and conflict reduction might ease international tensions lies behind a quiet program currently operating in Israel. There, social psychologist Herbert Kelman applies the lessons of the Eagles and Rattlers to the long-standing hostilities and prejudices between the Israelis and the Palestinians (Kelman, 1997, 1999; Rouhana & Kelman, 1994). His approach involves bringing community leaders from both sides together for small-group discussions of mutual problems. Not just anyone could have started such a program: Kelman's credibility with both sides is a product of his stature as a scholar and the prestige of his affiliation with Harvard University.

Kelman's approach was carefully planned to encourage cooperation and minimize the rewards for hostile behaviors. Representatives of both groups are invited to attend a series of meetings. These are not the usual, high-profile public negotiation sessions, however. Kelman has found that the process works best when the participants are mid-level community leaders who have some power and status but who are in close touch with ordinary, grassroots citizens. Also important is the fact that meetings are held in private to avoid competitive posturing for the press. Removed from the public spotlight, tensions between the two factions have eased, and earnest communication has developed.

Proof that this approach works is difficult to come by, especially in these times of political crisis and upheaval, although Kelman can recite case studies in which old hatreds have been soothed. In fact, several participants in these workshops have later become involved in other peace efforts in their communities. Although the method is inspired by solid science, Kelman is performing no laboratory experiment. Rather, he is applying principles of social psychology to the world beyond the laboratory, where most of the variables remain uncontrolled.

PSYCHOLOGY IN YOUR LIFE: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORISM

How does the Robbers Cave experiment apply to our understanding of the terrorist attacks of September 11? Admittedly, it is a stretch between experiments in the laboratory and conflicts on the international stage. Nevertheless, please consider the following ideas.

First, understanding terrorism does not mean condoning or accepting it—any more than understanding prejudice means approving of it. There can be no moral justification for the vicious attacks on the United States—or any other terrorist attacks. But—like it or not—many people in the world perceive the United States as the enemy. Understanding this perception—and dealing constructively with it—demands that Americans see the conflict from someone else's point of view: those who consider the United States to be the enemy. Doing so involves a cultural perspective.

Second, the Eagles and Rattlers study suggests that effective conflict resolution can come from identifying goals of mutual benefit and persuading the antagonistic groups to pursue these shared goals. This task requires leadership of exceptional vision and skill. It will take this same level of leadership to resolve the conflict resulting from the terrorist attacks on the United States.

Third, we must realize that terrorism does not always involve international conflict. The shootings at Columbine High School were terrorist acts, as was the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, along with thousands of racial/ethnic hate crimes, attacks against gays, and violence directed at abortion providers that have made news in recent years (Doyle, 2001). It would be a mistake to believe that terrorism is always an outside threat from foreigners: Even though some cultures are more violent than others, every culture can breed violent people who terrorize others (Moghaddam et al., 1993; Shiraev & Levy, 2001).

Fourth, as in other areas of psychology, understanding the problem of violence and terrorism requires application of multiple perspectives—perhaps the most profound and far-reaching idea in psychology. In an earlier chapter, for example, we viewed aggression from a biological perspective, noting its association with testosterone and with certain parts of the brain (Davidson et al., 2000; Enserink, 2000; Holden, 2000b). From a behavioral perspective, we saw how aggression often results from pain or punishment (Shiraev & Levy, 2001). From an evolutionary perspective, we can see that aggression involves an impulse built into our genetic makeup and triggered by fear, threat, scarce resources, and sexual rivalry. Experiments in social learning have also shown how role models can stimulate aggression. And, in this chapter, we have seen how other forms of social influence can lead to aggression and violence.

CONNECTION: CHAPTER 6

Through social learning we acquire behaviors observed in our role models.

A complete picture, however, necessitates taking perspectives that extend beyond psychology (Segall et al., 1999). When we expand our view of terrorism, we can see that long-standing hostilities arise from religious, ethnic, and racial prejudices and from poverty, powerlessness, and hopelessness. To arrive at this understanding, however, we must view terrorism from historical, economic, and political perspectives—again, not to excuse violent acts but to understand their origins.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. **RECALL:** Conflict between the groups in the Robbers Cave experiment was encouraged by
   - **a.** punishing nonaggressive boys.
   - **b.** showing movies featuring hostile role models.
   - **c.** competitive games.
   - **d.** putting a particularly aggressive boy in charge of each group.
   - **e.** encouraging cooperation.

2. **RECALL:** In Kelman's work in the Middle East, he removed much of the incentive for competitive responses by
   a. punishing those who responded competitively.
   b. holding the meetings in private.
   c. taking hostages from both sides.
   d. publicly denouncing those who responded competitively.
   e. encouraging cooperation.

3. **UNDERSTANDING THE CORE CONCEPT:** In both the Robbers Cave experiment and Kelman's work in the Middle East, helping people to build a sense of mutual interdependence encouraged them to
   a. become more aggressive.
   b. punish those who had encouraged hostilities.
   c. become more creative.
   d. adopt new personality traits.
   e. alter their perceptions of each other.

ANSWERS: 1. c 2. b 3. e

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE STATE OF THE ART

More than anything else, social psychology has demonstrated the *power of the situation* to shape people's behavior. Depending on how it is structured, the situation can make people conform, obey, act aggressively, develop prejudices, and even commit terrorist acts. On the other hand, the power of the situation can induce cooperation, liking, and loving. The most recent research has focused not only on the conditions but also on the *social processes* that shape these attitudes and behaviors. And, despite the complexity of their subject matter, social psychologists have been exemplars in the use of the experimental method in studying social processes.

In our opinion, the social psychology of the future lies in two domains: (a) work on validating (or invalidating) our knowledge across cultures and (b) the application of basic principles, theories, and methods to political and social problems at home and abroad—to situations as diverse as discrimination, poverty, crime, prisoner abuse, terrorism, ethnic conflict, and war.

USING PSYCHOLOGY TO LEARN PSYCHOLOGY

Persuasion in the Classroom

You may associate persuasion with advertising and politics, but persuasion does not stop there. It is woven into all human interaction—including the exchanges of ideas that occur in the classroom. There, your teachers and fellow students will attempt to persuade you with reasoned arguments, and they will expect you to set out your points of view in the same fashion. But aside from the open exchange of ideas and opinions, there are other, more subtle persuasive pressures of which you should be aware, says social psychologist Robert Cialdini (2001a, b). If you don't know about these, you run the risk of letting other people make up your mind for you. We will discuss three such subtle forms of influence that you will encounter in your college or university experience.

Social Validation

Although you may see a popular movie because your friends like it, going along with the crowd is a poor basis for judging the theories you encounter in your classes. Many of the world's discarded ideas were once accepted by nearly everyone. In psychology, these include the false notions that we use only 10% of our brain, that personality is determined by the first two years of life, and that IQ tests are a good measure of innate abilities. So, rather than accepting what you hear and read, questioning even the most widely held concepts is a good habit. In fact, most famous scientists have built their careers on challenging ideas that everyone else accepted.

Authority

The lectures you hear and the textbooks you read are full of authority figures. Every parenthetical reference in this book, for example, cites an authority. Most are given, in part, to persuade you that the argument being offered is credible. The problem, of course, is that ideas are not true merely because some authority says so. For example, just a few years ago, every introductory psychology text in print taught that no new neurons were created in the brain after birth. Now we know that the textbooks and the experts they cited were wrong. Real proof of such assertions, however, requires more objective evidence obtained by the scientific method—not just the declaration of an authority.

The Poison Parasite Argument

In advertising, a good way to undermine a competitor, says Cialdini, is with a message that calls into question the opponent's credibility. Then, to get people to remember what you have said, you can infect your opponent with a "parasite"—a mnemonic link that reminds people of your message every time they hear your opponent's pitch (Brookhart, 2001). A classic example involved antismoking ads that looked like Marlboro commercials, except that they featured a coughing, sickly "Marlboro Man." You may encounter the same sort of poison parasite argument in a lecture or a textbook that attempts to hold someone's ideas up to ridicule. That's not necessarily bad: In the academic world, weak ideas should perish. The sneaky, dishonest form of this technique, however, involves a misrepresentation or oversimplification of the opponent's arguments. The antidote is to be alert for ridicule and to check out the other side of the argument yourself.

The social psychology of persuasion, of course, involves much more than we have discussed here. A good place to look for more information is Cialdini's book *Influence: Science and Practice* (2001a). Perhaps the most important idea is that some knowledge of persuasion can forearm you against the persuasive techniques you will encounter, both in and out of the classroom. When you know how effective persuaders operate, you are less likely to donate money to causes you don't care about, buy a car you don't really like, or accept a theory without examining the evidence critically.

A PERSONAL ENDNOTE

And so we come to the end of our journey together through psychology. If you are a curious people-watcher, perhaps you will continue on to the next phase of the journey into more advanced psychology and social science courses and into the books and films we have suggested at the end of each chapter. If you scan back through the Core Concepts in this book, you will realize that you have learned much already. Yet, because people are so complex, we have scarcely scratched the surface of the excitement and challenges that the field of psychology has to offer you.

One day you may be among those who contribute to this dynamic enterprise as a scientific researcher. (Wouldn't it be great if your name could appear in a future edition of this book? Please send us word of your discoveries!) Or perhaps you will decide to be a practitioner who applies what is known in psychology to the solution of personal and social problems. (Again, we would like to know if your career in psychology began with our journey together.) But even if you don't become a professional psychologist, your authors hope that this introduction to psychology has sparked a lasting interest in mind and behavior because you cannot help but be an intuitive psychologist—psychology is all around you, and in you.

Playwright Tom Stoppard reminds us that "Every exit is an entry somewhere else." We would like to believe that the entry into the next phase of your life will be facilitated by what you have learned from *Psychology: Core Concepts*, and from your introductory psychology course. In that next journey, may you infuse new life into the study of human nature, while strengthening the human connections among all people you encounter. Here's to a long, mindful, and wonderful journey through life.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

HOW DOES THE SOCIAL SITUATION AFFECT OUR BEHAVIOR?

The Stanford prison experiment demonstrated how norms and social roles can be major sources of situational influence. The Asch studies demonstrated the powerful effect of the group to produce conformity, even when the group is clearly wrong. Another shocking demonstration of situational power came from Stanley Milgram's controversial experiments on obedience to authority. Situational influence can also lead to inaction: The bystander studies showed that individuals are inhibited by the number of bystanders, the ambiguity of the situation, and their resultant perception of their social role and responsibility.

We usually adapt our behavior to the demands of the social situation, and in ambiguous situations we take our cues from the behavior of others.

CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL REALITY: WHAT INFLUENCES OUR JUDGMENTS OF OTHERS

The situation, by itself, does not determine behavior. Rather, it is our interpretation of the situation—our constructed social reality—that regulates behavior, including our social interactions. Usually we are attracted to relationships that we find rewarding, although there are exceptions, predicted by expectancy-value theory and cognitive dissonance theory. Attribution theory predicts that we will attribute other people's blunders to their traits or character (the fundamental attribution error) and our own to the situation (the self-serving bias), although this tendency depends on one's culture. Prejudice and discrimination also demonstrate how we construct our own social reality through such cognitive processes as the perception of social distance and threats, the influence of media stereotypes, scapegoating, and self-justification. Group dynamics, the study of how groups form and interact, helps us to explain our behavior and choices in specific situations. Healthy, loving relationships also demonstrate the social construction of reality, because there are many kinds of love and many cultural variations in the understanding of love.

The judgments we make about others depend not only on their behavior but also on our interpretation of their actions within a social context.

WHAT ARE THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM?

Many studies in social psychology—particularly those dealing with obedience and conformity—show that the power of the situation can pressure ordinary people to commit horrible acts. In the Robbers Cave experiment, conflict between groups arose from an intensely competitive situation. Cooperation, however, replaced conflict when the experimenters contrived situations that fostered mutual interdependence and common goals for the groups.

The Robbers Cave experiment may hold a valuable lesson about dealing with violence and terrorism: the need for leadership that will find common goals for groups in conflict. A fuller understanding of violence and terrorism, however, requires taking multiple perspectives—including those that go beyond the boundaries of psychology to include the historical, economic, and political roots. Unfortunately, the easiest responses involve demonizing those who commit violent acts or labeling such acts as "senseless"—responses that interfere with our understanding them and dealing with them effectively.

A constructive approach, based on understanding conflict from multiple perspectives, is now under way in the Middle East. There, social psychologist Herbert Kelman has created noncompetitive situations in which Israeli and Palestinian community leaders are seeking solutions that benefit all sides.

The power of the situation can help us understand violence and terrorism, but a broader understanding requires multiple perspectives that go beyond the boundaries of psychology.

REVIEW TEST

For each of the following items, choose the single correct or best answer. The answer key appears at the end.

1. Which of the following is the social psychological principle illustrated by the Stanford prison experiment and its findings about participants' behavior?
   - **a.** Social situations have powerful influences on human behavior.
   - **b.** An experience is socially real only when the group is unanimous about interpreting it.
   - **c.** Because everyone is basically different, no two people will respond to the same circumstances in the same way.
   - **d.** Even in healthy circumstances, disturbed people will behave in unhealthy ways.
   - **e.** Participants felt positive about their participation.
2. Theodore Newcomb's study of the attitudes of Bennington College students showed that, 20 years after they were first studied,
   - **a.** many of the women had gradually shifted to more conservative attitudes.
   - **b.** many of the women had gradually shifted to more liberal attitudes.
   - **c.** the liberals were still liberal, and the conservatives were still conservative.
   - **d.** None of the above.
   - **e.** All of the above.

3. According to research on the Asch effect, which of the following is not a condition that encourages greater conformity?
   a. The task being judged is difficult.
   b. Each group member responds privately and anonymously.
   c. The group is extremely cohesive.
   d. The group members perceive each other to be highly competent.
   e. The task being judged is ambiguous.

4. Which of the following statements about Milgram's obedience experiments is true?
   a. All participants were unable to resist the authority figure's orders, no matter how high the level of shock they believed they were administering.
   b. The majority of subjects delivered increasingly intense shocks until the learner complained of a heart condition, at which point most subjects refused to go on.
   c. Although most subjects verbally dissented and complained, most obeyed.
   d. Despite predictions by human nature experts that no one would comply, subjects enjoyed the experiment and had no trouble obeying the authority figure's commands.
   e. The experiments were never completed.

5. Research on the factors that influence helping behavior suggests that the best predictor of bystander intervention is
   a. each individual's measurable level of personal altruism.
   b. the appearance or attractiveness of the victim.
   c. an individual's degree of religiousness or agreement with conventional religious values.
   d. the size of the group of bystanders to the emergency.
   e. the age of the victim.

6. According to research on interpersonal attraction and close relationships, which of the following is *false?*
   a. The more you interact with someone, the more likely you are to like him or her.
   b. We form friendships on the basis of our similarity of backgrounds and attitudes.
   c. As far as first impressions go, a pleasing personality counts more than good looks.
   d. If you voluntarily undergo a hardship or suffering at someone's request, you will probably like that person more than you did before.
   e. Humor is the most telling factor in long-term relationships.

7. Which of the following situations would be likely to create a feeling of cognitive dissonance in the mind of the individual described?
   a. A woman who has said she is on a diet declines the offer of dessert.
   b. A young man who says he loves his girlfriend spends a great deal of time choosing just the right valentine card to send her.
   c. When a man finds out the car he wants costs more than he can afford, he decides not to buy it and looks instead for a less expensive vehicle.
   d. A person must choose between two colleges.
   e. A woman with a prejudice against Jews finds herself agreeing to do a favor for a Jewish neighbor.

8. Which of the following illustrates the effects of the fundamental attribution error?
   a. Explaining why he is turning his paper in late, a student tells the professor that he had car trouble on the way to campus.
   b. Watching an acquaintance hurry from the overcrowded dining hall, a woman remarks, "Amy's in such a hurry—she must be a pretty impatient person."
   c. After waiting an unusually long time to be waited on in a restaurant, a customer thinks there must be something wrong in the kitchen that is interfering with the waitress's ability to work as quickly as usual.
   d. All of the above.
   e. None of the above.

9. In the Robbers Cave experiment, hostility between the groups was reduced by
   a. having the groups engage in social activities with each other.
   b. creating crisis situations that the groups had to work on cooperatively.
   c. punishing aggressive behavior.
   d. allowing the groups to take out their hostilities in competitive sports.
   e. All of the above.

10. In an application of social psychological findings on promoting cooperation between hostile groups, Herbert Kelman has
    a. used the power of conformity (the Asch effect) to reduce hostilities.
    b. advocated the use of rewards for peaceful actions and punishments for hostile actions.
    c. brought community officials on both sides together for private discussions of mutual problems.
    d. promoted "friendly" athletic competition as a means of displacing harmful aggressions and "burning off" energy that could explode into violence.
    e. demonstrated the effectiveness of negative reinforcement on group interactions.

ANSWERS: 1.a 2.c 3.b 4.c 5.d 6.c 7.e 8.b 9.b 10.c

KEY TERMS

Social psychology (p. 567)
Social context (p. 567)
Situationism (p. 568)
Social role (p. 569)
Script (p. 569)
Social norms (p. 569)
Asch effect (p. 571)
Conformity (p. 571)
Diffusion of responsibility (p. 579)
Social reality (p. 583)
Reward theory of attraction (p. 584)
Principle of proximity (p. 584)
Similarity principle (p. 585)
Matching hypothesis (p. 586)
Expectancy-value theory (p. 586)
Cognitive dissonance (p. 587)
Fundamental attribution error (FAE) (p. 589)
Self-serving bias (p. 589)
Prejudice (p. 590)
Discrimination (p. 590)
In-group (p. 590)
Social distance (p. 590)
Out-group (p. 591)
Scapegoating (p. 591)
Social facilitation (p. 593)
Social loafing (p. 593)
Deindividuation (p. 593)
Group polarization (p. 594)
Groupthink (p. 594)
Romantic love (p. 594)
Triangular theory of love (p. 595)
Violence and aggression (p. 596)
Cohesiveness (p. 597)
Mutual interdependence (p. 597)
Terrorism (p. 598)

AP* REVIEW: VOCABULARY

Match each of the following vocabulary terms to its definition.

1. Script
2. Cognitive dissonance
3. Prejudice
4. Scapegoating
5. Social facilitation
6. Social loafing
7. Deindividuation
8. Norms
9. Group polarization
10. Groupthink

_____ **a.** A negative attitude toward an individual based solely on her or his group membership.

_____ **b.** A decrease in an individual's performance because of being in a group.

_____ **c.** Knowledge about the sequence of events and actions that is expected in a particular setting.

_____ **d.** An increase in an individual's performance because of being in a group.

_____ **e.** A person's loss of personal identity and responsibility as the group "assumes" the responsibility for behavior.

_____ **f.** An excessive tendency to seek concurrence among group members.

_____ **g.** Blaming an innocent person or a group for one's own troubles.

_____ **h.** When individuals in a group have similar, though not identical, views, their opinions become more extreme.

_____ **i.** A highly motivating state in which people have conflicting thoughts, especially when their voluntary actions conflict with their attitudes.

_____ **j.** The rules of conduct for a group.

AP* REVIEW: ESSAY

Use your knowledge of the chapter concepts to answer the following essay question.

Define each of the following concepts and explain how each contributes to the phenomenon of prejudice.

a. Stereotyping
b. Self-fulfilling prophecy
c. Fundamental attribution error
d. Schema

OUR RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND VIDEOS

BOOKS

Aronson, E. (2000). *Nobody left to hate: Teaching compassion after Columbine.* New York: W. H. Freeman. Renowned social psychologist Elliot Aronson argues that violent shootings by young students are in part fostered by the pressures and negativity in the schools themselves, including bullying, taunting, and exclusion. To end such tragedies, he offers strategies by which students, teachers, and communities might work to make schools humane, compassionate, and respectful.

Cialdini, R. B. (2001). *Influence: Science and Practice.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon. Noted social psychologist Robert Cialdini summarizes the key principles of social influence, by which you get others to do what you want—or they get you to obey, agree, or buy. Whether you're selling, buying, or trying not to buy, this review arms you with the principles and research explaining how ideas and relationships alter behavior.

Coplin, W. D. (2000). *How you can help: An easy guide to doing good deeds in your everyday life.* New York: Routledge. Since September 11, 2001, many citizens want to "do good" but aren't sure how to start. This guide lists needy groups and worthwhile causes, strategies and principles for efficient helping, and brief, inspiring case histories of people who have made a difference in ways both large and small.

Davis, J. M. (2003). *Martyrs: Innocence, vengeance, and despair in the Middle East*. New York: Macmillan. What are the origins of the hatred and fanaticism that turn people into terrorists? Journalist Joyce Davis interviews people on both sides of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to uncover the conditions and motives that turn young men, mothers, and children into warriors and suicide bombers.

Friday, N. (1996). *The power of beauty.* New York: HarperCollins. Best-selling author Nancy Friday takes a careful, critical look at life in the "age of the empty package," when looks take precedence over personal qualities and everyone lusts for beauty.

Kohn, A. (1990). *The brighter side of human nature: Altruism and empathy in everyday life.* New York: Basic Books. Kohn provides an uplifting review of the many ways in which people help and cooperate with each other and the challenge this poses for more cynical views of human nature as "naturally" warlike and selfish.

Stern, J. (2003). *Terror in the name of God: Why religious militants kill*. New York: Ecco. Jessica Stern, former fellow on terrorism at the Council of Foreign Relations, traveled the world to study the people and issues behind "religious" murders, ranging from Muslim jihadists in Indonesia to Americans who murder abortion providers in the name of Christianity. Religious militancy, she notes, is maintained by religious groups' support and the façade of normality and can be countered only with effective nonviolent strategies.

VIDEOS

Ghosts of Mississippi. (1996, color, 130 min.). Directed by Rob Reiner; starring Alec Baldwin, Whoopi Goldberg, James Woods. This is the involving drama of the murder of civil rights leader Medgar Evers, the campaign by his widow to arrest and convict Byron De La Beckwith (the admitted but not confessed killer), and the attorney who finally agreed to prosecute the case at great cost to his own life. It is a portrait of a culture's doomed efforts to protect their prejudices and resist change. (*Rating PG-13*)

Pay It Forward. (2001, color, 123 min.). Directed by Mimi Leder; starring Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt, Haley Joel Osment. Challenged by a talented but afflicted new teacher, a young boy initiates a program of helping others in threes, with each recipient obligated to do the same for others in need. The engaging plot about the personalities and relationships of the principal characters also shows how such a plan might work and suggests that altruism might yet prevail. (*Rating PG-13*)

Separate but Equal. (1991, color, 193 min.). Directed by John Stevens, Jr., starring Sidney Poitier, Richard Kiley, Burt Lancaster. Originally a two-part TV movie, this docudrama tells the story of a young Thurgood Marshall's 1954 argument of *Brown v. Board of Education* before the Supreme Court, of which he was later to become the first black justice. Includes depiction of classic research by black psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark, who discovered that segregated children's self-concepts had been harmed, even to the point of preferring white dolls to black ones. (*Rating PG*)

To Kill a Mockingbird. (1962, b&w, 129 min.). Directed by Robert Mulligan; starring Gregory Peck, Mary Badham, Philip Alford, Brock Peters, Robert Duvall. This dramatization of Harper Lee's novel about a small-town Southern lawyer defending a black man falsely accused of rape shows the impact of his unpopular efforts on his young children and his community. (*Not rated*)

12 Angry Men. (1957, b&w, 95 min.). Directed by Sidney Lumet; starring Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb, E. G. Marshall, Ed Begley, Jack Klugman, Jack Warden, Robert Webber. In this absorbing drama of 12 jurors' deliberation over a verdict in a murder trial, their own prejudices, eyewitness memory, and group influence all play a part. (*Rating PG-13*)